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5 Director Elections, District Meetings

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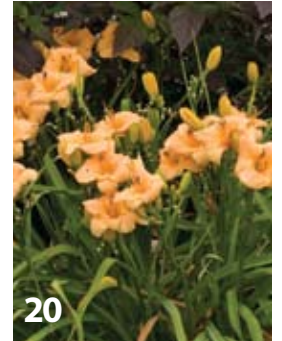
MICHIGAN Country Lines



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MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
countrylines.com



COVER *

Pauline Hancock, executive director and founder of the Elk Country Animal Shelter in Atlanta, MI, is shown with a shelter resident. *Photo—Roger Boettcher/Leavenworth*



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algerdelta.com

Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association

The Value of Electricity

I got on the treadmill and started walking. As I trundled along, I adjusted the earphones that are connected to the radio that keeps me entertained while on the treadmill. No iPod® for me—yet—I still use a little Walkman®. I sped up the treadmill, and just as I got into a steady rhythm, the earphones started hissing and popping.

I hate it when that happens.

I then tried adjusting the earphones and the connector that goes into the Walkman. After several minutes of frustration, I ripped the earphones off, tossed them aside, and took the Walkman off my belt. That old thing is really temperamental, and I was very frustrated with the way it behaved.

As I continued treading, I started looking around the basement at my little exercise station. There is the treadmill, a clock radio, a wall clock, the ever-frustrating Walkman, and a cassette tape player. As I looked at the electronic display on the treadmill's face, it showed the speed, incline, and counted the time, dis-

tance and calories burned. It would even tell me my heart rate if I put my hands on the bar in front of me. If I connected my treadmill to the internet (yes, that can be done!) I would be able to download programs, race against people I've never met, seen or talked to, and even join virtual exercise groups.

Next, my eyes followed the cord of the treadmill to the outlet. Because my basement is unfinished, I could trace the wire from there to the junction box and to the main panel. From there, the wires go out of the house to the transformer that sits in my neighbors' yard and on to the main feeder. From there to the substation, and then to the transmission system (also known as "the grid") and on to the generating plant. Electricity is readily available, plentiful, safe, and a darn good bargain for all the needs it meets and luxuries it gives us. Electricity enables us to do amazing and interesting things, like walk on a treadmill in the basement, in the middle of winter, and being entertained while doing so.



Manager's Column
Tom Harrell

Attend Your District Meeting!

Alger Delta has set the dates for its 2010 district meetings. "We're really excited to continue this new approach of holding a meeting in every district," says General Manager Tom Harrell. "Holding a meeting in each district gives our members the chance to meet with the co-op board members and management and discuss the issues that are important to them in a small group setting."

Alger Delta began holding meetings in each district—even the nonvoting districts—in 2008. Holding annual district meetings also gives members an opportunity to be more informed and interact with board members and staff more regularly.

"We're always interested in hearing from our members, and it gives them a chance to voice their concerns and for co-op leaders to talk about the issues in a more personal way," Harrell adds.

If you're not sure what district you reside in, call 906-428-4141 and we can help! Members are welcome to attend any district meeting, but you may only vote in your own district. Attending a district meeting is a chance to participate in your co-op's business, but also to visit with friends and neighbors, so mark your calendar using the date listing on page 5. ▶

Directors To Be Elected in Three Districts

Check out the qualifications for being a co-op director to see if you are interested in running.

Alger Delta will soon hold elections in three of its nine districts. Districts 1 (Big Bay), 6 (Nathan/Bagley), and 9 (Hiawatha) will each elect a representative to the cooperative's board of directors.

Serving on the board is a time-consuming but rewarding pursuit, and members should be aware of the qualifications and responsibilities associated with the position.

To run for the board, you must: be a permanent resident of the district you seek to represent; be in good standing as a co-op member; be at least 18 years old; and you must not be employed by, or have a financial interest in, a competing business.

Directors are charged with overseeing the co-op, including strategic planning, exercis-

ing fiduciary responsibility, setting policy and direction, corporate duties, governance, and other duties relating to co-op operations. Board members are expected to prepare in advance and attend monthly meetings, which are held on the third Wednesday at the cooperative's office in Gladstone. The meetings usually begin at 1 p.m., but may be set to begin at other times. Directors are also required to attend the annual meeting, which is held on the third Wednesday in June.

Further, board members serve on a variety of committees. Standing committees include the executive, policy, employee relations, and finance & rates committees. Every director is assigned to a committee, and they meet at least three times per year.

In addition to regular meetings and com-

mittees, directors participate in state, regional and national meetings, which may be business or training related, or political in nature. These often require advance preparation, such as reading information packets or researching current issues, and may range from a half-day to five days for travel and participation.

Finally, directors are required to represent Alger Delta in their community and elsewhere, which sometimes includes making public presentations.

Directors are elected for three years and receive compensation for their work, including reasonable and customary expense reimbursement. For more details, see bylaws Article III at algerdelta.com/bylaws.html. If you cannot access the bylaws online, call us at 906-428-4141 for a copy.

District Meeting Dates

Voting Meetings/Agenda:

District 1: Big Bay –
April 26, Powell Township School

District 6: Nathan, Bagley –
March 23, Stephenson American Legion

District 9: Hiawatha, Maple Ridge –
May 14, Au Train Town Hall

*5:30-6:15 p.m. – Light meal;
6:30 – Meeting Begins

Informational Meetings/Agenda:

District 2: Harvey-Deerton –
March 4, Onota Town Hall

District 3: Grand Marais –
March 8, REC Center in Grand Marais

District 4: Cedar River –
March 11, Cedar River Town Hall

District 5: Gourley, LaBranche, Cornell –
March 15, Gourley Town Hall

District 7: Stonington –
April 19, Stonington Town Hall

District 8: Nahma, Isabella –
April 8, Nahma Town Hall

*6:15 p.m. – Refreshments;
6:30 – Meeting Begins

* All times are local

New! CFL Rebates

Our Energy Optimization Program now includes Energy Star® rebates for compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) in any wattage, in any style, and from any retailer! A commercial and industrial lighting incentive program is available, too!

Call 1-877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org.



Energy Star® CFL Rebate Coupon

Alger Delta Co-op members with an active service account may purchase CFLs of any style or wattage from any retailer. To receive \$1 cash back per CFL, submit this coupon with your sales receipt. All coupons must be returned to:

Alger Delta–Energy Star® Rebate
3474 Alaiedon Parkway, Suite 600
Okemos, MI 48864

Coupon expires Dec. 31, 2010, and has no cash value. Rebates subject to change and availability. **Do not return coupon with Alger Delta bill payment, or to the co-op.**

\$5 Maximum
Cash Back!

AlgerDelta Account No. _____

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone _____ # of CFLs _____

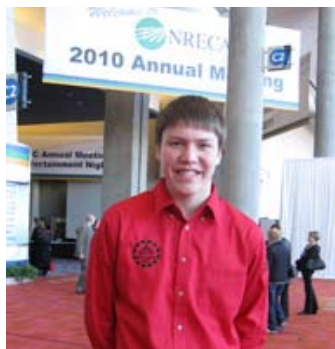
Co-ops Agree to Push Affordability

Close to 6,000 key staff and locally-elected directors from the nation's cooperative electric utilities met in Atlanta, GA, in February to set 2010 policies for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). They agreed that co-ops should strongly push Congress to take responsibility for climate change policy, and not leave it to the Environmental Protection Agency.

Glenn English, NRECA's CEO, told attendees they must demand that elected officials put affordability at the center of their energy policy discussions.

English said a unified, focused co-op position can help cut through the polarization and political stridency in the nation's capital that has stalled efforts to produce constructive energy-related legislation.

"Electric cooperatives cannot afford a scorched-earth politics. We cannot afford to participate in that kind of political debate.



Brandon Gregg, whose parents are members of Midwest Energy Cooperative, represented Michigan as a member of NRECA's Youth Leadership Council.

That divides co-ops," he said. *Michigan Country Lines* was among the five finalists for the Haggard Award, which recognizes magazine excellence among state electric co-op publications.

In celebration of the 75th anniversary of rural electrification, film and TV actor Edward Asner opened the general session with a dramatic and moving portrayal of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.



Lighten Up

Well, you gave me my laugh for the day. After reading your slightly condescending instructions on your publication's current name directing that we "notice the 'r' between the 't' and the 'y' in country" I turned to the [February] cover of *Michigan Country Lines*. Imagine my surprise to see someone's head covering *Country* in the title—all you can see is the "c" and the "y". Turns out the 'r' is invisible—also the "o", "u", "n" and "t".

So please lighten up, as you have plainly (or not so plainly) shown. We all make mistakes.

Sharon Miller, East Jordan

A Question of Subsidies

I have to take issue with your statements about renewable energy. [Comment, February] First, with solar PV (photovoltaics), the generous 30 percent rebate coupled with programs like DTE SolarCurrents and Consumers EARP programs puts the payback time for PV at about 12 years. The life expectancy of a PV system is 25 years, so, after the payback period, the cost of producing

is almost zero. Also, the low cost of producing electricity from coal is greatly exaggerated when you factor in the cost of mining and transporting it and not to mention the environmental cost. Also, you say that interest is not as high as is reported because of the number of net metered customers in the state. Not all customers net meter and I hear of more customers pulling the plug than ever!

John Wagner, via email

Mike Peters replies: I took issue with the statement in the MPSC report that "solar is reaching price parity." Price parity implies that the cost to generate solar is equivalent to the cost to generate with other (coal, natural gas, nuclear) sources of fuel. Your comment addresses the fact that solar is heavily subsidized, actually confirming my comment that solar has not reached price parity with the cost of conventional generation. The real cost of solar PV is subsidized so the customer does not have to pay the full amount.

As for your comment about the exaggerated cost of coal not including mining and transportation costs, the cost to generate with coal does include those costs. When a generator purchases coal, the price they pay includes the cost to mine it. Transportation can be part of the coal contract or it can be separated. Either way,

MYSTERY PHOTO

Everyone who identifies the correct location of the photo below by **April 10** will be entered in a drawing for a **\$50 coupon redeemable for electricity from your electric cooperative.**

Call in your entry to *Country Lines* at 517-351-6322, ext. 306, email jhansen@countrylines.com, or mail it to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and co-op. The winner will be announced in the May 2010 issue.

The **January** contest winner is **April Darga** of Posen, who correctly identified the old iron ore dock in the lower harbor at Marquette.



Jan. photo



Do you know where this is?

Scholarships Offered

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

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

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

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

the cost to generate with coal that I quoted in the comment includes the fuel, transportation, and all related generation costs. And the fact that a well-maintained coal generation facility can last for 70 years supports the fact that coal is a relatively cheap source of generation fuel. Some coal plants have an output cost of less than 4 cents per kWh.

You are correct that the cost to generate with fossil fuels does not include all of the environmental externalities. Although there are considerable environmental costs that have been added to power plants to make burning coal as clean as possible, such as scrubbers and precipitators to remove sulfur dioxide, mercury and nitrogen oxide, there are still environmental and societal costs that are not captured in the cost of generation. With advancements in technology, there will be carbon capture available that will greatly reduce CO₂ emissions, as well as less all other pollutants associated with burning coal. I also recognize there are advancements being made in solar technology every day. I am hopeful that at some time in the future solar PV really will reach "price parity."

Finally, as for individuals pulling the plug and going off the grid, it has been our experience

that out of the approximately 350,000 electric meters served by electric cooperatives no member has gone completely to self-generation. We have had a few dozen members install wind or solar generation units, but none have fully disconnected, yet.

The bottom line is that we need all forms of generation to adequately and affordably meet power supply needs now and into the future. We support a mix of renewables, fossil fuel and nuclear generation, as well as energy efficiency as the best way to keep the lights on and keep it affordable.

CFLs vs. Incandescents

I have on occasion seen time duration break-even points for incandescent and fluorescent lighting, but have forgotten the time frames involved as to most efficient use versus shut-off. In other words, how long does each type of light need to be turned off in order to overcome the additional electricity needed to restart the light? And are CFLs the same as other fluorescents, or is there a different break-even time of shut-off?

As we try to become more energy conscious in our homes and businesses, this type of "rule of thumb" information is helpful in deciding whether to turn off each type of light when leaving a room or is it better to leave the light on?

Donald Pishney, Williamsburg

We'll quote Umbra Fisk, the popular energy columnist at *Grist.com*, who quotes Anne Ducey, residential lighting program coordinator at *Seattle City Light*. Here's her unflinching bottom line:

"Turn out the lights if you are the last to leave a room, unless you are coming back within two minutes. Contrary to popular belief, turning lights on consumes no more electricity than they use when already lit. This is true for both fluorescent and incandescent bulbs. Out! Out!"



The 2010 Centennial Farm calendar, depicting centennial farms throughout Michigan, are still available for a reduced price. The program has certified more than 6,000 farms since 1948. Calendar price is \$8 + \$2 shipping. Send your order with payment to Michigan Centennial Farm Association, Box 80151, Lansing, MI 48908.



Appliance rebates are now available through the economic stimulus package.

The stimulus plan provides rebates for consumers who replace an old appliance with a new, energy-efficient model rated by Energy Star.

Each state's plan is unique. Visit

www.energysavers.gov/rebates

to find out how rebates can help you keep your electric bills affordable!

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 appropriated funds to each state for the establishment and administration of appliance rebate programs. The amount available to Michigan residents for refrigerators, clothes washers and dishwashers is \$6,641,514.

This is a first-come-first-serve rebate program launched February 10. Michigan residents who replace an existing appliance from an eligible category with a new ENERGY STAR® or CEE qualified appliance after February 10, 2010 may apply for the rebate.

Approved applicants will receive a Visa® Prepaid card via mail. A goal of the program is to stimulate the economy by encouraging consumers to replace old appliances with new energy efficient models.

To apply for the rebate, visit the program's website at www.MIrebates.com or call 1-866-621-8782.

Eligible Appliance Categories	Visa® Prepaid Rebate Value
Dishwashers - ENERGY STAR rating	\$25
Dishwashers - CEE Tier 2 rating	\$50
Clothes Washers - CEE Tier 3 rating	\$50
Refrigerators - ENERGY STAR rating	\$50
Refrigerators - CEE Tier 3 rating	\$100

COMING UP: ▶ Favorite recipes: **MOREL MUSH-ROOMS** by Mar. 10 and **SAUCES** by Apr. 10.

Mail to: Recipe Editor, Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864, or email jhansen@countrylines.com

More Energy Rebates

Heating and cooling makes up about 50 percent of a home's energy use, but you'll reap savings by being part of Alger Delta Co-

op's heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) program. It's a chance to upgrade to a more efficient system and watch your energy savings grow.

The program is available to co-op members with residential service in Michigan. The energy-saving measure you install must meet program efficiency requirements. Except for water heaters, all measures must be installed by a state of Michigan-licensed contractor and identified by name on the rebate form.

Go to michigan-energy.org and click on the Alger Delta link for a rebate application, or call 906-428-4141 or 800-562-0950. Receipts for equipment bought on or after 11/20/09, must be included with the application and papers to: Energy Optimization HVAC Program, 426 North 9th St., Gladstone, MI 49837. Please allow 6-8 weeks for processing.

Over \$370 in Rebates!

- **ECM Blower Motor*** \$300
Upgrades on existing furnaces only.
- **Electric Water Heater**..... \$50
Replace existing electric unit with .93 or higher efficiency.
- **Programmable Thermostat***.. \$20
- **Pipe Wrap-5 ft.*** \$4
For electric water heaters only.

*Rebates are subject to change and availability.
Must be contractor-installed.

Notice of Member Access To Rules And Rates

This notice of *Access to Rules and Rates* is published pursuant to the rules established by the Michigan Public Service Commission as set forth in the Consumer Standards and Billing Practices for Electric and Gas Residential Service, R460-2146.

As a member-customer (member) of Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association, please be advised that the following information is available to you from the cooperative, upon request:

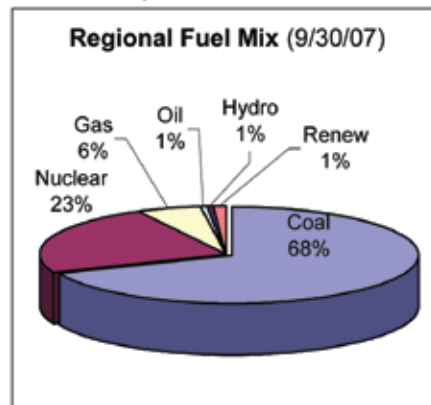
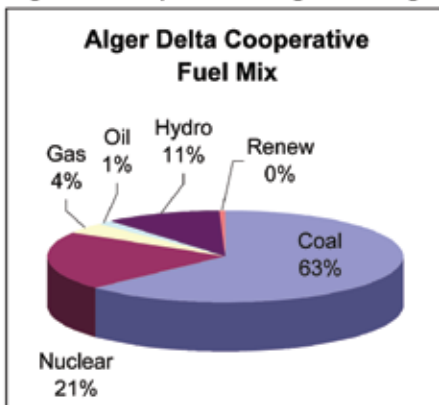
- 1.) Complete rate schedules;
- 2.) Clear and concise explanation of all rates the member may be eligible to receive; and
- 3.) Assistance from the cooperative in determining the most appropriate rate for a member when the member is eligible to receive service under more than one rate.

Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association

The environmental characteristics of your electricity as required by Public Act 141 of 2000.

Comparison of the Fuel Sources Used to Generate Electricity

Alger Delta Cooperative vs. regional average for the 12-month period ended 09/30/2006



Fuel Sources	Percentage of fuel types used to produce Alger Delta Cooperative electricity.	Percentage of fuel type used to produce electricity in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin. (9/30/07)
Coal	63.17	68.9
Nuclear	20.55	23.3
Gas	3.88	5.6
Oil	1.21	0.6
Hydroelectric	10.74	0.6
Total Renewable Fuels	0.45	1
Biomass	0.09	0.1
Biofuel	0	--
Solid Waste Incineration	0.09	0.3
Wind	0	0.1
Wood	0.27	0.5
Solar	0	0

Note: (1) Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas, and (2) "--" indicates not applicable or negligible. Wind less than 0.1%.

Airborne Emissions and High-Level Nuclear Waste Comparison

Alger Delta Cooperative vs. regional average for the 12-month period ended 12/31/2005.

Type of emission/waste	Alger Delta Cooperative average lbs/MWh	A regional average of all generation in Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, and Wisconsin (9/30/07)
Sulfur Dioxide	0.8	11.3
Carbon Dioxide	2,435	2,090
Oxides of Nitrogen	13.7	3.3
High-level nuclear waste		0.0083

Note: Purchased electricity from several suppliers accounted for 100% of the electricity supplied by Alger Delta Cooperative during the period.

NonDiscrimination Statement

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bases apply to all programs).

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at 202-720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, or call toll-free 866-632-9992 (voice), or 800-877-8339 (TDD), or 866-377-8642 (relay voice users). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



Try the
Energy Depot
online home
energy audit



A Helping Hand on Energy Costs

Little houses don't use much energy, but family-size houses do. They have a lot of lightbulbs, many windows, and all kinds of places that simply leak energy. Your electric co-op has Energy Optimization programs that will help you **use electricity more efficiently**, and will even **pay you** to make the switch to more efficient products.

At www.michigan-energy.com you'll find an online package of programs called **Energy Depot® for Homes**, where you can perform your own **home energy audit**, calculate your energy costs and learn what you can do to reduce energy use by **hundreds of dollars a year**. Plus, you'll qualify for a **free energy improvement kit** that will help you immediately reduce your energy use.

The **Appliance Recycling** program is now available. **We'll pay you \$30** to take that old, working refrigerator—the one in the garage chilling your beer and pop—off your hands.

Plus, **rebates** for compact fluorescent lighting, water heaters, other appliances, and furnace blowers continue. **Combine them with federal and state rebates** and save more.

Commercial and Industrial (C&I) customers can earn **incentives** for the installation of energy-efficient equipment, such as high efficiency lighting, heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) equipment, motors/fans/pumps/drives, water heaters, refrigeration, food service equipment and controls.

See more information about your co-op's EO program elsewhere in this magazine.



You'll find all these programs, and more, at
www.michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319

Grappling with a Changing Energy Future

Electric co-ops search for new ways to keep electricity affordable in the face of federal carbon regulation. **Scott Gates**

Escalante Generating Station in Prewitt, NM, will utilize solar thermal technology—using mirrors to reflect sunlight to heat a liquid and create steam—to scale back the burning of coal. This illustration shows where the new solar facility will be located.



Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association

For decades, electric utilities across the country have relied on fossil fuels to do most of the grunt work, burning coal and natural gas to create steam, spin turbines, and generate electricity. While fossil fuels remain the most cost-effective way to create massive amounts of electricity, that may not be the case in the future.

Looming government regulations targeting climate change and carbon dioxide will add to the costs of operating fossil fuel-fired power plants. As the cost of generating electricity goes up, the cost to consumers inevitably goes up with it. As a result, electric cooperatives, along with other electric utilities, have launched several initiatives to limit carbon emissions while keeping electricity flowing and your electric bill affordable.

Looming Regulations

In December 2009, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) declared that six greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, are “endangering public health and welfare” of current and future generations. Emissions from motor vehicles of four of those greenhouse gases, including carbon dioxide, were also said to contribute to air pollution.

The action comes in response to a 2007 U.S. Supreme Court decision (*Massachusetts v. EPA*) that opened the door to regulation of greenhouse gases under the federal Clean Air Act.

“The Clean Air Act as written was never designed to deal with carbon dioxide, and it could be awkward at best and probably a disaster, at worst,” warns Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Coop-

erative Association (NRECA).

In addition to potential carbon regulation from EPA, Congress is mulling over its own set of regulations, and English urges electric co-op members to continue to ask that any resulting legislation be fair, affordable and technologically achievable. If passed, Congressional legislation should also preempt use of any other existing laws—like the Clean Air Act—in order to avoid a regulatory disaster that would only add to costs for consumers.

“Regulation of carbon dioxide as a pollutant will occur with or without congressional input,” English explains. “But Congress must not simply add new legislation on top of old regulations. Any climate change bill should become the roadmap—the single strategy—for reducing carbon dioxide emissions at federal, state and local levels. By staying engaged in the process, electric co-ops can have a measureable impact on the outcome in order to keep electric bills affordable.”

A Smarter Way of Doing Business

Once regulations are in place, whether under the Clean Air Act or from Congress, electric co-ops will be faced with the daunting task of meeting our nation’s growing electricity demands while finding cleaner ways to burn fossil fuels. Since coal, natural gas, and other fossil fuels currently account for more than 70 percent of all electricity generated in the United States, new technology will be key to keeping the lights on. Cleaner use of fossil fuels, an increased use of renewable energy, and a big commitment to energy efficiency

will all be necessary.

Simply using electricity more efficiently in residential, commercial and industrial sectors could lead to total energy savings of 236 billion kilowatt hours by 2030, according to the Electric Power Research Institute (EPRI), a non-profit, utility-sponsored consortium, whose members include electric co-ops. That’s a lot of power: equivalent to the electricity used in a year by New York City—14 times over.

A more efficient electric grid—often called a “smart grid”—could provide co-ops with a big payoff. More than 50 co-ops and public power districts in 15 states recently captured U.S. Department of Energy smart grid investment grants, a part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (better known as the federal stimulus bill).

The not-for-profit utilities are receiving more than \$215 million of the \$3.4 billion total awarded, amounts they will match with their own funds.

In addition, NRECA’s Cooperative Research Network (CRN) received a \$33.9 million smart grid grant for a wide-ranging project that joins 27 electric co-ops in 10 states. Local co-ops will match the grant money awarded, creating a pool of nearly \$68 million for technology development.

“Cooperatives, who are leading the industry in the deployment of smart meter infrastructure, have the potential to drive the national effort to understand which smart grid technologies work best and are cost effective,” remarks English.

Cooperatives’ use of advanced, or “smart,” electric meters, a fundamental smart grid

technology, jumped from 3.8 percent in 2006 to 16.4 percent in 2008—well above the industry as a whole—according to the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). Michigan co-ops are well ahead of the curve in installing advanced metering infrastructure (AMI) on their systems, and some 30 percent of co-ops nationally have begun to integrate AMI with other systems, according to NRECA. AMI includes devices and software applications that enable two-way communications with smart meters and provide electric utilities, using frequent meter reads, with near real-time oversight of system operations.

Smart meters, which help consumers save money by lowering co-op operating costs, will be a big part of CRN's project: Approximately 132,000 are planned for installation. Other cost-saving components include 18,000 load control switches; nearly 4,000 in-home displays, smart thermostats, and other personal energy management devices.

"This represents the first opportunity for a nationwide pilot that tests end-to-end smart grid connectivity from a power plant all the way to a consumer's home," says CRN Executive Director Ed Torrero.

Generating Innovation

While technology will get electricity to your home more efficiently and help consumers use it more efficiently, new methods of generating electricity are also being tested. Looming regulations make carbon dioxide-mitigation research a priority for any future fossil fuel-fired power plants.

Tri-State Generation and Transmission Association, a Westminster, CO-based generation & transmission co-op that supplies wholesale power to 44 local electric distribution co-ops in four western states, has recently joined with EPRI to host a study that will convert a 245-MW coal-fired power plant into a "hybrid plant."

Escalante Generating Station in Prewitt, NM, will utilize solar thermal technology—using mirrors to reflect sunlight to heat a liquid and create steam—to scale back the burning of coal when possible. The hybrid plant will work like this: on a hot summer afternoon, when the sun is scorching, air conditioners are on full-blast, and electricity demand peaking, solar generation will switch on so less coal needs to be burned. When the sun goes down and the flow of solar power begins to drop, the coal generation side of the plant steps up to keep electrons flowing.

In this way, a plant will emit less carbon dioxide while also using less fuel.

We need your help to avoid...

A "Glorious Mess"

Washington and politicians in general have slipped in the eyes of the American people. Recent polls show that only 37 percent express a favorable opinion of Congress, while 52 percent hold an unfavorable view. Positive opinions of Congress have been declining for some time.

Sometimes, the American people are justified in their dim view of Congress. The partisanship seems to be running at an all-time high as both parties believe they can "pick up seats in the next election." "Rule or ruin" seems to be the game plan on both sides of the aisle.

But there is one issue that appears to have bipartisan support: the EPA should not move forward with regulating carbon dioxide under the Clean Air Act without clear authorization by Congress. Although Congress has yet to pass legislation to control greenhouse gases, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering new rules and regulations under the Clean Air Act to limit greenhouse gas emissions from power plants, and that could lead to higher electric bills for everyone.

EPA bureaucrats want to use the Clean Air Act to enforce their new rules—but Congress never intended for EPA to address climate change this way. The Clean Air Act was not designed to address climate change. It's the wrong tool for the job and if allowed, says Michigan Congressman John Dingell, one of the primary authors of the Clean Air Act, it will result in a "glorious mess." I couldn't agree more.

This issue is the responsibility of Congress. It is not for bureaucrats at EPA to decide. This is where your help is needed. We must convince our members of Congress that they need to put the partisan wrangling aside and come together to rein in the EPA and their efforts to regulate without Congress-



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

sional direction. We know that regulating CO₂ will lead to higher energy costs. We have seen various estimates of those costs based on the various approaches. Some approaches are more manageable than others. Although we don't know which direction Congress will ultimately take,

cap-and-trade or a carbon tax, we do know that if EPA does move ahead on their own, the regulations will be more onerous and more costly than if Congress were to act.

Your representative in Congress and your U.S. senators need to know you're concerned about this issue. Tell your legislators that Congress needs to step in and prevent EPA from using the Clean Air Act as a tool for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. It's the role of Congress to determine any climate change policy—and to ensure that the impact of that policy is fair and keeps electricity affordable for all Americans.

Thankfully, some in Congress understand this. They've recently introduced legislation to stop EPA from acting. **You can tell our delegation to support this legislation**

by logging-on to OurEnergy.coop. By doing so, you will be telling your member of Congress that this issue is important, too important to let unelected EPA bureaucrats take the lead. Your emails and postcards can urge lawmakers to co-sponsor legislation to stop EPA from moving forward, because it's Congress' responsibility to determine how to best deal with greenhouse gases—while at the same time keeping electric bills affordable. Let's help Congress help themselves improve their record in the eyes of the American voter.



Our Energy, Our Future
A Dialogue With America
OurEnergy.coop

Lighting Innovations on the Horizon

A new lighting product quickly making gains in the market may one day overtake compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) and other types of lights in many applications. Light emitting diodes (LEDs) are being hailed as the next great innovation in lighting, promising long life, great light quality, and super efficiency. However, the ultimate promise of LED technology is still on the horizon.

The Cooperative Research Network (CRN) partnered with several electric cooperatives throughout the United States to test a variety of LED lamps as alternatives to conventional lighting or CFLs. Electric co-ops are optimistic about LED technology because of the following consumer benefits:

- ▶ LEDs last longer, perhaps for decades;
- ▶ LEDs can run on substantially less energy than CFLs or other fluorescents;
- ▶ With no mercury content, LEDs are more environmentally friendly;
- ▶ The products are rugged and more resistant to breakage;
- ▶ LEDs perform well in cold climates, especially outdoor applications;
- ▶ LEDs are dimmable and produce a more pleasing light.

As promising as the technology appears, the path to seeing store shelves stocked with reliable and affordable LEDs may be a long and rocky one. Limited light output and high initial prices are barriers to widespread LED use. In the current economy, consumers will not purchase LED lighting until manufacturers bring down costs significantly.

The Cost of an LED

An initial investment in an LED fixture is far greater than for an incandescent bulb—sometimes as much as 100 times more expensive when compared to a 100-watt Edison bulb priced at \$1. However, the total cost of ownership over its lifetime, including the energy cost to run the light and replacement costs, puts the LED in a more favorable light.

When LEDs are perfected, it should take about 50 incandescent bulbs, or eight to 10 CFLs, to equal the life of one LED lamp. LEDs also are expected to be about 20 times more efficient than an incandescent bulb.

The Edison lightbulb creates light by heating a filament, an inefficient process that actually produces more heat than light. LEDs, on the other hand, create light through



Comparing Lifecycle Lighting Costs

	Incandescent Bulb	LED Lamp
Useful Life	50,000 hours. Requires 50 replacements	50,000 hours. Requires no replacement
Wattage	100 watts	10 watts
Cost of bulb/lamp	\$1	\$100*
Energy costs to operate	\$500	\$54
Total Cost of Ownership	\$550	\$154

Source: Cooperative Research Network *Estimated cost of high end LED lamp. Even at this exaggerated cost the lifetime savings of the LED may make sense for some consumers.

GE's 7-Watt Energy Smart PAR20 LED, created for use in restaurants and other commercial settings, cuts energy use by 77 percent—but typically costs more than \$30. When you compare the lifecycle cost of a light source, the question is: Which would you rather pay—\$550 to use an incandescent bulb, or \$154 to use an LED?

a semiconductor chip mounted on an electronic circuit board. When energy passes through the chip, it creates bright light and almost no heat on the bulb itself.

LEDs are not entirely new. In fact, they are the familiar red or blue indicator lights on electronics panels, computers, and even traffic lights. Over the last two years, there have been technological strides in the development of white, high-brightness LEDs. This opens opportunities for much broader lighting applications within our homes, offices, and for outdoor street lighting. Several electric co-ops are working with CRN to test LED

lamps in parking lots, roadways, farms and schools. The test results will give co-ops a strong voice with manufacturers in creating new LED lamps that will be less expensive, last longer, and benefit consumers.

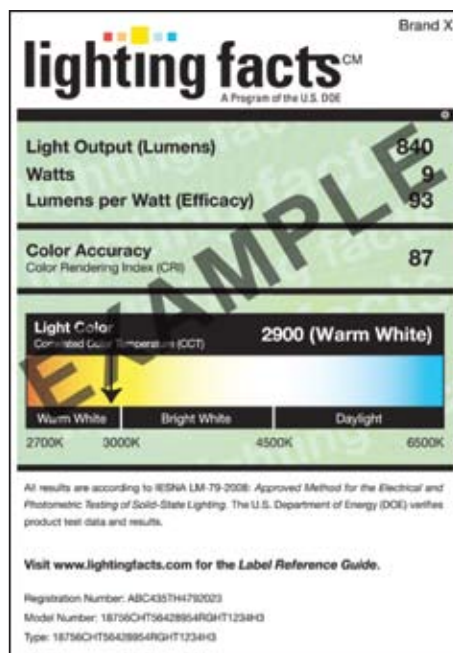
A Strong Word of Caution

Poor quality LED products are flooding the marketplace and are easily purchased on several well-known websites and through big box retailers. Many products promising to be “good for the planet” are not as environmentally friendly as claimed. Several of these products are manufactured outside the United States with components that produce low light levels, don't last long, or have exaggerated energy-saving claims.

With LED lamps, you get what you pay for. A product that costs \$15 is likely to provide less light and have a shorter life than one that costs \$50. Even high-quality LED lamps are in a relatively early stage of development and few have undergone rigorous testing.

The Department of Energy (DOE) is establishing Energy Star® standards for LEDs. Until this happens, DOE encourages consumers to become educated before investing in LEDs and to look for the SSL Quality Advocate label (see left), which is similar to the one used by the FDA for food labeling.

LED lighting holds a great deal of promise. However, most ready-for-prime-time LED products are in only a few niche applications, such as task and display case lighting. General illumination lights are still a work in progress. Smart consumers will do a little homework before purchasing LED lights.



Sample of what a SSL (Solid-State Lighting) Quality Advocate label looks like.

SOY

April is National Soyfoods Month

Eating soyfoods daily has many health benefits:

- Protection against osteoporosis
- Alleviation of menopausal symptoms
- Make room for soyfoods on your plate, a great way to support your health and Michigan agriculture.
- Prevention of certain cancers
- Help with lowering cholesterol

Better Bran Muffins

- 1 ¼ cups flour
- ½ cup soy flour
- 1 cup bran flake cereal
- ½ cup brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- ¾ teaspoon ground cinnamon
- ⅛ teaspoon ground cloves
- 2 slightly beaten eggs
- ⅔ cup soymilk
- ½ cup raisins
- ¼ cup soyoil



Spray muffin pan with vegetable cooking spray or line with paper baking cups. Stir together all dry ingredients. Combine eggs, soymilk and soyoil. Add egg mixture to flour mixture; stir until moistened. Fold in raisins. Fill muffin pan ⅔ full.

Bake in a 400°F oven for 15-20 minutes. Yield: 12 muffins.

Per serving (1 muffin): 134 calories, 4.7 grams protein, 26.4 grams carbohydrates, 6.7 grams total fat, 0.8 grams saturated fat, 30 mg cholesterol, 188 mg sodium. Source: www.soyfoods.com/recipes



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Abby

Two-year old Toad was left by the roadside, so dirty and matted that he had open sores.

Five-year old Chester was discovered lying in a yard with his leg shattered from a shotgun blast.

Had these victims been human, the people responsible for such cruelty would have faced criminal prosecution. But these were dogs.

Lucky for Toad and Chester, there are people like Pauline Hancock of Atlanta, MI, and Sandy Bassett of Caro. With other dedicated volunteers, they care for thousands of unwanted and injured pets while seeking “forever homes” for them.

Elk Country Animal Shelter

For years, the Montmorency County Sheriff’s Department animal control section provided the only stray dog shelter in Atlanta. The animals had to be housed outdoors and minimal care was available.

In fall 2002, Pauline Hancock, a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op member, held a meeting with fellow citizens and started a volunteer group called the Elk Country Animal Shelter (ECAS). The volunteers helped at the shelter with cleaning, vaccinations and promoting adoptions.

In April 2009, ECAS opened its own facility after volunteers raised enough funds to renovate a building next to the Sheriff’s Department.

Through strictly volunteer efforts, Pauline explains, “they created something from nothing with only their hearts, brains and hands.” About 30 volunteers now work at the shelter, and many more help with fundraising. As executive director, Pauline also sits on the board of directors, and her husband Dave chairs the building committee.

Since opening, the new shelter has already accepted 206 dogs, 131 cats, and five other animals, including a pet rat named Stuart. So far, 78 dogs, 88 cats, and all the other animals, including Stuart, have been adopted.

“We’re good at what we do,” Pauline explains. ECAS provides vaccinations, worm-

Left: Sandy Bassett, of Caro, cuddles puppies she is sheltering at her home until they can be adopted to “forever homes.”

RESCUE ME

Two Country Lines 2009 Volunteer of the Year nominees create ‘Happy Tails.’ **Linda Kotzian**



Elvira



Jena



John and Jean



Photos-Pet Friendz

Chewy

ing, and basic care. Local veterinarians volunteer to provide rabies vaccines, microchip all the animals, and spay or neuter them at no charge before they are adopted.

Pauline describes Montmorency County as one of the poorest in Michigan. "But that doesn't stop the help from coming to us," she adds, and is grateful for that.

Pauline first rescued a litter of barn kittens when she was 12. "I loved animals even when I was little and always thought it was an honor to be liked by them," she says.

Cathy Hehir, a fellow volunteer who adopted a golden retriever says, "Pauline is a tiny powerhouse of a woman who knows how to relate to animals, even injured and frightened ones. She's our own little 'dog whisperer.'"

Pauline acknowledges how difficult it is to see animals in pain and afraid, but the breakthrough can be as simple as a friendly lick on the hand, and the work can also bring unexpected smiles. While she and Dave were bathing a rabbit named Emily, they noticed what appeared to be two tumors on the animal's underside. It turns out they weren't tumors, and Emily was renamed Elmer.

Pauline and Dave adopted Elmer, plus three dogs, a cockatiel, and three cats, and she still says the best part of their work is seeing an animal placed in a "forever home." It benefits the animal *and* enriches the life of the person who adopts.

Cass River Pet Friendz

Sandy Bassett, a Great Lakes Energy Co-op member, brought so many animals home when she was little that her parents threatened to banish her.

As an adult, she took early retirement and began a "critter sitter" business in Caro. But people began bringing her strays, and so she started trying to find homes for them, too.

By 2001, Sandy and a group of volunteers started a rescue operation called Cass River Pet Friendz. Unlike most shelters, rescue organization volunteers generally care for animals in their own homes. At Pet Friendz, just five people care for the animals, handle paperwork, and hold fundraisers.

Since 2001, Sandy has cycled over 1,842 animals through her home, and adopted two

shih tzus, Charley and Marley.

Since cats reproduce in large numbers if not fixed, they are the largest challenge in time and expenses. With an unemployment rate of 17 percent locally, Sandy worries about the group's revenues.

"Money is down and calls for assistance are way up," she reports. Grants subsidize local fundraising, but they often come earmarked for spaying and neutering, so Sandy hesitates to label the group as a "no kill" refuge.

"We have to make hard choices that can result in euthanasia if an animal is vicious or not trainable," she explains. "We try to do the best thing for the animal, but there are many sleepless nights."

"No one except those who work with her understand the sacrifices Sandy has made to follow her heart with this endeavor," says Susan Green, a fellow volunteer.

Cindy Fox, who's miniature Schnauzer, Sully, is a steady customer of Sandy's pet day care, became a Pet Friendz volunteer out of admiration for Sandy. Eight years ago, Cindy brought a grimy dog to Sandy after finding him running loose. When Cindy visited a few days later, a beautifully groomed dog greeted her—it was Sully, and she adopted him.

As for Toad and Chester...

A truck driving couple adopted Toad after Sandy transformed him from a mass of tangled fur into a beautiful shih tzu. They bring Toad to visit her when they pass through.

Chester's leg was amputated, and the Hancocks adopted him. Pauline says the Lab-mix dog "can run like crazy" even with just three legs.

To Pauline and Sandy, the best happy endings come with tails.

Donkeys Need Friends, Too

There are many animals that need our help, but one of the more unique rescue operations we found in Michigan is for donkeys.

Sharon Windsor is the founder of Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue, where she currently shelters nearly 70 of all types on her farm near Dansville. With a few volunteers to help, she finds homes for about 20-25 per year.

Why? "Because they are the most loving, intelligent, fun, and given enough time and patience, the most forgiving of any creature I have ever met," she explains. Donkeys are very intelligent, she says, and due to their cautious, not stubborn, nature they cannot be forced to do anything they feel is unsafe.

"One of the most loving donkeys here was the victim of a shooting," Windsor

adds, and another was so abused her only defense was to kick at anyone who came near because she was too lame to run away from her tormenters. Others were loved pets, but due to an owner's ill health or death they needed new homes. Still others come from auctions, a law enforcement seizure, or from people that never should have gotten a donkey in the first place.

If you have a donkey(s) you want to surrender, Turning Pointe is happy to welcome your animal and find it a new home.

If adopting a donkey just doesn't work, sponsoring one with a donation makes a unique gift for an animal lover, who will be sent regular news and pictures of their rescued donkey. Contact Sharon Windsor, as noted in the box below.



Photo-Sharon Windsor

Joe Blow

Elk Country Animal Shelter, Atlanta
989-785-3738
elkcountrysanctuary.org

Cass River Pet Friendz, Caro
P.O. Box 513, Caro, MI 48723-0513
petfriendz.org

Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue
517-623-0000
turningpointedonkeyrescue.org

Adoption/Find a Shelter/Your Area:
adoptapet.com
800-728-3273

Early Intervention Improves Young Lives

At the risk of sounding hopelessly uncool, I confess that every so often I long to turn back the clock for today's children. Back to a time when families had fewer things, but more time together. When children sought adventure in family-friendly neighborhoods. When teens talked to people in the room, undistracted by digital "chats."

But then I remember at least one thing I don't miss about raising and teaching children in the "old days." We used to wait for children to fail before we'd take much action to improve their chances of success. "Don't worry," we'd tell parents. "What will be, will be. Let's wait and see if things get better on their own."

These days, we know better. We know that if a child experiences a developmental or learning delay, this can compound over time. By intervening early with appropriate therapies for children and families, we minimize these delays and maximize our kids' chances of reaching normal milestones in development and learning.

"Don't worry, but don't wait," we tell parents today. And this philosophy is making all the difference, both before and during their days at school.

Reaching the Youngest Learners

Two free services exist in counties across Michigan to help young children who may not seem to be growing, developing or learning at the same pace as others their age. Early On provides services and support to infants and toddlers up to age three.

Project Find serves children ages three and older by making families aware of special education supports and services provided in public schools. Both programs offer answers to questions parents may have, and deliver services and support to children who qualify.

Early On is a federally-funded system of early intervention services under Part C of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Project Find is funded under Part B of the same act through a grant from the Michigan Department of Education. Both programs

are coordinated by Michigan's intermediate school districts or regional service agencies.

Early On intervention involves specialized education and therapy services for the child, as well as support for the whole family through information, advocacy and emotional support. The process may begin with a telephone call from a parent, referral from a physician, or a visit in the hospital when a child is born. It may lead to a home visit to learn more about the child's needs.

If the child needs help, Early On staff will tell parents how to get it at little or no cost. Infants or toddlers up to three years old may qualify for speech services, physical or occupational therapy, or other support. Services are often delivered directly to the child at home, and parents and caregivers are also given tips and support on how to assist the child.

Anyone who has concerns about an infant or toddler's development, behavior, speech and language, physical impairment or delay, can visit 1800EarlyOn.org or call 800-EARLY-ON.

Project Find addresses concerns about children or youth over age three. Project Find refers individuals up to 26 years of age for a free evaluation to help identify physical, social, emotional or learning conditions that prevent a young person from learning in school. The evaluation is the first step in getting the help he or she needs. These young people may be eligible for free special education services provided by Michigan public schools.

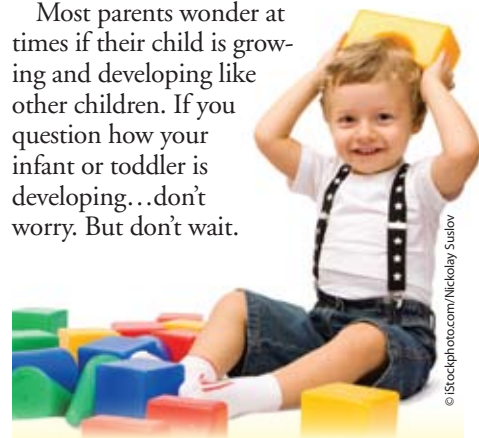
Early intervention is an important factor in special education for children with disabilities. Research during the 1960s and '70s showed that the earlier children received special education, the better their outcomes. Research also showed that families who were supported earlier were more empowered to advocate for their child later on.

In Michigan, eligible children, youth and young adults may receive special educational services from birth through 25 years of age. And by the way, all Michigan's children with disabilities, including those who are homeless or wards of the State, and who attend private schools, regardless of the severity of

their disabilities, are eligible under the law for special education services.

Anyone can make a referral for a Project Find evaluation. A free evaluation is available for individuals from birth to age 26. All information contained in the evaluation and educational program is confidential. To learn more, visit ProjectFindMichigan.org or call 800-252-0052.

Most parents wonder at times if their child is growing and developing like other children. If you question how your infant or toddler is developing...don't worry. But don't wait.



Step-by-step guide to your baby's growth

By 3 Months, Does your baby...

- Roll from side to side?
- Play with her hands?
- Laugh out loud?
- Look at a rattle?

By 6 Months, Does your baby...

- Pass things from one hand to the other?
- Look at herself in the mirror?
- Sit up with little support?
- Roll over?

By 12 Months, Does your baby...

- Wave goodbye?
- Drink from a cup without help?
- Stand alone for at least two seconds?
- Use a few short words like "mama?"

By 24 Months, Does your toddler...

- Walk and run well?
- Handle a spoon well?
- Ask for things by name?
- Use two or three words together?

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Update: Due to the tremendous success of the Geothermal Homeowners Stimulus Event, WaterFurnace has extended the program to March 31st! Call your local WaterFurnace dealer today, or visit waterfurnace.com/event to learn more.

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Berrien Springs

WaterFurnace Michiana
(269) 473-5667

Big Rapids

Stratz Heating & Cooling
(231) 796-3717

Caro

All-Temp Heating
(989) 673-5557

Charlevoix

Great Lakes Plumbing & Htg
(231) 547-1035

Cheboygan

Jim's Handyman
(231) 627-7533

Carsonville

Certified Temperature Innovations
(810) 300-7748

DeWitt

S & J Htg & Clg
(517) 669-3705

Gaylord

Family Htg & Clg
(989) 732-8099

Grand Rapids

Montgomery Htg & Clg
(616) 459-0261

Hart

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Harbor Springs

Great Lakes Plumbing & Htg
(231) 526-6859

Ionia

Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

Lapeer

Porter & Heckman
(810) 664-8576

Michigan Center

Comfort 1 Heating /
Lenawee Heating
(517) 764-1500

Mount Pleasant

Walton's Htg & Clg
(989) 772-4822

Muskegon

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(800) 922-3045

Petoskey

Great Lakes Plumbing & Htg
(231) 347-3900

Palms

Lakeshore Improvements
(989) 864-3833

Traverse City

D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000

Webberville

Applegate Home Comfort
(800) 377-2272

Zeeland

Mast Heating
(616) 772-2252

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TUNA



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Hot Crossed Tuna with Cucumber Sauce

2 6 1/2-7 oz. cans tuna, drained
 1 10-oz. pkg. frozen peas, thawed
 1 c. shredded sharp cheddar cheese
 1 c. diced celery
 1/2 c. bread crumbs
 1/4 c. chopped onion
 1/4 t. salt
 Dash pepper
 1 c. mayonnaise or salad dressing
 8 oz. pkg. crescent rolls

Cucumber Sauce:

1/2 c. mayonnaise or salad dressing
 1/2 c. sour cream

1/2 c. chopped cucumber
 1 T. chives
 1 t. parsley
 1/4 t. dill weed

Combine sauce ingredients; mix well and chill until casserole is ready. Combine all casserole ingredients, except rolls; mix well. Spoon into a 7x10-inch baking dish. Separate dough into 2 rectangles. Press perforations to seal. Cut into 4 long and 8 short strips. Place over tuna mixture in a lattice design. Brush lightly with a little salad dressing and sprinkle with sesame seeds if desired. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes. Serve with chilled cucumber sauce.

Sharon Walcott, Grandville

Tuna Cakes

2 6-oz. cans light tuna in water, drained
 1 pkg. stuffing mix for chicken
 1 c. shredded cheddar cheese
 1/2 c. shredded carrots
 1/3 c. mayonnaise
 2 T. pickle relish
 3/4 c. water

Mix all ingredients, cover and refrigerate for 10 minutes. Heat 3 tablespoons oil, in a skillet, on medium heat. Scoop tuna mixture into a skillet with an ice cream scoop. Flatten cakes, cook 3-4 minutes on each side or until golden brown on both sides. Yields 6 servings.

Mary Waterbury, Fenton

Tuna Fish Pie With Cheese Roll Crust

Cheese Roll Crust:
 1 1/2 c. flour
 3 t. baking powder
 1/2 t. salt
 dash cayenne pepper
 3 T. shortening
 1/2 c. milk
 3/4 c. grated cheddar cheese, or other
 2 pimentos, chopped

Combine flour, baking powder, salt, pepper, shortening and milk. Mix with a fork until a soft dough forms. Roll dough into an 8x12-inch rectangle. Top with cheese and pimentos. Roll up jelly-roll style. Cut into 8 slices; flatten slightly.

Tuna Fish Pie:

1/2 c. sliced green pepper
 1 onion sliced
 3 T. butter
 6 T. flour
 1/2 t. salt
 3 c. milk
 1 lg. can tuna, drained
 1 T. lemon juice
 grated cheddar cheese, or other

In a saucepan, melt butter. Add peppers and onions; cook until brown. Add flour and salt; blend. Add milk slowly, stirring constantly. Boil 2 minutes. Add tuna and lemon juice. Pour into a 9x13-inch baking dish. Top with prepared cheese rolls. Cover with grated cheese; bake at 450° for 30 minutes.

Sylvia Behrens,
 DeTour Village

Crustless Tuna Quiche

1 T. butter
 1/3 c. chopped onion
 1/4 c. chopped red or green pepper*
 4 eggs
 3 T. flour
 1/4 t. salt
 1/8 t. pepper
 1 1/2 c. milk
 1 1/2 c. shredded cheddar cheese
 1 6 1/2-oz. can tuna in water, drained and flaked

Melt butter in a small skillet. Sauté onion and pepper until tender, about 3 minutes. Combine eggs, flour and salt in a medium-sized mixing bowl; beat until well-blended. Stir in milk; add cheese, tuna and sautéed vegetables; mix well. Pour into a well-buttered 9-inch pie plate. Bake at 350° for 45-50 minutes or until knife inserted near center comes out clean. Cool 10 minutes before serving. *Pimento, carrots or mushrooms can be substituted for peppers.

Olivia Hayward,
 South Boardman

Tuna Florentine

6 T. butter or margarine
 1/2 c. chopped onion
 1/4 c. flour
 1/2 t. salt
 dash nutmeg
 2 c. milk
 6 oz. Gruyère cheese, shredded
 2 7-oz. cans tuna, drained and flaked
 2 10-oz. pkgs. frozen, chopped spinach, thawed and drained
 1/2 c. fine dry bread crumbs
 1/4 c. grated Parmesan cheese

Melt butter or margarine in a medium-size saucepan; sauté onion just until soft. Stir in flour, salt and nutmeg; cook, stirring constantly, just until bubbly. Stir in milk; continue cooking and stirring until sauce thickens and bubbles, about 1 minute. Remove from heat. Stir in shredded cheese just until melted; add tuna. Place spinach in the bottom of a lightly greased 6-cup baking dish. Spoon tuna-cheese mixture over top; top with crumbs and parmesan cheese. Bake at 350° for 25 minutes or until golden. Yield 8 servings.

Nancy Krzykwa, Alto

Tuna Fish Dip

1 12-oz. can tuna fish, drained
8 oz. cream cheese
1/4 c. soy sauce
1 med. onion, finely diced
1 T. parsley flakes
1/4 c. chopped nuts

Combine all ingredients, except nuts, in a bowl; mix well. Shape mixture into a ball and roll in nuts. Chill well. Serve with crackers or chips.

Dorothy Hessell,
New Haven

Tuna Crunch

1 c. chopped celery
1/2 c. chopped onion
1 T. butter
1 T. water
1 can cream of mushroom soup
3/4 c. water
6 oz. can tuna, drained and flaked
3 oz. can Chinese noodles
1/2 c. frozen peas

In a saucepan, sauté celery and onion in butter and 1 tablespoon water until tender. Add soup, water, tuna, noodles and peas; mix well. Place mixture in a buttered, 1 1/2-quart casserole dish. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 30 minutes.

Connie Foltz, McMillan

Broccoli and Tuna Roll-ups

1 can cream of mushroom soup
1 c. milk
1 12-oz. can tuna in water, drained and flaked
1 10-oz. pkg. frozen broccoli florets, thawed and drained
1 1/2 c. shredded cheddar cheese, divided
1 lg. can French-fried onions
6 super-sized flour tortillas

Combine soup and milk; set aside. Combine tuna, broccoli, 1 cup cheese and 1/2 can onions; stir in 3/4 cup soup mixture. Divide the tuna mixture into the tortillas and roll up. Place seam-side down in a lightly greased, 9x13-inch pan. Pour remainder of soup mixture over the tortillas. Cover with foil and bake at 350° for 35 minutes. Top with remaining cheese and onion; bake uncovered 5-7 minutes longer, until onions are brown and cheese is melted.

Lynn Bischof, Traverse City

Mashed Potato Tuna Patties

2-3 c. mashed potatoes
6 oz. can tuna, drained
1 sm. onion, diced
flour



Combine potatoes, tuna and onion. Form into balls and roll in flour. Flatten balls into patties. In a skillet with a bit of oil, fry patties on both sides until crispy.

Beverly Callewaert, Hersey

Tuna Tulips

Biscuit dough:
2 c. flour
1/3 c. shortening
3 t. baking powder
3/4 c. milk
1/2 t. salt

Tuna filling:
1 c. chunk tuna
1 c. diced celery
1/4 c. salted peanuts
1/2 c. mayonnaise
1 T. lemon juice
1 t. grated onion

To prepare dough, stir dry ingredients and shortening together until mixture forms coarse crumbs. Add milk; stir with fork until blended. Turn mixture onto a board and knead 10 or 12 times. Roll dough 1/2-inch thick, forming a 12x18-inch rectangle. Cut into six squares. Place squares into a greased muffin tin. Combine filling ingredients; mix well. Spoon mixture into dough-lined muffin tin. Fold corners over and seal by pinching tops together. Bake at 400° for 15-20 minutes until brown.

Velma Mahler, Berrien Springs

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Curried Tuna

1/4 c. butter
2 t. curry powder
2 green onions, with tops, thinly sliced
3 c. cooked rice
1/4 c. hot water
1/2 t. salt
1/4 t. ground ginger
1/8 t. garlic powder
1/8 t. ground red pepper
1 12 1/2-oz. can albacore tuna in water, drained

1 hard-boiled egg, chopped
1 T. parsley

In a large skillet, over medium heat, cook and stir butter, curry powder and onions. Stir in rice, water, salt, ginger, garlic powder, red pepper and tuna. Cook and stir until tuna is hot, about 5 minutes. Sprinkle with egg and parsley.

Cheryl Murray, Armada

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Delightful, Delectable

Daylilies



Photo - PerennialResource.com

You can have your flowers and eat them, too, with this hardy perennial.

The daylily (*Hemerocallis* species) is an old-time favorite that grows in all climates. Early settlers carried it to all ends of America because of its beauty, endurance and adaptability to a wide range of soils, and for another practical reason: It's edible.

Today, more and more gardeners are rediscovering the delicious daylily. Not to be confused with true lilies, daylilies grow from tuberous, fleshy roots rather than bulbs. Daylilies have been eaten for centuries in Asia, where they originated.

During summer, the daylily buds and blossoms are the sweetest parts—particularly the yellow and orange, which contain more vitamins A and C than beans. Raw or boiled, stir-fried or steamed, they can be eaten with other vegetables. With their savory taste and gelatinous consistency, the blossoms add a flowery zest to soups and vegetable dishes.

Blossoms may also be dipped in a light batter of flour and water and fried. Unopened flowers are boiled 3 to 4 minutes, then served with butter and salt or dipped in egg batter and quickly fried golden-brown in hot oil. Dried petals are an ingredient in Chinese hot-and-sour soup.

At almost any time, roots can be eaten raw

or added to salads, soups and stews. Boiled, stir-fried or creamed, they can be served as a side dish to substitute starches such as peas or potatoes. The flavor is similar to asparagus.

A strong word of caution: Some people are allergic or otherwise sensitive to daylilies, just as they can be to other vegetables. When first sampling any part, try only a small bite, and do so only when other people are around. Don't swallow if it tastes bad. If it tastes good, then wait at least an hour before trying again, and then only a small amount.

Tolerating freezes, hot temperatures, dry spells and dampness, the hardy daylily thrives in full sun, semi-shade, in containers, in the yard, or on a balcony. Almost any soil works, but for best results, add plenty of compost or other well-rotted organic material. Keep them moist during the flowering season. Side dressings of compost or seasoned manure can improve performance. Usually they respond very well to fertilizer.

The American Hemerocallis Society (AHS), the top authority on daylilies, recommends selection of varieties to plant from winners of its Popularity Poll. Winners are judged annually across the nation in each AHS region.

Winners from each region perform well in each geographic area. For the 2009 winners, access daylilies.org/PopPoll/2009. Visit

daylilies.org/AHSreg.html for a map of the 15 AHS regions. Winners can be found at gardening centers nationwide. Local daylily clubs are a good source of cultural information for specific locations, and clubs are listed for each region.

Planting and Care

In northern areas, daylilies should be planted six weeks before the first hard frost, typically by Sept. 1. Southern growers may be able to plant during winter. Over-wintering in containers or raised beds is not advised in extremely cold climates, such as USDA hardiness zone 5 and colder.

Each plant needs about 2 feet of space, as they multiply rapidly and form large clumps. Those planted in winter usually flower the first season and reach full bloom during the second and third year.

The time to feed is when plants show new growth after dormancy, usually March. If possible, it is also a good idea to fertilize daylilies a second time, a few weeks after they finish blooming.

You can safely leave a daylily clump to grow for 10-15 years. Dividing is simply a matter of digging up, cutting into quarters with a spade or sharp knife, then replanting separately.

Apart from their tastiness and beauty, daylilies are resistant to most pests and diseases, and are sold in nearly every shade of the rainbow, with various forms and bloomtimes.

More than 65,000 varieties of daylilies have been bred since the early 1900s, when only yellow, orange and rusty reds were available. Modern hybrids offer a wide range of heights, a broader spectrum of colors and patterns, more robust flowers of varying sizes, and higher bud counts.

Daylily Resources

Many daylily recipes can be found on the internet, for example through Recycled Gardens, a division of POPPA Inc., at poppainc.org/pdfs/Daylily_recipes.pdf.

The American Hemerocallis Society publishes *The Daylily Journal*, a quarterly magazine featuring new cultivars, how-to articles on care, feeding, hybridizing and more. Visit their website at daylilies.org for membership details and access to a wealth of resources, including retailers and a list of the society's Daylily Display Gardens.

GrowDesignerPlants.com is another good information source, and daylilies also ship well by mail order.

John Bruce is an editor, writer and gardener.

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Recessed Lighting is More Efficient Than Ever

Recessed lights have been popular for decades, and remain the lighting fixture of choice for overhead lighting. As with any other home product, some recessed lights are more energy efficient than others. Efficient options can use 80 percent less electricity than inefficient versions which provide the same amount of light output with practically the same appearance.

Recessed light fixtures are unique because they penetrate and are mounted in the ceiling of a room. From an energy conservation standpoint, this is not an issue when installed in the first floor ceiling of a two-story house. However, if fixtures are installed in the second-story ceiling or the first floor ceiling of a one-story house, a hole is created between a conditioned living area and the open, unconditioned attic area.

Without an efficient design and proper installation, a recessed lighting fixture can allow conditioned air to leak out of the house. This is particularly true during winter, when the warmer air inside a home naturally rises to the ceiling. This not only wastes energy, but may create a chilly draft in rooms where cold outdoor air leaks indoors.

There are new energy-efficient recessed light designs that meet Energy Star standards. All of these fixtures use fluorescent light sources instead of inefficient incandescent bulbs. This fact alone reduces electricity consumption by 75 percent. The inside surface of the new fixtures is also more reflective, which reduces the amount of light trapped and dissipated inside a fixture before ever getting into a room.

For fixtures in ceilings where indoor air leakage seems likely, select a new airtight design with a sealed canister. When installed properly, this unit forms an airtight seal between the ceiling and the fixture. These types of fixtures are most often used in ceilings beneath an unconditioned attic, but they are also effective for unheated basement ceilings,



Juno angular recessed lights fit a sloped ceiling for downlighting that highlights a home's architectural design features.

tion void increases heat loss from the room below even if the installation is airtight.

When installing recessed light fixtures yourself, first determine your lighting goals. To brighten an entire room, downlighting can be quite effective. In a normal-height ceiling, a 4-foot spacing provides an even lighting pattern at floor level. Typical 6-inch-diameter fluorescent fixed vertical fixtures work well for downlighting. If you'd like to dim some of the lights, consider installing a second circuit and dimmer switch with incandescent bulbs in those fixtures.

For task lighting, a single fixed vertical unit directly over the work area seems effective. Wall-wash recessed lighting can be used to accent a painting or other wall hangings. An eyeball recessed light is best for this application because the light path can be adjusted. For a sloped cathedral ceiling, install an angular recessed fixture—preferably an IC model, since it will contact with ceiling insulation.

It's not difficult to install recessed lighting fixtures by yourself. For an attractive, efficient installation, cut the mounting holes the exact size recommended by the manufacturer.

This makes it much easier to create a good seal between the fixture and the ceiling. Before drilling and cutting holes, make sure your fixture layout clears all the floor joists.

The following companies offer efficient recessed fixtures: Capri Lighting, 800-234-1890, caprilighting.com; Cooper Lighting, 770-486-4800, cooperlighting.com; Juno Lighting, 847-827-9880, junolighting.com; Lightolier, 800-215-1068, lightolier.com; and Sea Gull Lighting, 800-347-5483, seagulllighting.com.

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

minimizing drafts between floors.

As a safety note, if you already have recessed lighting in your home, do not go into the attic and wrap them with insulation to try to save energy. Wrapping older fixtures with insulation can hold in too much heat, particularly when standard incandescent bulbs are used. These fixtures are not designed to be airtight and the excess heat buildup can become an electrical or fire hazard.

If recessed lighting will be installed in a ceiling under an insulated attic floor, select an insulation contact-rated (IC) design. These are designed to touch insulation without overheating the fixture. When installing new non-IC fixtures, the insulation must be kept away from the canister. This insula-

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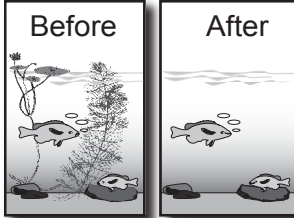


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Whoooooo Dat?

A nosy neighbor inquires of our cook.



One of our neighbors tends to be a little nosy. “Who-cooks-for-you, who-cooks-for-you-all,” our inquisitive backyard questioner asks.

That perennial curiosity about our chef tells us that a barred owl has taken up residence in our wooded acres. He’d been gone for awhile, but since we had heard the calls of a great horned owl late this summer, we wouldn’t really expect to hear the barred owl doing any talking. If this owl has one enemy to worry about, it is the great horned one, and a wise owl knows it must keep quiet when the big guy is around less it becomes the main course for the larger owl, a ruthless predator of anything edible that gets its attention.

But the woods had been silent of *any* owl talk in recent months, until the other night when we heard him asking that question about who is preparing our meals. We are happy to welcome him back, since this is the time of the year when mice and voles seem to find ways to get inside our house as they sense spring coming.

Between setting a Have-A-Hart® live trap or putting out De-Con®, we hunted for the hole they are getting through, but with a little luck our barred owl friend will head them off at the pass. These owls love dining on small rodents. It is nice to know the barred one is back, since we have gone way overboard on our De-Con budget. A barred owl can consume a lot of mice and voles before they ever get a chance to snuggle in with us.

This owl’s voice is constant, a resonant series of eight or nine hoots—“hoo-hoo-to-hoo, hoo-hoo-to-hoo-aw”—in a raucous, far-carrying sound.

Strix varia (there go those Latin name tags again) is a large, typical owl that also goes by many names besides the barred owl, including night hooter, rain owl, wood owl, and striped owl, but is probably known best as the hoot owl.

Its breeding habitat is dense woods across Canada, the eastern United States, and south to Central America. Its nest is often in a tree cavity, but it may also take over an old nesting site used by a crow or squirrel. It is a permanent resident, but may wander after the nesting season.

It has a pale face with dark rings around dark eyes, and a yellow bill. The under parts are light with brown streaks and the upper parts are mottled brown with brown bars on the chest. The legs and feet are covered in feathers up to the talons. This owl does not have ear tufts, a distinction from the short-eared owl. In size, it ranges from 17-20 inches in body length, with a wingspan between 39 and 43 inches, and weight from 16 to over 37 ounces. The sexes look alike in plumage, with the female larger.

Barred owls hunt by waiting on a high perch at night, or flying through the woods and swooping down on their prey. They may also hunt near dawn or dusk. They mainly eat small mammals, such as mice, rabbits and small birds. Of the North American owls, they are the species most likely to be active during the day, especially when raising their chicks.

The humans most familiar with the barred owl are turkey hunters, many of whom learn to call and imitate this owl as a way to get a wild turkey to respond in the early morning roosts. Knowing how to “owl hoot” is an important skill for the turkey hunter to master.

After his absence from our woods, it was good to the barred owl once more asking about our chef. I guess you could say I really ‘give a hoot’ about this neighbor, even if he’s a little nosy.



Photo - Andree Sierra, DrePhotography.net

Hooked

Producing locally-crafted works of art gives an economic boost to this isolated “Up North” area. **Linda Siros**

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

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

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

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

craftsmanship.

“They’re really heirloom pieces,” explains Cheryl Reed, one of the Rug Works’ organizers. The pictorial rugs are created by area artisans using punch-needle tapestry with regionally harvested wool that is dyed and custom designed on-site.

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

your foot,” Reed continues.

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

Ties to the local community are a crucial part of “our bigger mission of education,” says Reed. They’ve forged an informal partnership with North Central Michigan College in Petoskey through art instructor Shanna Robinson, who developed classes in dyeing and weaving. Several Rug Works members have enrolled in Robinson’s fiber classes so they can take those skills back to the workshop.

“People don’t realize how much this place is affecting the people up here in the village,” adds VanderZee. As an area native, she sees the ripple effect of Rug Works’ activities. Besides the 25 people it employs, she notes several local farms, people who process the wool, and the many satisfied customers among those who are benefiting. Using quality materials, new skills and integrity, these dedicated locals are helping themselves while producing truly regional artworks.

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

Cross Village Rug Works, Lakeshore Drive, 231-526-7849, crossvillagerugworks.com. Hours: winter M-T-TH-FRI-SAT, 11–4; summer (Memorial Day) daily, 11–7.



Photo - Andree Sierra



Photo - Linda Siros

Top, left: Weaving apprentice Jamie Kornmeier demonstrates weaving that can incorporate washed wool (dyed or natural). **Above:** The three-trout and dragonfly rugs are originals by the Rug Works’ design team.

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Killing

Energy Vampires



Energy parasites are costing you hundreds of dollars a year.

Brian Sloboda

Typical Power Consumption of Household Items in Watts

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

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

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

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

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

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

Common energy vampires include:

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Tracking the Electricity You Use

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

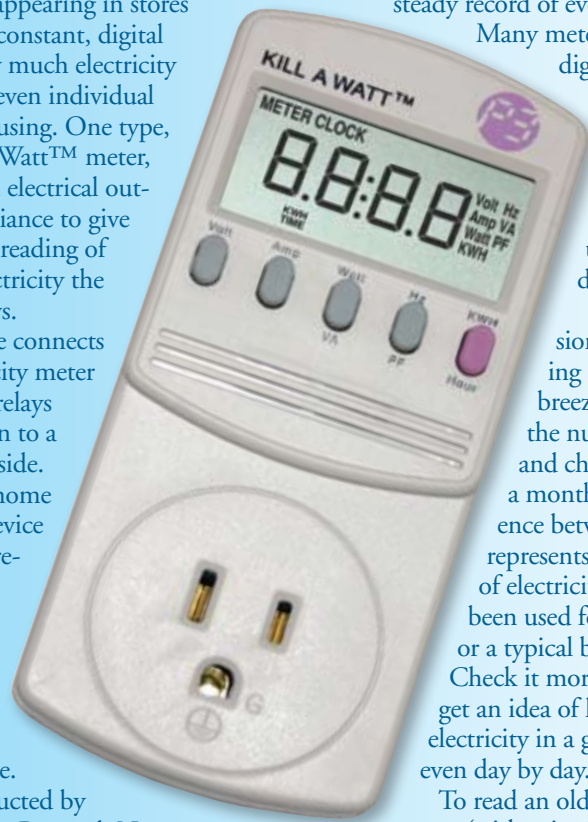
Many meters today are digital, replacing the older—though still reliable—design that uses spinning disks and dials.

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

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

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

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



Are You Tweeting Yet?

My son Jon took the train up from Chicago a few weekends ago. We ate out, cooked together, saw the movie *Crazy Heart*, watched the Olympics and a Spartan basketball game on TV, and capped the weekend with a terrific concert by Wilco. We try to pack things in because the weekends we spend together, whether we go to Chicago or he comes to Mason, are precious to us.

We're glad Jon's close and we can see him once in awhile. It's tougher to get to Austin, TX, for short visits to see Dan, so those longer visits take on the trappings of a vacation.

We're not unlike other parents whose children have left the state in the midst of the worst economy for young people that any of us remember. If Michigan's economy were in better shape, it's possible our kids wouldn't be leaving to find the work they want. But our parents went through the same thing. There weren't many opportunities in the western U.P. in the 1960s. When the mines closed, the jobs disappeared, so most of our classmates scattered across the country. That's happening now all over the state and we're poorer for it. It's nice to travel to visit our kids, but it's not an ideal arrangement.

So, like most parents, we compensate by staying in touch by phone, email and even texting. It's the way of the modern family.

Now the question is whether we should use any of the new social networking tools, like Facebook and Twitter, or Skype for video chatting.

Twitter allows people who need a constant communications fix to stay connected to just about anyone who is also connected to Twitter. Your message can be seen by a few people or thousands, even millions. In just three years, Twitter has almost 400 million users.

So, what you do is sign up for a Twitter account and find people who you want to stay connected to, like your kids, doctor,

bowling team, best friends, people who like the same rock band, or the President. Then you wait for all those important messages to start rolling in, like "I just saw a great movie," or "the dog wants to go outside," or "I bought a green bowling ball," or "the Senate's got to pass health care." Anything you can say in 140 characters. And everyone you Tweet can Tweet you back. Then you can direct your Tweets to Facebook or any of several other sites that will collect those Tweets for you. See how easy it is?

Those of you who grew up with personal handwritten letters and a phone tethered by wire to a wall outlet are probably shaking your head. This is mostly an age thing.

Like other parents our age, Barb and I live in the middle, between the stone age and the space age.

Our older relatives don't email or tweet or Facebook or text. So we talk on the phone. (Barbara also likes to write notes, cards and even full-blown letters. Me, not so much. Frankly, my handwriting has gotten so bad I can't decipher it myself. I should sign up for a remedial handwriting class. Remember the Palmer Method? But, probably because of computers and texting, kids are having trouble with cursive writing, too. I hear teachers are now printing notes to students because they can't read a cursive message.)

Phones still work great. You can dial a number and talk. A five-minute conversation can cover a lot of ground.

Remember when a long-distance phone call was a major event, simply because it was so infrequent? College students, members of the military and long-moved family would call every few months and talk long enough to let the folks at home know they were alive. Back then, a long distance call meant someone might be in trouble. The recipient's first comment might be, "What's wrong?" Now if loved ones don't

regularly call or send a message of some kind—like daily—we think they're in trouble.

Computers, cell phones and smart phones have given us multiple ways to stay in touch. I am grateful for all this new technology. But you can have too much of a good thing.

I recall a meeting last year where a woman, hyped on social media, kept three panels open on her laptop, one each for email, Twitter and Facebook discussions—and she also could talk on her cell phone—while she was following an in-person presentation.

Now we are being told that *Country Lines* magazine should have a Facebook page, so we can encourage friends of the magazine to engage with us online. Is this a good idea? Other magazines have a page. I've seen their fan count—as high as a few hundred—compared to a circulation of several hundred thousand.

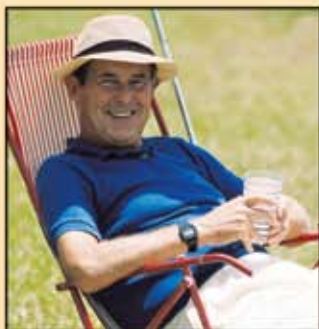
But, maybe we'll try it anyway. It's another way to stay in touch with all those folks who have reluctantly left the state in search of work. If you'd like to become a fan, just search for *Michigan Country Lines* in Facebook.

That Twitter thing will have to wait. We need to hear our kids' voices.



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

Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com



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(By Frank K. Wood)

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

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