

# MICHIGAN Country Lines

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Important annual meeting  
information on  
back cover.*

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Big Savings**

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

Unsolicited letters, photos and manuscripts are welcome. *Country Lines*, however, will not be responsible for their safe keeping or return.

**The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.**

**Display ad representatives:**

Michigan—Al Mateus  
877-649-5620

National—The Weiss Group  
480-860-5394

National Country Market  
512-441-5200

**Change of Address:** Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.

# MICHIGAN Country Lines



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Waste not

\*Not in all editions

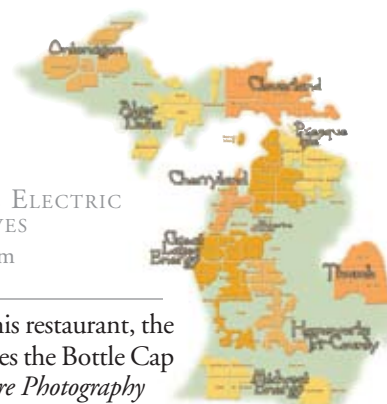
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MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC  
COOPERATIVES  
[countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)



### COVER \*

Grayling entrepreneur Bill Gannon and his sister, Marianne McEvoy, at his restaurant, the Dawson & Stevens Classic '50s Diner & Soda Fountain, which also houses the Bottle Cap Museum (Coca-Cola® collection). She is the Museum curator. *Photo—Dre Photography*



**500 J.K. Paul Street**  
**Ontonagon, MI 49953**  
**Phone: 906-884-4151**  
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## OFFICERS & DIRECTORS

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**Donna Siren**, Billing Clerk  
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 Order Clerk

## OTHER INFORMATION

**Date of Incorporation:** Sept. 30, 1937  
**Fiscal year-end:** Dec. 31  
**countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon**



The Ontonagon County REA office will be closed on May 31 for Memorial Day, and July 5 for Independence Day. Please, only call the office on these days if you need to report a power outage.

# Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

## Small Changes Equal Big Savings

**S**ometimes the little things in life mean a lot. Easy steps such as turning off lights when you leave a room, unplugging appliances when you're not using them, and raising the temperature on your thermostat as the weather warms up, when done together, can help your family rack up big energy savings.

At Ontonagon County REA, we're always looking for ways to help you, our members. With energy costs rising due to a growing demand for electricity, higher power plant costs, and federal regulations, energy efficiency remains a key part of our efforts to keep rates affordable. Best of all, energy efficiency—simply making the electricity you use do more—saves you money.

There's a valuable online resource you can use, called Energy Optimization (EO). This program is offered through a team of 12 Michigan co-op and municipal electric providers, to provide energy efficiency education, programs and rebates designed to help consumers better manage their energy use.

Intrigued? Visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) to find out more. Program offerings include Residential and Small Business Energy Star®, an Online Energy Audit, Appliance Recycling, Residential Heating/Ventilation/Air-Conditioning (HVAC), Energy Efficiency Assistance, and Commercial & Industrial. On the website's home page, select your electric provider to learn about the specific programs and rebates available to you, or call the Customer Service Center at 877-296-4319.

Clicking on the "Online Energy Audit Program" link is a good starting point. Called "Energy Depot", it's a free, one-stop resource for energy information that you can use to:

- Get a personalized profile with an estimate of your energy costs for each home energy system/appliance (choose "Full Profile" or the shorter "EZ Profile"). Complete the Full Profile and get a free energy

savings kit;

- Learn specific things you can do to reduce energy use and how much money you can save;
- Complete a do-it-yourself home energy audit and get your report online;
- Quickly estimate the annual energy use and cost of home energy systems and appliances with the Energy Calculator;
- Compare your existing heating and cooling system, or water heater, to a range

of new systems, or compare two new systems to each other. Determine how soon you can pay for your new system through energy savings; and more.

The website uses calculations targeted for your utility's electric rate and figures from your actual electric bills and usage to provide an accurate reflection of what your potential savings could be if you

use the suggested energy efficiency steps. If you want more in-depth information on energy efficiency, [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) also has an energy library to answer your questions.

Finding ways to help you save energy dollars during tough times is important to us. Valuable tools like [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) are just one more way that your Ontonagon electric co-op looks out for you (see ads, page 25).

For residential customers who fall under certain income limits, the EO "Energy Efficiency Assistance Program" provides weatherization products and services. Qualified applicants must meet household income guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Energy weatherization program. Please locate your local Community Action Agency for more information by visiting [mcaaa.org](http://mcaaa.org) or call Ontonagon County REA at 800-562-7128 or 906-884-4151.

We are committed to educating our residential and commercial members in energy conservation and to offering cost-effective solutions in reducing energy consumption.

Save Energy. Save Money.



Manager's Column  
**Tom Haarala**

# Be Energy Wise!

## Change Bulbs, Batteries, Too!

By moving the clocks ahead in March, we gained extra daylight hours that help save electricity by allowing us to turn the lights on a little later in the evening.

If you soon change the lightbulbs in your home from energy-wasting incandescent bulbs to compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) you can make those energy savings go even further. Even changing a single lightbulb would pay for itself many times over in lower energy bills by next March, as CFLs offer a similar quality of light but use significantly less energy.

Daylight Saving Time offers another reminder—to change the batteries in your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors.

## Spring Cleaning? Keep the Environment Clean, Too

Before you dispose of an outdated, energy-hogging refrigerator, freezer or air conditioner, consider the impact it will have on the environment.

Some old appliances contain chemicals that are harmful if leaked into the environment. Refrigerators, air conditioners and freezers made before 1995 contain chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) and most air conditioners manufactured after 1995 contain hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), and both can harm the Earth's ozone layer. Many harbor other chemicals like oil, mercury and hydrofluorocarbons that may not deplete the ozone but still require careful disposal.

Properly disposing of appliances keeps these chemicals out of your air and water, and ensures that reusable materials in the appliance are recycled. First, check with the service delivering your new appliance—most will remove your old one for a nominal fee. Ask if the old appliance will go to a recycling center instead of a landfill.

Visit Earth911 at [earth911.com/recycling](http://earth911.com/recycling) to find recycling facilities for large appliances in your area. Many areas have curbside recycling programs that will pick up a used appliance at your front door. Before kicking them out to the curb, remove doors from refrigerators or freezers to prevent children or animals from getting stuck inside.

## Myth or Fact? Be Sure For Power Line Safety

If birds can touch electrical wires, are they safe for people, too? If you're not on a metal ladder, are you clear of danger from power line electrocution? Know for sure before you take a chance with your life.

First, the facts: Electricity always looks for the shortest and easiest path to the ground—including people and objects that touch or come too close to power lines. Electricity is fast, and it can cause severe burns or death if it flows through the human body. Read on to find the facts on some myths:

**Myth:** *Wires must be safe to touch if birds can land on them.* **Fact:** Birds don't represent a direct path to the ground, giving electricity nowhere to go but back to the wire. It's easier for the current to simply stay in the wire. So touching a power line is *not* safe for humans.

**Myth:** *Power lines are safe to touch because they're insulated.* **Fact:** Most lines are insulated only to protect against slight tree contact, but not enough to prevent human injury. Don't touch them!

**Myth:** *Non-metal ladders are safe to rest on a power line.* **Fact:** Anything that can get wet can conduct electricity, and many non-metal ladders still contain metal parts. Keep your ladder away from power lines, no matter what it's made from.

**Myth:** *Ladders are safe near power lines as long as they don't touch.* **Fact:** Electricity can "jump," especially when a good conductor like a metal ladder comes close. Keep a safe distance of at least 10 feet.

**Myth:** *Trimming trees around power lines is safe if I don't use a ladder.* **Fact:** Electricity doesn't need metal to conduct. The moisture in the tree is enough. If a tree contacts with the line while you're trimming, it has a direct path to the ground through the tree, your pruning tool, and you. Call your electric co-op when it's time to trim trees near power lines.

## Audit Your Home For Leaks

Hiring a professional to seek out air leaks in your home is a good investment, but may not be at the top of your to-do list anytime



Photo: Werner Ladder Co.

soon. This doesn't mean you have to accept living in a drafty house—take matters into your own hands with a do-it-yourself home energy audit using Energy Savers tips from the Department of Energy.

Start by closing all exterior doors, windows and fireplace flues and turning off your furnace, water heater and any other combustion appliances. Then turn on every exhaust fan in the house—like bathroom and kitchen fans—to help suck the air out of the house. Use a large window fan to help, if necessary. Doing this increases the air flow through leaks and cracks, making them more obvious as you search for them.

Now, you're ready for the hunt. Start at one end of the house and move room by room, meticulously feeling for drafts flowing through electrical outlets and switch plates, window frames, baseboards, seals around exterior doors, fireplace dampers, attic hatches and window-mounted air conditioners.

Unsure if you've detected an air leak? Wave a damp hand in front of the potential draft; does your hand feel cool? Also, look for daylight coming in around closed doors, and see if you can rattle the windows. Keep track of drafty locations in each room and make note of any possible fixes. This will help you decide which repairs to do first.

The easiest to find leaks could also be the easiest to fix with caulking or weatherstripping, especially around windows and doors. While you're at it, seal the attic hatch door and add some insulation.

All around the house, look for holes and penetrations for faucets, pipes, electric outlets and wiring, and then seal large gaps with spray foam or caulk around them.



# Energy Star Program Defects Prompt Overhaul

A Government Accountability Office (GAO) audit has found the Energy Star® program to be primarily a self-certification program “vulnerable to fraud and abuse.”

The GAO, a non-partisan congressional watchdog agency that audits federal programs, finished the nine-month investigation in March. Energy Star, a voluntary, international standard for rating energy-efficient consumer products created by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in 1992, covers over 60 categories.

As part of its study, commissioned by U.S. Sen. Susan Collins (R-Maine), ranking member of the Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs, GAO submitted fake products, such as a gas-powered alarm clock, and listed nonexistent companies for evaluation.

In response, EPA noted, “We take this report very seriously. We welcome all efforts, internal or external, to improve

the [Energy Star] program. That’s why we have started an enhanced testing program and have already taken enforcement actions against companies that violated the rules.”

A 2009 EPA review found 98 percent of products tested met or exceeded Energy Star requirements. Devices carrying the Energy Star logo, such as computers and electronics, kitchen and household appliances, residential lighting, and windows, deliver the same or better performance and use 20 percent to 30 percent less energy on average than comparable models.

“Energy Star uses a series of checks to ensure consumers are getting products that cut energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions,” explains a joint statement from the EPA and U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), a partner with EPA on the Energy Star program. “One of the reasons the system has worked...is that manufacturers have a market incentive to

test competitors’ products and report violations, which supports the program’s own independent testing, verification and enforcement initiatives.”

The GAO review adds to other Energy Star concerns. *The New York Times* revealed last October that some manufacturers of household appliances were testing products for Energy Star-certification internally instead of using independent laboratories. In response, Energy Star ramped up oversight of product ratings and by the end of 2009 revoked the Energy Star label for some refrigerators while raising the bar for efficiency expected from TVs.

Starting this year, Energy Star is expanding third-party evaluations and implementing a two-step internal testing process to broaden the evaluation of Energy Star-qualified products.

“Consumers can continue to trust Energy Star to save energy and money and protect the environment,” say DOE and EPA.

Federal energy efficiency tax credits for appliances and home heating and air-conditioning systems typically require qualifying products to be Energy Star-rated. As always, research a product before making a purchase.



© iStockphoto.com/Damian Gadal

## CFL Clean-up & Fridges

Thank you for the bit about how to clean up after CFL bulbs [April 2010]. I remember playing with mercury from a broken thermostat when I was a kid! That article is being taped up on my storage closet.

If you do a fridge article again, please mention that the law requires that old discarded refrigerators must have the doors removed, or be chained shut. That’s one good regulation; too many kids ‘hid’ in old refrigerators, couldn’t get out, and suffocated. I also appreciated the list of plastics dangerous when heated under ‘Our Kids.’ Another clip and post.

*Beth Clemensen, via email*

I’d like to suggest you include a gentle reminder to those calling for ‘old fridge pick-up’ that if the appliance is clean and still working it might be donated to a local Habitat for Humanity ReStore. We have many low-income families that need those used appliances. If you would like the contact information for ReStores where the pick-up program is being initiated, please let me know and I will locate it for you. Most ReStores also have trucks and staff to pick up donations which may also help decrease your costs while supporting both causes.

Thank you for this offer. It is concerning to see older appliances rotting away on some of the back roads we travel on our Sunday rides.

*Bonnie Robbins, Exec. Dir.  
Antrim County Habitat for  
Humanity*

*Mike Peters replies: I can appreciate your desire to find a home*

## MYSTERY PHOTO

Everyone who identifies the correct location of the photo below by **June 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](mailto: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 July 2010 issue.

The **March** contest winner is **Robert LeFevre** of Garden City, who correctly identified the pier in Pentwater.



March photo

## Recycled Paper

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

Do you  
know  
where  
this is?



for the used appliances, but by law our appliance rebate programs require that the old appliances we pay a rebate on must be recycled and not put back into use. The intent of the rebate program is to get older, inefficient appliances off the grid and properly recycled, thereby reducing overall energy consumption. I can assure you that the appliances you see abandoned on the back roads are not ones that were picked up as part of our cooperatives' programs.

Two things should be included that are not: The person doing the clean-up should wear rubber gloves that are heavy enough to prevent contact with their skin and disposal must be made in a hazardous waste disposal site, not with your normal local trash disposal.

*Bob Chumack, via email*

Nice article on the clean-up of hazardous materials. Its the main reason I would go without light rather than use CFLs. You needed to mention gloves and masks as well, and you still couldn't eliminate the hazard! Want a perplexing experience? Ask people that have them what the clean-up procedure is for broken bulbs and see if you get the same answers that I did. Simply, they laugh!

I know that some have used vacuum cleaners, paper towels, broom and dust pan, or worse, bare hands. No matter what, the end result is landfill contamination. There always seems to be a "rush" to make a profit, when the issue is hot. Consequently, mercury gets into the public system in the "go green" format.

Make it safe or don't sell it!

*Don Akers, Tustin*

*The EPA continues to recommend that you should seal the CFL pieces in two plastic bags and put it into the outside trash, or other protected outside location, for the next normal trash*



**Winners**—A team of student linemen from the Utility Technology program at Alpena Community College took first place in March at the annual Linemen's Rodeo Competition hosted by Chandler-Gilbert Community College in Phoenix, AZ. Utility Tech students Tom Chojnacki, Tyler Castagne, and Lucas Tice won over 18 other teams consisting of 60 competitors. Attending the rodeo were (L-R) instructor Rick Arbic, Chojnacki, Castagne, Mark Vantine, Russ Skuse, Tice, Pat Savoie, Matt Wenn, Steve Westrick, Cody Teegardin, and instructor Tim Buse. Michigan's electric co-ops support the program.

*collection. Never send fluorescent bulbs or any other mercury-containing products to an incinerator. EPA also says that, even though CFLs contain a small amount of mercury that could ultimately end up in the environment, that amount is significantly less than the amount of mercury avoided as a result of the energy savings.—ed.*

### Owls and d-CON

I, too, enjoy hearing and seeing beautiful barred owls in our wooded neighborhood. Don Ingle's entertaining article [April 2010; [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)] about his noisy barred owl neighbors gave readers many facts about the species, and clearly conveyed his affection for all kinds of owls.

He writes, "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 d-CON® budget. A barred owl can consume a lot of mice and voles before they ever get a chance to snuggle in with us."

d-CON works by offering a food source that is actually a tantalizingly sweet bit of poison bait. Mice eat a bit from the pile of poison bait

and then go back to their shelter, continuing to make visits back to eat more d-CON for about three days. Before they become so poisoned that they finally die, the rodents continue to load up on tasty morsels of d-CON bait. In their weakened, poisoned, but still moving state, they are often captured and eaten by owls and other birds of prey.

According to Dody Wyman, director emeritus of the Raisin River Raptor Center in Ann Arbor, eating one mouse, fully loaded with d-CON, will kill a large owl or hawk. Admirers of birds of prey can help those species by not using poison bait for rodent control. It's a simple change of practice that will reap great rewards for wildlife.

*Pam Bunch, Tecumseh*

*Don Ingle replies: Thank you for your comments — and for passing on your caution about using d-CON to control opportunistic rodents that move in with us*

*over winter. We have used this product according to the maker's instructions for use, and in limited amounts; however, your advice is well-taken. Plan B is clearly called for.*

### Metering Electric Use

I was wondering if there's a meter that I can buy to put on my new Marathon® hot water heater? We would like to see how much it's costing.

*Bill & Dawn Ross*

*See pages 12-13 for options.—ed.*

### Carbon Tax

As for MECA's job, I think you should, as our representatives, stand between the oppressive government and your owners (customers) and fight with all your resources to prevent any further regulation that is an economic depressant and which is therefore destructive to America. Let's face it, this is just another giant tax increase on the American public.

*Dave Mills, Interlochen*

**COMING UP:** ▶ Favorite recipes: **APPETIZERS** by May 10 and **POULTRY** by June 10.

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



## Power Line Safety

Look up. Look down.  
**Look Out!**



Call MISS DIG at  
1-800-482-7171  
to locate under-  
ground cables three  
full business days  
before digging.



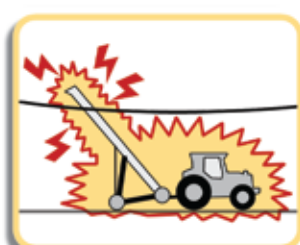
When using a ladder,  
look up to locate the  
power line. MISS DIG  
can also assist with  
overhead lines,  
call 1-800-482-7171.



Trimming trees near  
wires is for qualified  
professionals only.



Report fallen lines  
immediately. Stay at  
least 30 feet away.



Be aware of overhead  
wires when moving  
equipment. Maintain  
at least a 10-foot  
clearance.



Never try to lift an  
electrical wire.

## Ontonagon County REA Financial Statement Balance Sheets

Dec. 31, 2009 & 2008

Assets	2009	2008
<b>UTILITY PLANT:</b>		
Electric plant in service	\$18,558,700	\$17,812,509
Construction work in progress	<u>378,281</u>	<u>252,084</u>
	18,936,981	18,064,593
Less - Accumulated depreciation	<u>4,995,618</u>	<u>4,682,955</u>
Net utility plant	<u>13,941,363</u>	<u>13,381,638</u>
<b>INVESTMENTS &amp; OTHER ASSETS:</b>		
Investments	494,313	438,590
Accounts receivable	-	<u>226,873</u>
Total investments and other assets	<u>494,313</u>	<u>665,463</u>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>		
Cash and cash equivalents	399,126	232,846
Accounts receivable (less accumulated provision for uncollectibles of \$15,805 in 2009 and \$15,805 in 2008)	494,024	668,610
Materials and supplies	243,843	246,517
Prepayments	<u>31,919</u>	<u>26,934</u>
Total current assets	<u>1,168,912</u>	<u>1,174,907</u>
Deferred Charges	<u>189,610</u>	<u>29,753</u>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<u>15,794,198</u>	<u>15,251,761</u>

### Members' Equities and Liabilities

<b>EQUITIES:</b>		
Memberships	20,450	20,635
Patronage capital	2,280,502	2,050,138
Other equities	<u>32,302</u>	<u>30,712</u>
Total equities	<u>2,333,254</u>	<u>2,101,485</u>
<b>LONG-TERM LIABILITIES:</b>		
RDUP and CFC mortgage notes, less current portion	10,233,783	10,572,114
Post-retirement benefit obligation	<u>373,866</u>	<u>359,850</u>
Total long-term liabilities	<u>10,607,649</u>	<u>10,931,964</u>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES:</b>		
Current maturities of long-term liabilities	360,000	360,000
Line of credit note payable	1,900,000	1,200,000
Accounts payable	233,926	293,457
Customer deposits	9,950	10,850
Other current liabilities	<u>321,579</u>	<u>325,505</u>
Total current liabilities	<u>2,825,455</u>	<u>2,189,812</u>
Deferred credits	<u>27,840</u>	<u>28,500</u>
<b>TOTAL EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES</b>	<u>\$ 15,794,198</u>	<u>\$ 15,251,761</u>

### Statement of Revenue & Expenses Ending Dec. 31, 2009 & 2008

<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>	<u>4,987,111</u>	<u>\$4,999,355</u>
<b>OPERATING EXPENSES:</b>		
Cost of power	2,417,376	2,628,838
Distribution - Operations	134,564	108,762
Distribution - Maintenance	347,625	286,083
Consumer accounts	179,597	150,669
Customer service and informational	11,511	13,385
Administrative and general	469,339	517,011
Depreciation	551,309	511,852
Taxes	191,823	200,616
Other deductions	<u>896</u>	<u>600</u>
Total operating expense	<u>4,304,040</u>	<u>4,417,816</u>
Operating margins before interest expense	683,071	581,539
Interest expense	<u>572,437</u>	<u>562,778</u>
Operating margins (loss) after interest expense	<u>110,634</u>	<u>18,761</u>
<b>NONOPERATING MARGINS:</b>		
Interest and investment income	44,934	4,172
Other nonoperating income (expense)	<u>63,113</u>	<u>152,020</u>
	<u>108,047</u>	<u>156,192</u>
Capital credits	<u>16,357</u>	<u>11,022</u>
<b>NET (LOSS) MARGINS</b>	<u>\$ 235,038</u>	<u>\$ 185,975</u>





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



# Sometimes Washington Gets It Right

**M**ay 11, 2010, is the 75th anniversary of the Rural Electrification Administration ("REA," now renamed as the Rural Utility Service or "RUS") created by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's executive order in 1935. At that time, less than 10 percent of the nation's farms and rural homes had electricity. And those that did often paid significantly higher rates than people living in more populous areas.

Through the creation of the REA, individuals were able to come together to form electric cooperatives, borrow money from the federal government, and do for themselves what others would not: provide reliable and affordable electric service to rural America.

Today, 99 percent of rural America has been electrified. Some say that fact alone means that RUS has done its job and the loan program should be ended. But if those that advocate shutting down RUS would consider the facts, they would come to a different conclusion. At a time when government programs are seen

as a cost to the American people, the RUS program actually has a "negative subsidy rate," which means it increases revenue to the U.S. Treasury! In fact, last year the U.S. Treasury made about \$50 million in profit on loans to rural electric cooperatives.

And, although most of rural Michigan has electric service, most of our cooperatives still rely on RUS loan programs to finance the repair and replacement of their electric infrastructure.

Without RUS, many cooperatives would pay significantly more to borrow money to build and maintain the poles and wires needed to deliver electricity into some of the state's most isolated areas. And higher interest rates mean higher electric rates.

Some have argued that the RUS loan program should be ended because most



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

of America has electricity. That would be like saying we should end funding for the interstate highway system because most of the country now has access to interstate highways. We all know, especially living in Michigan, those roads need constant maintenance and repair. Our electric systems are no different. With some of our infrastructure over 60 years old, cooperatives are constantly maintaining or replacing the lines, all at a significantly higher cost than when they were first built.

And, our electric cooperatives are doing more than just building lines. Cooperatives are leading the industry in developing clean energy solutions, such as renewable energy, clean-coal technologies, and energy efficiency programs.

Seventy-five years is a long time for any program to exist, but when something works as well as rural electrification, its future should be as bright as its past.

# GREENER CHOICES

Spending wisely on improvements can help reduce energy bills. **Morgan Zenner**

**T**hese days, the word “green” is everywhere, but homeowners really need to know: What exactly does it mean to ‘go green’?

At one time, green products were anything manufactured with at least 30 percent recycled material, but now there are several other factors that determine sustainability. Currently, green products are ranked by their Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), which takes into consideration manufacturing practices, installation, energy use and eventual disposal.

Federal incentives and Michigan’s law mandating utilities to help customers reduce energy use have cast a bright light on home energy efficiency. By lowering energy use, homeowners preserve existing resources and practice sustainability.

With all of these factors, “going green” is not as clear cut as homeowners may have thought. Here are a few items to keep in mind before beginning your green investment.

## Sustainable Surfaces

Surfaces in your home include flooring, and countertops in kitchens and bathrooms. VOCs, or volatile organic compounds, are a hot topic when it comes to green because compounds emitted as gases from certain solids or liquids include a variety of chemicals that can have adverse health effects.

But choosing the greener option doesn’t mean you have to throw out the other considerations—such as style, functionality, durability and, in the case of kitchens, food safety and heat resistance. Marble, slate, granite and stone are natural surface options that do not release VOCs.

For homeowners who prefer a modern, industrial style, concrete is becoming popular as a sustainable surface that can easily be reused, recycled or locally supplied. Another sleek option is stainless steel, which is known for high durability.

“If you’re considering concrete, be sure to check what kind of content is in it,” says Ben Thompson, owner of Thompson Remodeling Inc. in Grand Rapids, and a National Association of Home Builders’ Certified Green Professional (CGP).

Another option is terrazzo surfaces, which are a combination of glass or stone chips and binders. For the greenest option, choose terrazzo bound with cement that does not contain VOCs and chips that are sourced from recycled glass.

“My clients have increasingly been choosing a combination of these greener countertops,” says CGP Judy Mozen, of Handcrafted Homes Inc. in Roswell, GA. “Recently, a client used granite for the island and recycled glass for the perimeter countertops.”

Wood flooring remains one of the most desirable options in the U.S. today, but instead of installing exotic wood from the world’s greatest rainforests, purchase wood that is certified by the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC). An FSC certification ensures that the wood originated from a fast-growth tree, meaning the forest is sustainable.

Surprisingly, some manufacturers continue to sell wood such as particleboard or medium-density fiberboard (MDF) that

contains formaldehyde, a chemical known to cause cancer. “Check with your kitchen designer to ensure that your floors are free of these types of wood,” Mozen says.

Then there are the poster children for green flooring—cork and bamboo. Although these are great green options, there are some downsides to installing them.

Cork flooring is made from the bark of cork-oak trees, from which the cork is stripped off the trunk and branches about every decade. The bark grows back, and its removal does not disturb the growth of the tree. However, it may not be the best material to install where moisture is present, as cork will deteriorate over time if it comes into contact with water.

Bamboo is a natural material that is harvested every three to seven years. The downside is that most bamboo is not harvested locally, and the amount of energy it takes to transport bamboo from China may offset its sustainability.

Still, Thompson adds, bamboo and cork are the most appealing options for most of his clients because of the look and price.

If there is a surface that fits your home perfectly, think about putting a little research into various brands and their green consid-

**Right:** This National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI) 2009 award winner virtually eliminated the toxins from the home, complete with low-VOC, oil-free paint, formaldehyde-free materials and urea-free cabinetry in the kitchen.







**Left:** This National Association NARI 2009 award winner by Wilkinson Design & Construction, in Harwich, MA, used closed-cell insulation and triple-glazed windows, both of which are eligible for energy-efficient tax credits. The homeowners were happy to re-use the toilet from the previous bath, a great way to reduce costs and extend a product's life cycle.

erations. That way, you don't have to compromise style or sustainability.

And don't forget, VOCs are found in a number of other common household products. It is a good idea to check the VOC content level in all products or materials that enter the home.

## Insulation

One of the most effective energy upgrades a homeowner can make is insulation. Homes require a large amount of energy to generate heat and air conditioning.

The first place to increase insulation is in the attic. Up until the mid-1990s, builders under-insulated the attic to reduce building costs. But most of today's contractors know that ignoring the attic can lead to costly energy consumption.

The other major insulation problem area is the basement, especially if it is unfinished. By insulating the basement ceiling and above the crawl space, or insulating the basement walls, you can save a large amount of money on your heating bills.

"Here in Michigan, our standard insulation is spray-foam insulation because it insulates and air seals at the same time," Thompson says. "It is slightly higher in cost and it requires professional installation."

## Windows and Doors

Air leakage commonly occurs in obvious places, such as window and door openings. Leaks show up in older windows that may have loosened up over the years, and in new windows that were not properly installed. Energy-efficient windows have low-e glass

with special coatings to reflect infrared light and keep heat inside during the winter. They also have multiple panes of glass with argon or krypton gases in between each pane and warm edge spacers to keep window panes apart.

"When it comes to windows, keep this in mind: Southern climates should look at the Solar Heat Gain Coefficient (SHGC)—the lower the SHGC, the less solar heat is transmitted. Northern climates should look at the U factor [which measures how well a product prevents heat from escaping]—the lower the U factor, the better," Mozen says.

Energy-efficient doors have weather stripping around the edges to seal leaks. Weather-stripping supplies and installation techniques can range from simple to technical, so it is important to read the package instructions first. Doors made from fiberglass or steel with polyurethane foam cores are some of the best-quality materials in today's market.

One of the myths of air sealing is that it is possible to seal a home too tightly, to the point that it collects moisture. "You can never seal a house too tightly, only under-ventilate it," Thompson says. He says the key to air sealing is to control how a building breathes by installing a mechanical ventilation system, which transfers heat from outgoing air to fresh incoming air.

## Roofing

Most people consider a roof over their heads and food on the table to be the most important concerns in life, but what happens when the roof over your head is costing you major money?

Your main option for a green roof is one that's made from recycled content or from recycling existing roof structures that are being replaced. There are many asphalt roofing collection facilities nationwide that welcome old roofing materials.

Rubber and plastics from other industries, like the automotive industry, have been reformulated into a rubber slate roofing material, which has the Energy Star approval rating.

Roofs have evolved over the years from traditional asphalt roofing to what industry professionals now call cool roofing. Cool roofing options are popular in warmer geographic areas, where sunlight is prevalent.

One type of cool roofing is named reflective roofing because the roof is covered in some form of metal to reflect the sun's rays and decrease heat transferred into buildings. This is especially useful in hot to moderate climates where homeowners have high cooling costs. Some people in moderate climate areas install reflective roofs to avoid having to install an air conditioner altogether.

"We have clients, for the first time, who are considering lighter color and reflective roofs after they found out that a light-color roof can give up to 70 percent reflectance, and a dark roof only up to 18 percent," Mozen says. "Light-color roofs last longer and reduce heat buildup—a very important factor for homes in the South." As another option, you can install a reflective metal radiant barrier beneath your roof to transfer rays off the home.

For those who battle with cooler climates during certain times of the year, roof insulation may be more beneficial. Depending on the type of roof, or how pitched it is, attic insulation is all you need. The most common way to insulate your roof is by blowing cellulose or closed-cell foam into the roof cavities.

For flat roofs, adding insulation may be a larger task that requires a professional to lift the roof. Some contractors add pitch to flat roofs during this process to allow for more insulation.

A green investment is not about vanity; it's about saving money, improving a home's performance and conserving natural resources.

*Morgan Zenner is a marketing and communications coordinator with the National Association of the Remodeling Industry (NARI). To locate a local remodeling professional, visit [remodeltoday.com](http://remodeltoday.com) or call 800-611-NARI. For tips on remodeling using green techniques and materials, visit [greenremodeling.org](http://greenremodeling.org).*



# Tracking Energy Use at Home

Being more energy efficient at home starts with an awareness of how electricity is being used. A number of new gadgets can help.

**E**lectric utilities now have more than \$3 billion at hand for deploying smart grid technologies, thanks to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. Most of the technologies and equipment purchased by utilities will be invisible to the consumer. However, the in-home display, a key component of tomorrow's smart grid, may wind up on your kitchen counter or hallway wall.

In-home displays are devices that inform homeowners of the amount of electricity their homes are using in almost real time. The devices are connected—either directly or wirelessly—to your electric meter. In-home displays are being developed to provide a variety of information related

to your energy use, including how many kilowatt hours you have consumed and how much you are currently spending on electricity.

Placing these devices inside the home could give homeowners the information needed to save energy. For the first time, you could see in real time how much it actually costs to run the air conditioning or holiday lights. With in-home displays, you will be less likely to find any surprises when you open the monthly bill.

Research conducted by the Cooperative Research Network (CRN) shows that most consumers who have an in-home display use less energy than those without one. Research also shows, however, that most homeowners stop paying attention to the

devices after a few months. As with many electronic devices, they become part of the background noise of everyday life. Yet, it appears that seeing the devices for just a



Black & Decker's sending unit simply straps onto the outside of the meter and sends a signal to a countertop display.



couple of months has a long-term effect on a consumer's electricity use behavior. Even after they stop paying attention to the devices, most homeowners still use 1 to 3 percent less energy than before.

## Types of In-home Displays

In-home displays come in two types. One is supplied by the local utility and connects directly to your utility meter. The second can be purchased directly by the consumer and attached either to the meter, somewhere inside the home, or to the breaker box. "Utility-grade" displays are not yet available to customers in most parts of the country, but off-the-shelf products have been available for a year or more.

A small but growing number of utilities are conducting test pilots of in-home displays in order to better understand their effectiveness. To participate in a pilot, most homeowners must fit certain demographic characteristics. Even though preliminary research shows that homeowners who have an in-home display use less energy, little is understood about who responds best to the devices or precisely how these consumers are cutting back on their energy use. These questions must be explored prior to a utility deploying in-home displays on a large scale.

Several third-party manufacturers offer in-home displays, which will report electricity use for the entire home or one specific outlet. Consumers will need to program their electric rate into the device and make sure the device is installed correctly for it to work accurately. The devices will give homeowners an idea of how much energy they are consuming and how much is saved when, for example, they install energy-efficient lighting or turn down the thermostat.

A whole-house display, such as the one sold by Black & Decker, simply straps onto the outside of the meter and sends a signal to a countertop display. You will need to pick a model that works with your type of meter. Other devices, such as the Energy Detective, connect to the breaker panel, and should be installed by a licensed electrician. You can expect to pay \$75 to \$150 for an in-home display like these.

Some devices allow you to connect only one appliance or power strip to the display. These devices are less expensive and can demonstrate how much energy many of the devices in a home are using. They can also show that many appliances continue



The receiving unit for The Energy Detective (TED). The sending unit connects to the breaker panel, and should be installed by a licensed electrician.

to use energy even when they are turned off. These units cost \$35 to \$90.

## Where to Get It

In-home displays are available through several websites and some retail stores. Features and cost can vary greatly, so if you purchase one, you should verify that it will work with your meter or whether it will require professional installation.

A growing number of local governments

are providing in-home displays through local libraries or other government offices for short-term use by consumers.

The following companies offer energy management devices and control systems: Agilewaves, 650-839-0170, agilewaves.com; Black & Decker, 800-544-6986, blackanddecker.com/energy/; Control4, 888-400-4070, control4.com; Energy Inc., 800-959-5833, theenergydetective.com; and Onset, 800-564-4377, onsetcomp.com.

## The Future

The question of whether in-home displays catch on and become permanent fixtures in the American home is still open. Over the coming months, several utilities will begin pilot studies that will help determine the feasibility of this product. However, for anyone who wants to take a proactive approach to understanding electric consumption (and who is willing to monitor the display regularly), the in-home display may be worth exploring. Indeed, 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.

*Brian Sloboda is a program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, a service of NRECA.*

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# Grayling's Real Thing

Pop-in to the '50s Diner and Bottle Cap Museum, where Coke memorabilia reigns. **Al Parker**

**T**ucked along East Michigan Avenue, just off Grayling's main drag, is a classic '50s-style diner that houses a 10,000-piece museum that pays homage to the world's largest beverage company, Coca-Cola®.

The Dawson & Stevens Classic '50s Diner and Soda Fountain is home to the Bottle Cap Museum, northern Michigan's largest privately-owned collection of all things Coke, from century-old bottles, carriers, trays, playing cards, bottle caps, ads, baseball cards, coins, and dolls to an original Coca-Cola delivery truck that came across Lake Michigan from Minnesota.

On display are barrels, vintage posters, cans, holiday decorations, coolers, beanie babies, and even a framed series of 1960s bottle caps featuring National Football League players. The impressive collection is housed in dozens of glass cases that line the museum walls.

"Unfortunately, we're only able to have

about half of it on display at any one time," says Marianne McEvoy, the Museum curator. "We rotate items in and out of storage."

## The Back Story

The original business was founded by Earl Dawson in 1938 as a retail store that included a bustling soda fountain. A fire destroyed the business in 1957, but it re-opened a year later under the direction of Devere Dawson and his wife Pauline, who ran it for five decades before it was bought by Russell and Jane Stevens in 1994.

The Stevenses transformed it into a restaurant and operated it for 10 years before selling it to Bill Gannon, the founder and owner of Gannon Broadcasting and other Grayling businesses.

"We ran it for a year, then closed for 18 months to make renovations," he recalls. "We expanded the seating to 110 seats. The most important thing we wanted to do was upgrade the building, but we didn't want

to destroy the feeling of the original soda fountain atmosphere."

An avid collector, Gannon later bought The Bottle Cap Museum (a sprawling 7,000-piece Coke collection) from Bill Hicks, who had operated the museum in the tiny village of Sparr for a decade.

Collecting vintage Coke items has been a popular pastime almost since the refreshing beverage was first sold in May 1886 by John Stith Pemberton, a pharmacist in Atlanta, GA.

The growing International Coca-Cola Collectors Club boasts a membership of 5,000 Coke-heads representing 28 countries.

Over the years, Gannon has added over 3,000 more Coke items to the inventory, and he displays it proudly. Gannon and McEvoy are siblings, and he says the Museum came together mostly because of her efforts.

"We're one of the few museums with no admission fee," says McEvoy, who lives in Traverse City and commutes to Grayling a few







Photo-Bottle Cap Museum

Workers bustle around the authentic soda fountain, preparing hand-dipped ice cream, shakes, sodas and sundaes for visitors. The Dawson & Stevens Classic '50s Diner & Soda Fountain, in Grayling, is open Sunday-Thursday, 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., and Friday-Saturday, 8 a.m. to 9 p.m. For information, call 989-348-2111 or visit [bottlecapmuseum.com](http://bottlecapmuseum.com).

times a week to work on the collection. "Bill wants to keep it that way. He wants to make sure it's accessible to the community."

### What's Cookin'?

But the amazing Coke collection is not the only thing that draws visitors from as far away as Japan, Kenya, New Zealand and Russia. Under the direction of manager Laura Serum, Dawson & Stevens serves up some serious diner food for breakfast, lunch and dinner. The lunch bunch can choose from 20 different sandwiches named after pop songs and personalities from the '50s and '60s. Dinners are named after popular '50s and '60s dances, such as "The Stroll," (fried butterfly shrimp) "The Sock Hop," (beef and shrimp), and "The Hustle," (ham steak platter).

The authentic vintage soda fountain is ringed by shiny chrome stools where guests

enjoy hand-dipped ice cream, shakes, malts, sodas and 12 specialty sundaes.

Between the vast Coke collection and tasty diner cuisine, Dawson & Stevens draws major crowds, according to McEvoy. "We have a large number of bus tours, senior citizen

groups, birthday parties, and school classes that visit," she says. "All we ask is that they call ahead for a reservation so we can best accommodate them."

### Another Restaurant

Just a few doors down, the Bear's Den Pizzeria is another restaurant Gannon owns. He named it in honor of Fred Bear, a Grayling resident who turned his passion for archery into the Bear Archery company, whose revolutionary bow designs made him an industry leader. Bear was recognized in *Life* magazine and traveled the world on hunting trips, but McEvoy explains that it was his work for wildlife management and the sport of bow hunting that made his face familiar to most every hunter.

"Bill wanted to keep the Fred Bear name and memory in the forefront of Grayling's history," McEvoy adds. "He also wanted the younger generation to know about the great, kind, world-renowned man that Fred Bear was and all that he accomplished from this small town of Grayling."

*Al Parker is a freelance writer living in Traverse City and Nevada.*

**Opposite:** Vintage items lining the Diner's Museum walls are part of northern Michigan's largest privately-owned collection of all things Coke.

**Right:** Kitchen Manager Laura Serum whips up an old-fashioned malt.



# Life Is Grand

**W**e represent one-third of the population, and our numbers are growing by 1.7 million each year. We're fit, wired and connected, and we're confident we can do a better job than we did when we were younger.

Call us Nana, Mimi, Oma, Boppa, Grampy or Pops. We are America's 70 million grandparents, and—according to a 2009 [Grandparents.com](http://Grandparents.com) survey—we're having the time of our lives. I'm proud to be numbered among the 72 percent of that happy bunch who describe grandparenting as just, well, *grand*.

If we could change one thing, we'd have more time. With 60 percent of us still working full- or part-time, we struggle to carve out enough hours to spend with our grandkids. And for many of us, that won't change anytime soon. It seems the average age of grandparents in America today is 48. Oh my.

Nevertheless, we're a determined bunch. Seventy percent of us see our grandchildren at least once a week, and 81 percent include grandchildren in part or all of our summer vacations. Nearly three-quarters of us care for our grandchildren on a regular basis, with a growing number taking over primary care for them.

With all this togetherness, no wonder conflict arises from time to time. Generational divides and personal styles have always caused disagreements over areas such as food, sleep, discipline and more. Smart grandparents navigate these differences carefully and with a generous dose of respect, which isn't always easy. We've learned a lot from our past mistakes, and we're confident we could do it all better the second time around.

One area that shouldn't have to cause conflict is safety. While I sometimes wonder if today's parents go overboard in protecting their children from harm, it's hard to deny that increased attention to safety and accident prevention have saved the lives of many thousands of children. So, new grandparents, listen up: Here are a few changes affecting the way we care for kids today.

**Car seats** – Laws regarding vehicle restraints for children have changed dra-

matically. In Michigan today, a child restraint system is required for any child who is seven years and younger and less than 57

inches. Children three years and younger must be in the rear seat if one is available.

**Infant sleep positions** – The issue of whether an infant should sleep on her stomach or back has been raging for years. Current thinking is that "back is best" in preventing Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). Also, never lay a baby in a crib with heavy, fluffy pillows or blankets. A firm surface without any items that may fall or roll onto the baby is best.

**Lead exposure** – We know now that children exposed to lead can experience learning disabilities, behavioral problems, mental retardation, seizures, and even death. Grandparents can help by blocking access to peeling paint or chewable surfaces painted with lead-based paint. They can also regularly wash children's hands and toys, wet-mop floors and horizontal surfaces and prevent children from playing in bare soil. They can also check the Consumer Product Safety Commission recall list at [cpsc.gov](http://cpsc.gov) for products that contain lead.

**Food rules** – Children's immature immune systems need extra protection from

bacteria and pathogens adults might resist. And since we know more about how to prevent food allergies, it's important to keep up with new guidelines on when to introduce new foods (it's later than you might think).

Some things about grandparenting never change. Our adult kids still expect us to model good relationships and offer time and support. And stuff, of course. According to surveys, grandparents still know how to spoil the kids they love. With grandparents controlling 75 percent of the nation's wealth, we are spending \$52 billion every year on our grandchildren alone. Not to mention the ways we pitch in to support the day-to-day needs of our adult children for housing, education or health care.

Best of all, our generation is still offering up the best recession-proof gifts we've got. As one mom put it: "Our kids love that there are four adults who aren't their parents who just melt when they're around. They have a relationship with their grandparents that isn't based on child care or discipline. ... They have a love that is based on 100 percent acceptance."



Writer Linda Wacyk with her 10-month-old granddaughter, Annie.

**Resources** Some 6.2 million of all U.S. households today are multigenerational, up from 5 million in 2000, according to the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey. In Michigan, more than 70,000 grandparents are responsible for the grandchildren who live with them. A number of organizations offer information, support, and even legal advice:

- [Grandparents.com](http://Grandparents.com) offers articles, activities, gift ideas, and more.
- [iParenting.com](http://iParenting.com)'s [GrandparentsToday.com](http://GrandparentsToday.com) has informative articles and expert Q&A, as well as a variety of discussion boards perfect for grandparents.
- The Kinship Care Resource Center – A nonprofit through Michigan State University that provides a centralized location where Michigan relative caregivers for children and professionals can receive assistance. [kinship.msu.edu/](http://kinship.msu.edu/); 800-535-1218
- Generations United (GU) – Supports public policies that assist family caregivers of all types in caring for family members. [gu.org](http://gu.org)
- American Association of Retired Persons – Provides resources and information for grandparents, including those who are raising grandchildren alone. [aarp.org/families/grandparents](http://aarp.org/families/grandparents)





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# Let's get SAUCY

Find more sauce recipes from readers at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com).

## Walloon Lake Inn's Grand Marnier Sabayon Sauce

- 4 egg yolks
- 1/3 c. sugar
- 3 T. Grand Marnier® or other orange-flavored liqueur
- 1 c. whipping cream

Beat egg yolks, sugar and Grand Marnier in a medium saucepan. Cook over medium-low heat for 12 minutes or until thickened to the consistency of a thin batter. Remove from heat; chill, covered, 2 hours or more. Beat whipping cream in a chilled bowl until stiff peaks form. Fold in chilled egg mixture. Serve over sliced strawberries or other fresh fruit.

*Bonnie Bourn, Constantine*

## Famous Hot Dog Sauce

- 1 1/2 lb. ground bologna
- 1 1/2 c. catsup
- 3 c. tomato juice
- 1 T. chili powder
- 1/2 c. sugar
- 1 T. celery seed

Combine ingredients in a saucepan. Simmer 2 hours.

*June Dougherty, Evart*

## Red Pepper Sauce

- 1 T. butter
- 1 lg. red pepper, chopped
- 1 T. chopped onion
- 1 clove garlic, sliced
- 1 c. dry white wine
- 1/2 c. chicken stock
- 1 c. heavy cream

Melt butter over medium-low heat, in a

heavy-gauge, 2-quart saucepan. Add red pepper, onion and garlic; cook until tender, but not brown. Add wine and chicken stock; heat to boiling. Reduce heat and simmer, uncovered, for 15 minutes. Add cream, cook until volume is reduced to half. Transfer mixture to food processor; purée until smooth. Season with salt and pepper. Serve hot or cold with fish, vegetables or pasta.

*Emmajean Bowerman, Lake Isabella*

## Butterscotch Sauce

- 1/2 c. butter
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 c. whipping cream
- 1/2 t. vanilla

In a saucepan, cook butter and brown sugar until bubbly. Add whipping cream; cook until sauce sheets from the spoon. Remove from heat; add vanilla. Serve with ice cream, apple desserts, cheesecake, etc.

*Nancy Schneider, Thompsonville*

## Creamy Spaghetti Sauce

- 4 c. cherry tomatoes
- 1 t. dried basil
- 1 t. Italian seasoning
- 1/2 t. kosher salt
- 1/4 t. pepper
- 1/2 c. olive oil
- 1 c. sour cream

Spread cherry tomatoes in a 9x13-inch

baking pan; drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle seasonings over tomatoes. Using your hands, mix everything together in the pan. Bake uncovered at 385° for 15-20 minutes. As soon as tomatoes start to crack or burst, remove from oven. Pour mixture into a food processor or blender; blend until smooth. Pour mixture into a pot and add sour cream. Heat over low heat, stirring well until mixture is creamy. Salt and pepper to taste. Use this sauce for chicken Parmesan or add a pound of browned ground beef to make spaghetti sauce.

*Danielle Cochran, Grayling*

## Seafood Sauce

- 1 c. mayonnaise
- 2 T. anchovy paste
- 2 T. chili sauce
- 2 T. tarragon vinegar
- 1/4 c. tomato catsup
- lemon juice and pepper, as desired

Combine all ingredients; mixing well. Chill before serving.

*Nancy Krzykwa, Alto*

## Sour Cream Cucumber Sauce

- 3 green onions
- 1 lg. cucumber
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 2 c. sour cream
- salt and pepper

Mince onions. Peel and chop cucumber. Mix onion and cucumber with lemon juice and fold into sour cream. Season to taste with salt and pepper. Serve with poached salmon or any broiled or barbecued fish.

*Nancy Tower, Alto*

## Jeweled Lemon Sauce

- 1/2 c. sugar
- 2 T. cornstarch
- 1 1/4 c. water
- 1/3 c. bottled lemon juice
- 2 T. butter
- 1/2 c. maraschino cherries, quartered

In a saucepan, combine sugar and cornstarch; gradually stir in water. Cook, stirring constantly, until thick and clear. Remove from heat and add lemon juice and butter. Stir in quartered cherries. Serve warm with cake, tarts, ice cream, etc.

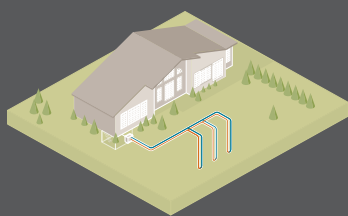
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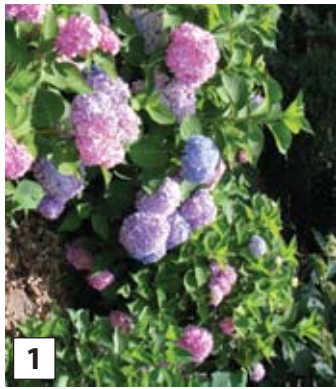
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# Growing Luscious Hydrangeas in Michigan

I'm into low-maintenance gardening. If a plant can't make it with adequate food and water, it's out of my garden. But I do confess to having one exception...hydrangeas...in particular *Hydrangea macrophylla*, with their eye-grabbing, massive flower heads. This doesn't make much sense given my sandy, dry soil, but after years of experimenting I have a bountiful hydrangea bed.

There are basically two types: those that bloom on old wood, meaning that the buds set the previous growing season and must be able to survive over the winter, and those that bloom on new wood, meaning the buds are set on new growth in the current growing season and don't have to survive a Michigan winter.

In Michigan, the easiest hydrangeas to grow are those that bloom on new wood such as *Hydrangea arborescens* (Smoothleaf Hydrangea). This is a fast-growing shrub that reaches 3- to 5-feet tall and wide. White flowers appear in late June through September on new wood. These flowers are great for drying, and the plant can be cut to the ground in late fall or early spring. The best-loved of this species is "Annabelle," with spectacular white flowers. It grows very well in all Michigan hardiness zones from 3 through 6, and is not fussy about soil and only requires watering during dry periods. It can be grown in full sun to part shade.

The big news this spring is a new cultivar of "Annabelle," with pink blooms called "Invincibelle Spirit™" by Proven Winners™. "Invincibelle Spirit" is extremely hardy and easy to grow, it will bloom year after year without the special pampering required by other hydrangeas," comments Tim Woods of Spring Meadow Nurseries in Grand Haven. Woods is also the product development and marketing manager for Proven Winners.

*Hydrangea paniculata* (panicle hydrangea) is another great type for Michigan, since it also blooms on new wood and has growing conditions similar to *Hydrangea arborescens*. It is a fast-growing shrub that reaches 6 to 15 feet, depending on the variety. Its flowers appear on panicles 6 to 12 inches long.

Another great new variety is Proven Winners' "Pinky Winky" (USDA Zone 4), which has two-toned pink and white flower heads and blooms in mid-summer. "Tardiva," with white flowers and a tinge of pink, is another popular variety.

Then we come to the prima donnas of the hydrangea world, *Hydrangea macrophylla* (bigleaf hydrangea) with their large, luscious flowers. These blooming beauties demand much more from Michigan gardeners in order to be good performers. Hydrangea macrophylla's flowers are either mopheads or lace-caps. Plants grow 3 to 6 feet, and require adequate moisture and fertile soil. Up until about six years ago, these hydrangeas only bloomed on old wood, making it almost impossible to grow in Michigan if you were not in hardiness Zone 6. But a breakthrough came with the introduction of a variety called "Endless Summer™" (Zone 5), the first of this type to bloom on new and old wood. Since then, a number of new varieties have come out that bloom on both new and old wood, such as Proven Winners' "City Line™" and "Let's Dance™" series.

The key to success with these hydrangeas

is careful site selection—one that is protected from the western sun and winds, provides good winter protection, and has fertile, somewhat moist, well-drained soil. After placing "Endless Summer" plants in numerous spots without a lot of luck, I finally settled on a fertile stretch of soil near a garage that faces east and is close to a water source. It provides plenty of morning to midday sun while sheltering the plants from the harsh western sun. Contrary to popular belief, these hydrangeas don't require a lot of fertilizer. One application of a good all-round fertilizer to the surrounding soil in the spring will do the trick. Nor do they require moist conditions; let them dry out, but not wilt. I wait until spring to prune back any dead wood and only after I've removed the 12-16 inches of chopped leaf mulch that I applied in late October (or before the first hard frost). The key here is leaving the mulch on the plants until all chance of a spring frost has passed. In Zone 5 that is around May 15. If it looks like there's a chance of a late frost after I've removed the mulch in mid-May, I cover the plants with sheets. Follow these tips and you, too, can enjoy these eye-grabbing hydrangeas.

Rita C. Henehan is an author, freelance writer and photographer. Her book, "The Michigan Gardener's Companion: An Insider's Guide to Gardening in the Great Lakes State," is available in bookstores.

1. "Endless Summer" was the first mophead *Hydrangea macrophylla* that could be grown in Michigan's Zone 5. Their color is determined by soil pH. Low pH (acidic soil) creates blue flowers; high pH (alkaline soil) creates pink.
2. "Annabelle," with its huge white flowers, is very easy to grow in all of Michigan (Zones 3–6).
3. New this spring is "Invincibelle Spirit" (Zone 3–6), by Proven Winners. With pink blossoms, its flower heads are slightly smaller than its sister plant, "Annabelle."
4. "Pinky Winky" (Zone 4) has two-toned pink and white panicle-shaped blooms and is easy to grow in our state.



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# Enjoy the Journey



Trains can provide your vacation transportation or be the focal point of your trip. **Chelsey Simpson**

In America's less populous regions, west of the Eastern seaboard, train travel occupies a place in many people's hearts—but not in their daily lives. Passenger trains are the stuff of folk songs, Western legends and bandit tales; cars and planes are the way we get around. When it comes to vacation planning, however, trains shouldn't be overlooked. They can be a cheaper, faster and less-stressful way to get from point A to point B, but most train enthusiasts will tell you it's the journey in between that really matters.

**Why Trains?** "I think every reason you would be going down the Interstate highway is a reason you would be riding Amtrak," says Marc Magliari, a media-relations manager for Amtrak. "In a lot of places and a lot of ways, we make more sense than driving." He notes that some people ride the trains because it's cheaper; but others are traveling upscale.

Amtrak, the nation's primary passenger-rail provider, operates 21,000 route miles in 46 states. For many riders, reaching one of Amtrak's 500 destinations is the main goal, while others are simply along for the ride and the scenery. When it comes to sightsee-

ing, there are also a number of non-Amtrak excursion trains operating across the country, such as the Pikes Peak Cog Railway and the Branson Scenic Railway.

Michael Gleason, owner and editor of TrainTraveling.com, offers a wealth of information about excursion trains and Amtrak. He also sees good reasons to take to the rails.

"Some people will go anywhere just to ride a train," he says. "Some people have never liked flying, and some feel flying is just getting worse and worse. There are destinations that you can get to faster on a train, by the time you wait at the airport, get your luggage and make your way into the city."

Planes allow you to cross the continent in a matter of hours, but if your trip isn't that far or you aren't in a hurry, taking a train could be a good alternative and a focal point for your next vacation. Here are some things to consider:

**Time** When you weigh the duration of a train journey against a comparable flight, make sure you consider how early you will have to arrive at the airport, as well as its location. While you don't want to invite the kind

of cinematic drama that comes with arriving at the last minute and running to catch your train, it also isn't necessary to arrive more than 30 minutes early for Amtrak service in most situations. And while airports are usually on the outskirts of cities, train stations are often in the heart of downtown.

Amtrak is an especially good alternative for flights with an in-air time of one hour or less, which means train travel might be a real time-saver if you plan to visit multiple cities within a region. For example, New York, Boston, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C., are all served by frequent rail service, and trips between each city take only two to four hours.

**Money** Traveling round-trip on Amtrak doesn't always come out cheaper than driving or flying, and there are often far fewer scheduling options. The real bargain aspect of rail travel is that long-haul trips can serve as your transportation, entertainment and lodging all in one. For example, if you really want to see America, you could buy two tickets with a Superliner Roomette (sleeping car for two) on the Southwest Chief from Chicago to Los Angeles. If you booked several months out for a trip in mid-July, the one-way cost would be about \$550 for the 43-hour journey. If you drove the same route, you would have to figure in gas prices and hotel stays, the view might not be as scenic, and you would have to do the driving.

Sleeping cars are an especially good deal for couples and families, because Amtrak charges by the room for sleepers, not by the person. And speaking of families, traveling Amtrak with kids can be another dime saver:

**Train S**

**Object of the game:**  
Move your game marker from one end of the train to the other by spotting things outside your car or train windows.

**Rules:**  
Find something (like coins) to serve as game markers. At the count of three, players start trying to spot one of the objects listed in the first car. As soon as



Children through the age of 15 receive half-price fare.

If traveling light is not your style, you will be comforted to know that Amtrak allows as many as three checked and two carry-on bags on some of its routes, and three additional pieces can be checked for just \$10 each. Unusual items, like ski equipment and bicycles, can also be checked on many trains without an extra charge. Food and even alcohol are also allowed as carry-ons, so plan a picnic, bring a corkscrew and make the ride a party.

**Intangibles** Trains are an experience. Many Amtrak routes offer a real departure from the billboard-lined Interstate, charting a course instead through the backyards, small towns and wild spaces of America. For example, Amtrak's California Zephyr passes through two mountain ranges and the Painted Desert; the Adirondack and the Vermonter are prime leaf-peeper routes in the fall; and the Empire Builder passes through Glacier National Park.

Comfort is another plus of train travel.

"Our coach seating is comparable to most airlines' first class, and our business seating exceeds that," Magliari says.

Food and restroom breaks, and general leg-stretching, are also easier and more entertaining on a train than in an airplane or car.

While taking a stroll, don't be surprised if a fellow passenger strikes up a conversation. Magliari says the dining car is often a hotspot for community building.

"Everyone's favorite first question is, 'Where are you going?'" he says. "And their

second favorite question will be, 'Is this your first trip?'"

**Tips** When it comes to planning a trip, Amtrak.com and TrainTraveling.com are both great resources. Amtrak offers an interactive route atlas and a space to order free planning publications. The site helps new travelers visualize their experience with helpful information about stations and services, and offers a virtual tour of each sleeping-cabin option.

Information about deals and discounts is also available at Amtrak.com. Military personnel, veterans and AAA members are just a few of the groups eligible for discounts. Magliari says booking well in advance of your trip is a good way to snag the best fares.

TrainTraveling.com has information about Amtrak, excursion trains and regional commuter trains. You can browse routes by region or state, and each listing offers a short description and a link for more information.

If you're taking a longer trip, research public transportation options in your destination city or make plans to rent a car. Amtrak recommends Washington, D.C., New York City, Orlando, Seattle, Boston, Chicago, Portland and San Diego as the cities with the most attractions easily accessed by foot.

Or instead of one big destination, chart a path that includes several stops. Start in Chicago and stop in Memphis, TN, for some barbecue and Elvis; head on to and Jackson, MS, for culture and civil rights history; then stay a few days in New Orleans before heading back. Don't overlook the value of small towns, like Dodge City, KS, which has a lot of Wild West history, and Ardmore, OK, where you'll find a toy and action-figure museum that kids of all sizes will love.

Be aware, however, that there isn't regular service in many smaller communities, and you might have to get on or off the train at inconvenient times in some places. The westbound train into Dodge City, for example, arrives just before 6 a.m., and the eastbound train rolls in after midnight.

Magliari recommends first-time riders, especially those who will be traveling with children, take a day trip first before committing to a long or overnight journey. Amtrak is making improvements, however, that should help the miles fly by: Soon all of their trains will have electric outlets at every seat so laptops, DVD players and other entertainment devices can be used easily.

Traveling by rail certainly isn't for everyone. But that could also be said of traveling in general. Long train trips are full of quiet

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you see one, call out its name and place your marker on the yellow car, then start looking for objects listed on the blue car. If two players see the same object, the first one who calls it out gets to move their piece while the second player keeps looking. You only have to spot one object in each car. The first player to reach the engine and see one of the items listed there wins.

moments when the soft hum and sway of the cars is the only thing of interest. But if you don't mind getting lost in scenery and you have a companion or two worth keeping, climb aboard, settle in, and enjoy the journey.

# It's Spring – Turtles are Out & About

**F**or winter-battered survivors looking for proof that we have climbed out of that long, cold Michigan season, this quote from the “Song of Solomon” points to a proof-positive sign.

*“...The time of the singing of birds is come, and the voice of the turtle is heard in our land.”*

True, most would be hard put to describe what a turtle's voice sounds like, but seeing a turtle out and about again is worth a million vocal sound tracks because, if you are seeing turtles again, winter is history.

Our native woodland Indians had many colorful stories about wildlife and the turtle was often a subject. One story said a turtle's back provided the base for the first land formed in the midst of the Great Lakes. Mackinac Island takes its native name from a word in the Ottawa language meaning “Great Turtle.”

Turtles have been with us a long time—even before there was an “us.” Fossil remains date back about 225 million years to the late Triassic period. For millions of years turtles shared the planet with dinosaurs; but unlike dinosaurs, turtles survived the ecological and climatic changes that caused the extinction of dinosaurs and many other life forms.

Michigan has a variety of turtles. You will find them in a mix of habitats, from wetlands to uplands and sandy sites. Each habitat niche satisfies the special living, breeding, and feeding needs of each of the 10 Michigan turtles. If we change these habitats through development, chemical contamination, or wetland drainage, the future of many turtles will be jeopardized. In fact, a number of specific turtle species are listed by Michigan as rare or threatened by the loss of vital habitats.

As spring warms things up, water-based turtles do what many turtles like doing the best – basking. A common sight around ponds and slow-moving streams is a bunch of turtles that have climbed onto a log or partly submerged limb to soak up the sun.



The boy is holding a painted turtle. Inset photo is an Eastern box turtle.



From late May into early July, turtles begin to breed. The females will leave the water and seek a sunny spot with little or no vegetation and moist, but not saturated, sand or soil. There they dig shallow nest cavities with their hind feet and deposit their eggs, which may be round or oval with hard or flexible shells.

Each nest is then refilled by the female with excavated material, and the eggs are abandoned to fate. Many (probably most) turtle eggs are eaten by raccoons or other land predators within a few days of being laid.

The surviving eggs will hatch in two to three months. In most cases, the young head immediately for cover in shallow water (aquatic species) or leaf litter (box turtles). Young painted turtles have the ability to withstand partial freezing and often remain in the nest over winter, emerging in spring.

A look at a turtle's beak tells what it eats. Flesh-eating turtles have hook shaped beaks that easily slice and tear food apart. Turtles that eat vegetation or shellfish have flat, wide beaks useful for mashing food. A few species are largely carnivorous (musk, map, Blanding's, and soft-shell turtles). Most, however, eat both plants and animals.

Young sliders, painted, Eastern box, spotted, and wood turtles consume mostly insects and other small animals, but eat more plants and fruits as adults.

Predacious and opportunistic snapping turtles will occasionally capture fish and young waterfowl.

Box turtles, the only terrapin among Michigan turtles, are land-roaming creatures more at home in woods than ponds. Perhaps the greatest danger for roaming box turtles is in crossing a road during warm weather. These turtles are the frequent loser in this game of highway life and death.

If you slow and stop to let a box turtle cross the road and decide to pick one up to move it safely to the land side, make certain you take it to the side it was headed for. This critter is one stubborn traveler; put it off on the side it came from and it will stubbornly turn and head right back in its original direction – and back into danger from passing cars.

The box turtle's range is shrinking in many of the upper Great Lakes states. In Michigan it is listed as a species of “special concern,” – one step below threatened.

All Michigan turtles are protected from commercial taking, with the exception of snapping turtles, which may be taken under a DNR fishing license. It is said that, depending on what cut of the snapper you eat, it may taste like chicken, pork, steak or lobster. Blanding's, Eastern box, wood, and spotted turtles are completely protected.

When you again see turtles out and about, don't expect to hear them speak. Their message is visual and nonverbal—but it speaks of spring and warm weather once again, a message many of us are happy to get.



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**LIQUIDATING BARNSIDE ANTIQUES** – Of St. Johns, MI. See listing at lambertauctions.com

## OUTDOORS

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**GARY'S STUMP GRINDING** – Cheaper by the dozen. 800-870-3871 or 231-587-9296.

## REAL ESTATE

**LAKEFRONT FOR SALE** – 2 mobile homes with lots in Oakwood Resort on Campbell Lake, near Hesperia. Purchase separately or together. 231-798-2712.

**200 FEET, WATER FRONTAGE** – Fishing, Morley, MI. \$22,400. 313-386-0924, Ed.

**LAKEFRONT CABIN** – Near Big Star Lake, Baldwin. 110 feet lake frontage, paved road, 1 mile to Pere Marquette River, 1.4 acres, garage, bunkhouse, perfect condition, \$99,000. 616-669-8424.

**200 FEET ON LAKE SUPERIOR** – Fabulous view, white, sandy beach, Brimley, MI. Near trails, 3-bedroom, 2-bath, mobile home, \$134,900 negotiable. Let's talk, 231-879-4381.

**85 ACRES IN THE BEAUTIFUL** – Algoma Highlands of Canada. Furnished log-construction cabin, a separate furnished guest house and detached sauna. Close proximity to Lake Superior, provincial parks, cross country skiing, hiking, inland lakes, rivers. Secluded but not remote setting, wooded and high land, plenty of wildlife. Has served as a bed and breakfast. \$140,000. Photos and details available, contact larry.wagle@gmail.com

**49 ORGANIC ACRES** – 3 miles west of Traverse City, MI. M-72 frontage, 2 roads, house, farm buildings. Appraised 2005 \$730,000, asking \$600,000. 517-663-5013.

## What Members Collect



Jackie Timmerman collects donkeys, including live ones. She has an adopted and foster donkey from Turning Pointe Donkey Rescue, and one that was given to her.



Linda Hodges has over 100 milk glass bud vases she has collected from yard sales. She says its surprising how few are alike.



Along with old Michigan boat licenses pictured here, John Andree of De Tour Village collects boat safety inspection tags and recreational vessel stickers.



Janet Ricard of Baldwin has over 200 items in her Snoopy collection.

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

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(Until the next issue of the magazine is published.)



**220 FEET RIVER FRONTAGE** – Muskegon River, Paris, MI. Phone 815-685-7010.

**400 FEET, SAUBLE RIVER** – Frontage, Freesoil, MI. 1,680 square-feet, 2-bedroom, 2-bath home, 2928685. Coldwell Banker A.L.M. Realty, call Michele Bueker, 231-723-3555.

**PRIME HUNTING PROPERTY** – Montcalm County, 4 miles from U.S. 131, 31 acres. \$159,900. Call 231-598-1615.

**FOR SALE, DEERFIELD ESTATES** – Home built in 2004 on 10 wooded acres, 3-bedroom, 2 full baths, large kitchen with dishwasher, stove and refrigerator, fieldstone fireplace, 2 large decks and 12 x 24 storage shed. \$106,000. By owner, 616-899-2664.

**3-BEDROOM, 2-BATH WATERFRONT** – Home on Brevort Lake. For sale or seasonal rental, offered by Mackinac Properties Real Estate. 906-643-9242.

#### VACATIONS

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

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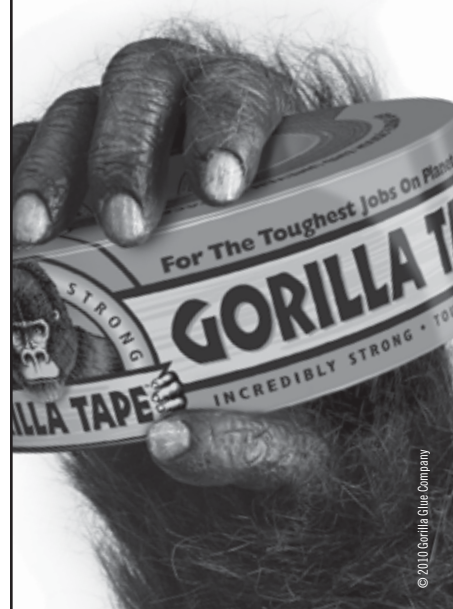
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# Energy Drains

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

can be achieved.”

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

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

## Appliance Accountability

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

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

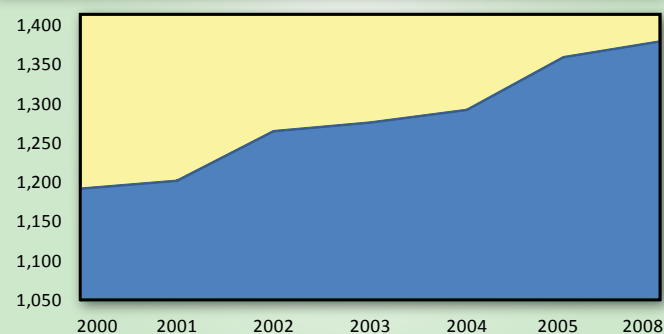


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## Appliances more efficient, but energy use rises

Although appliances have become more efficient, American consumers are adding more electronic devices in their homes. As a result, overall energy use rises every year.

Average Annual Residential Electricity Use *billion kilowatt-hours*



Source: U.S. Energy Information Administration, Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers

Since 2000:

Energy used by clothes washers drops 64%

Refrigerator, dishwasher energy use drops 30%

Consumer energy use rises 15.6%



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

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

### Silent Energy Drains

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

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

### Cash for Appliances

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 'Unlimited' Hot Water?

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

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

### Hidden Costs

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

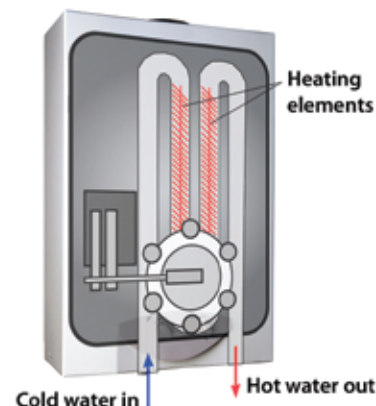
For example, a traditional tank water heater with 4,500-watt elements operates on #10 wire and a 30-amp circuit breaker. One whole-house tankless model boasts four 7,000-watt elements for a total electrical load of 28,000 watts, requiring wire and a circuit breaker that will handle at least 120 amps.

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

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

#### A tankless water heater at work

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



Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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

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

### Other Options

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

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

—NRECA Cooperative Research Network

# Waste Not

**W**hen my parents lived in Ironwood, they remodeled an abandoned two-story farmhouse in their retirement years, starting around the time of the mid-'70s energy crisis. They did it in stages, tearing down walls, adding insulation, replacing leaky windows with top-of-the-line double-paned marvels, fixing the plumbing, replacing the roof. They created a fortress against the rugged winters that blew in from Lake Superior.

They were Depression kids and, like many others of that era, they knew how to get by with less, and by not wasting what they had. They weren't cheap, just smart. If we were as smart, we'd have been doing the same thing years ago. But energy got cheap and it didn't cost us much to waste it. So we did.

Now we need rebates from government and utilities to do the right thing.

There's an interesting business model. What business tries to get you to buy less of their products? Do farmers offer incentives to drink less milk or orange juice? Does Shell give you a rebate if you buy a fuel-slinging car?

In Michigan, you're paying a little extra on your bill so your co-op can offer state-mandated energy optimization programs designed to help you use less electricity. That's a good thing; there are many benefits to using less.

But many people, like Frank and Virginia Buda, learned early on how to use less, and they've been doing it for years, without incentives or rebates. A healthy frugality is built into their DNA.

Saving energy can be as simple as the suggestion of Thumb Electric member Dorothy Simmons of Millington, who writes:

"Why not make cupcakes instead of a cake? Cupcakes take 15 to 20 minutes to bake and a cake takes 27 to 30 minutes in the oven. You can save about 10 minutes of electricity."

Or, take Chuck and Kathy Titus of Johannesburg. The Great Lakes Energy members explain their frugality in a letter to *Country Lines*:

"I have been a customer of yours for some 30 years now and have always tried to use as little of your product as I possibly can—not because it isn't a good, quality product, but simply because I take great pleasure in saving money in any way I can. And this applies to not only electricity, but every form of energy or resource I consume, including propane, firewood, water and food. In fact, my wife of 14 months continually maintains I should write an instruction book on the subject since she is amazed at how little of each we use and the lengths I will go to save them.

"I was therefore pleased to read in Brian Sloboda's 'Killing Energy Vampire' article [February 2010] that the average electric co-op member consumes roughly 13,900 kWh per year, finally giving me something to compare my own figures with to see how I am doing. So, I went back through last year's electric bills and discovered that in 2009 I consumed 2,750 kWh, or roughly 20 percent of the national average. Not bad, huh? This is a result of turning off anything that uses electricity whenever not in use, purchasing Energy Star appliances with only the highest ratings, using only fluorescent lamps or LEDs, (thanks for the free bulbs by the way) and making certain nothing uses electricity unnecessarily through the use of eight separate outlet strips that are on only when in use. I must confess I could trim this even more by cutting back on the use of my Christmas lights, but I cannot seem to get over my childhood needs of seeing the house lit up in November and December (and part of January, to be honest).

"Although initially my primary consideration was my pocketbook, I have long since become a conservationist of the highest order due to my continued belief that life as we know it today in this nation of ours may very well become contingent upon our changing our lifestyles to suit the energy available instead of the other way around. I have a favorite saying about eating that goes, 'I remember wishing that I could afford to eat the way I wanted to. And now that I can finally afford to eat the way I want to, I cannot afford to eat the

way I want to.' Meaning, of course, there are ramifications to eating too many of the things we truly enjoy just as there will be consequences of our consuming and wasting too much of our resources needlessly. My wife and I lead a very satisfying and pleasurable lifestyle here while at the same time using as little of the earth's resources as possible.

"It has even become a pleasurable experience to see just how little we can get by with and my wife is now participating and seemingly caught up in the movement. We cook on a range with electronic burner ignition and in the winter take a great deal of pleasure cooking on the wood stove we heat with. We also heat most of our dish water on the wood stove and shower with a tankless water heater. And although we do heat with firewood we keep the temperature at 68 in the day time and lower at night, wearing more clothing to keep comfortable. We have even been known to snuggle together under a blanket while watching a movie, probably because we still like each other only having been married a year.

"So, I guess my purpose in writing is to say, 'keep up the good work of providing dependable, affordable electricity, and letting people know using less is a real necessity today and in the future.'"

Unlike Virginia and Frank, Kathy and Chuck, and Dorothy, too many of us never learned that energy efficiency is an investment that pays back. Now we have to be incentivized with our own money. Shame on us.



*Mike Buda is the founding editor of Country Lines and continues to work on the magazine, as well as other activities of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His parents now live near Minneapolis. Email Mike at [mbuda@countrylines.com](mailto:mbuda@countrylines.com).*



# Soy

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2 tablespoons soybean oil  
½ cup vertically sliced onions  
2 cups (about ½ lb) Chinese pea pods  
1 cup sweet red bell pepper, cubed  
6 oz cooked pork, cut in 2-inch strips  
½ cup sliced mushrooms  
2 tablespoons soy sauce  
1 teaspoon minced fresh ginger root  
½ teaspoon sugar  
Pepper to taste



Heat oil in large non-stick skillet or wok over medium-high heat about 1 minute or until hot. Add onions and stir-fry about 2 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and stir-fry about 5 minutes or until vegetables are crisp-tender and pork is thoroughly heated.

Makes 4 servings.

Per serving: 206 calories, 15.6 grams protein, 11.4 grams fat (50% calories from fat), 10.3 grams carbohydrates, 41 mg cholesterol, 2.6 grams fiber, 545 mg sodium.

Source: [www.soyfoods.com](http://www.soyfoods.com)



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# Ontonagon County REA

## 2010 Annual Meeting

### June 19

#### Annual Meeting Notice for Members of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

Notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association will be on Saturday, June 19, 2010, at Chassell High School. Registration will begin at 9:30 a.m. and the meeting at 10 a.m. Members attending the annual meeting will receive a \$5 credit on their July bill.

## Free Meal ~ Cash Prize Drawings ~ Bill Credit

**T**he board of directors and employees of your electric co-op invite you to join them at the 2010 annual meeting (see notices above and right for details).

This is a chance to visit with your neighbors and friends from throughout our five-county service area and participate in your co-op's affairs. You will hear about the state of the co-op over the past year, as well as our vision for the future.

Newly-elected directors from the Lake Mine/Toivola, Pelkie/Keweenaw Bay/Herman and Chassell districts will also be seated at the meeting.

### *Meeting Highlights:*

- ▶ 9:30 a.m., Chassell High School
- ▶ Updates on co-op affairs by co-op president & general manager
- ▶ Guest Speaker: Mike Peters, President & CEO, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association
- ▶ Director election results:
  - Lake Mine/Toivola, • Pelkie/Keweenaw Bay/Herman and • Chassell districts
- ▶ Update on your co-op's financial health
- ▶ Drawing for cash prizes
- ▶ Lunch

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