

MICHIGAN Country Lines



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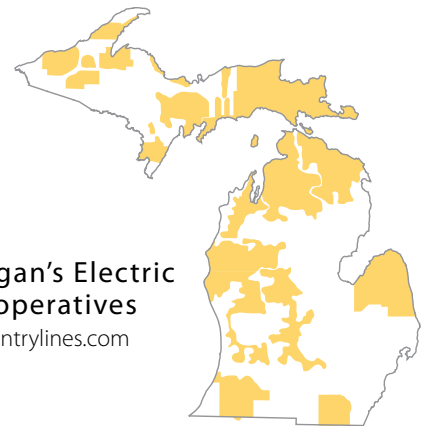
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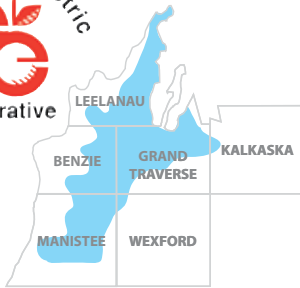
Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
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On the Cover

Ice climber Paul Garrison works his way up one of many ice curtains that line Sand Point along the Lake Superior shoreline in Munising.

Photo - © Shawn Malone





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Another Basket of Power

Over the past years, I have written about wholesale power supply many times. Most recently, back in the November/December issue, I explained the purchase of a natural gas facility (the Sumpter plant) downstate by our wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative.

The goal of Wolverine and its members has always been to have a diversified portfolio of wholesale supply capable of providing long-term rate stability. This includes having different facilities as well as different fuel supply sources in order to avoid having “all our eggs in one basket.”

Late last month, Wolverine and FirstEnergy Generation Corporation completed a transaction (see story, p. 24) that gives Cherryland Electric Cooperative and the other Wolverine members yet another “basket” of wholesale power supply. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission approved Wolverine’s purchase of a 6.65 percent interest in the output of Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC). The sale was made to Peninsula Generation Cooperative, which is owned, controlled and operated by Wolverine, and was established solely to own generating assets and buy power for Wolverine and its members.

The Ohio Valley Electric Corporation is a group of investor-owned and co-op electric utilities. Wolverine purchased its interest in OVEC from FirstEnergy, which retained a 4.85 percent interest in OVEC.

Plants in the OVEC fleet generate nearly 2,400 megawatts (MW) of electricity, which means that Wolverine purchased a very small slice of a huge pie. The sale involves about 150 MW of capacity from two coal-fired power plants owned by OVEC in Ohio and Indiana. While this may sound like a tangled web, remember that a diversified portfolio +

not all our eggs in one basket = long-term rate stability.

How does all this affect your rates?

In the short-term, the OVEC purchase means that our rates will be going up at some point in 2011. The long answer is

that, after the increase, we will have rate stability for more years than would be possible with purchasing power on the open market or under new fixed contracts. On page 8, you will find notice of a meeting during which Cherryland Electric Cooperative’s board will consider a higher Power Supply Cost Recovery (PSCR) number to accommodate this purchase, the Sumpter plant, and whole-

sale increases in general.

Again, ownership gives us a known quantity that a fluctuating market simply cannot. Because Wolverine needs total capacity in excess of 500 MW to serve its members’ needs, we will still be seeking other “baskets” of wholesale power. Some of these sources may come from other asset purchases, more long-term contracts, or the open market, and potentially include different fuel types such as natural gas and further renewable supplies.

What about the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture in Rogers City? That project remains in the court system at this writing (see p. 24). It also remains a viable project proposed for a great location. Due to the unknowns of the legal system, the desire to own an asset, and the affordability of the OVEC purchase, Wolverine closed the OVEC deal while keeping the Rogers City project open as a future option.

Wolverine and Cherryland remain focused on a diversified, affordable and reliable portfolio of power supply. The OVEC transaction is simply another “basket” of power supply that moves us in that direction far into the future.



Tony Anderson
General Manager



Two New Electric Heat Rates

Cherryland Electric Cooperative has rolled out two new, noninterruptible electric heat rates. These rates replace our existing interruptible heat rates for all new electric heat loads.

For over 20 years, Cherryland residential and small commercial members have taken advantage of our interruptible heat rates. In exchange for a lower energy rate, members agreed to give Cherryland the right to interrupt (turn off) their heat within predefined limits. Members taking advantage of this had to install a backup heat source to ensure sufficient heat during the winter hours when Cherryland might “interrupt.”

Our two new rates continue the tradition of offering rate incentives for electric heat loads. The new Efficient Heating (EH) rate is priced at a discount of 1.5 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh) off our regular residential energy rate (about 8.5 cents per kWh). The second new rate, Resistance Heating (RH), is priced at a discount of 0.5 cents per kWh off the regular residential rate.

A host of forces are driving this change.

First, there is less incentive to attract interruptible load at the wholesale level right now.

Second, the industry and regulatory emphasis today is on reducing energy consumption in total, rather than shifting consumption to an off-peak time.

Third, new generation plant construction hurdles underscore the importance of using what energy we have more efficiently.

Fourth, the daily administrative and maintenance costs incurred by Cherryland to administer the interruptible heat rate program far exceed the proportionate share of members benefitting from the rate.

Lastly, moving away from our existing interruptible heat rates allows participating members to save up-front installation costs and avoid compliance hassles.

The EH rate in particular seeks to reinforce current trends in home electric heating. Air-to-air heat pumps and geothermal systems now account for the majority of new electric heat load on Cherryland lines. These highly efficient heating systems compete operationally against other fuel types.

Where these systems struggle a bit to compete is in the up-front installation costs. In conjunction with the 1.5 cents per kWh rate incentive, Cherryland will also provide up-front incentives to those members investing in qualifying efficient electric heat systems. Thus, through our EH rate we are encouraging not just electric heat, but the most efficient heat sources commonly available.

For those members currently in full compliance with one of Cherryland’s interruptible heat rates, they can sit tight. We do not plan to migrate existing heat

rate members over to the new rates at this time. The timing of any future migration will be determined in part by signals from the wholesale market and will likely be a gradual transition that is spread over a few years.

On the other hand, members who simply prefer not to worry about heat interruption and the associated equipment or want to get rid of that backup heat source can choose to move over to the new heat rate anytime. Just contact our office and we will help you make the transition.

Kevin Cragg is the member services manager at Cherryland Electric and oversees the Energy Optimization program.



Come visit us at the

Home Builders EXPO 2011

Feb. 26, 9 a.m. – 6 p.m. & Feb. 27, 11 a.m. – 4 p.m.



Cherryland’s Booth: #646 & 647

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Efficiency Tax Credits Drop, But Don't Disappear

Benefit reverts to \$500 lifetime cap for upgrades.

Energy efficiency improvements are great for lowering electric bills. But sometimes the up-front cost can be a drawback.

Since 2005, Congress has enacted a series of tax breaks for consumers who take steps to make their homes more energy efficient. In December, the outgoing 111th Congress approved extending some popular efficiency tax credits through Dec. 31, 2011, but at greatly reduced levels.

"While we were hopeful that the tax credits would be higher than what was approved, we are encouraged that this valuable incentive for homeowner investment was retained," says Art Thayer, director of energy efficiency programs, Michigan Electric

Cooperative Association.

The federal "Tax Relief, Unemployment Insurance Reauthorization, and Job Creation Act of 2010" reduces the total lifetime credit that can be claimed on energy efficiency improvements made between 2006 and 2011 (excluding 2008, when no credit was available) from \$1,500 to \$500. It also lowers the percentage of efficiency upgrade costs consumers can recover, from 30 percent in 2009-2010 to 10 percent in 2011.

"Basically, energy efficiency tax credits revert to levels approved for 2006 and 2007, before the federal stimulus bill pumped up the program," Thayer explains. "There's also a lifetime cap of \$500 for any work that's done. But if you

haven't applied for an energy efficiency tax credit before, this extension gives you a chance to recoup some of the costs needed to make your home more efficient."

There are also maximum allowances for different upgrades. For installing more efficient windows, the credit is limited to \$200, with a \$300 cap for "any item of energy-efficient building property." Other restrictions include:

- ▶ **Furnaces** (\$150): Must have at least 95 percent (up from 90 percent) annual fuel utilization efficiency (AFUE). Oil furnaces and boilers were returned to the single furnace category at 95 percent AFUE.
- ▶ **Advanced main air circulating fan** (\$50): Must utilize less than 2 percent of a furnace's total energy consumption.
- ▶ **Central air conditioner** (\$300): Must have a seasonal energy efficiency ratio (SEER) of at least 16 and an energy efficiency rating (EER) of at least 13.
- ▶ **Air-source heat pump** (\$300): Must have at least a heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF) of 9, SEER of 16, and EER of 13.
- ▶ **Biomass fuel stove** (\$300): Requires a thermal efficiency rating of at least 75 percent.

produced in America during 2008, 2009 and 2010.

"While consumers cannot take these types of credits directly, these units may be promoted by manufacturers, or by state or utility efficiency programs, during the next two years," notes the Tax Incentives Assistance Project. The group tracks efficiency incentives at energytaxincentives.org.

Renewable Tax Credits Remain Active

Renewable energy tax credits created by the federal stimulus bill don't expire until Dec. 31, 2016. These cover 30 percent of materials and installation for residential solar panels, solar water heaters, small wind turbines, and geothermal heat pumps. Details are available at energystar.gov/taxcredits.

Claiming Tax Credits

Tax credits are beneficial because they directly reduce, dollar for dollar, any taxes you owe. Be sure to keep your receipts and your Manufacturer's Certification Statement (a signed statement from the manufacturer certifying that the product or component qualifies for the tax credit) for your records. Claim the credit by using IRS Form 5695.

Looking for Help?

Some electric co-ops and state government offices offer additional subsidies or rebates to consumers who make their homes more energy efficient. You can find this information at michigan-energy.org. For a list of federal, state and local energy efficiency rebates and tax credits, visit the "Database for State Incentives for Renewables & Efficiency," a project funded by the U.S. Department of Energy, at dsireusa.org.

Recycled Paper *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 that required to make paper from pulp.

Scholarships Offered

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

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

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

Applications are available at countrylines.com; click on "Youth," email wolford@countrylines.com, or call 517-351-6322, ext. 205. Eligible applications must be postmarked by *April 4, 2011*.

Builders, Manufacturers Benefit, Too

The bill reinstates a credit of up to \$2,000 for builders (during 2010 and 2011) of energy-efficient residences that use no more than half the energy of a 2003 national model energy code home (the credit had expired in 2009). In addition, U.S.-based manufacturers of clothes washers, dishwashers and refrigerators will receive credits ranging from \$25-\$200 for efficient appliance models



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Solar, Wind Affordable?

We are not being told what the costs are for solar and wind power run by individuals, companies, government-run facilities, etc. Solar and wind power generating plants are subsidized by municipal, state and federal government up to 80 percent of the capital cost of the plant. Those governments are way over their heads in debt right now and should not burden you and me with more debt.

After the solar and wind plants come on-line, the utility must pay for any excess which the owners cannot use themselves. The amount utilities must pay is at least three or four times what the power cost is from coal and nuclear. A utility must be able to meet peak loads, maintain transmission lines, and pay other fixed and variable overhead costs.

This is a direct subsidy for the owner of solar and wind generating facilities which everyone else pays for in their electric bill. The utility has to raise their rates to make it possible for others to enjoy lower rates, which will add a large amount to your electric bill.

—John Birkle, Stanwood

"The Music in Our Lives"

I am a faithful reader of your "Ramblings" column in *Michigan Country Lines*. This past one ("The Music In Our Lives," Nov/Dec 2010) really stirred up something in my memory

and thanks to the internet, I have had some help!

You see, in early October I had the great fortune to tour 7 European countries, plus London. After crossing the English Channel, I saw the White Cliffs of Dover. This prompted something in my brain about that song, but could not recall the words. Since there were 50+1 on that tour (I am the #1 and say that because I was truly the Senior Citizen there), most of them were in their 60s or 70s and were no help to me. I got a blank look when I asked about the song, but it floated around in my head for several days and the words did not come. Thankfully, I have searched the internet and found the words, popular at WWII. That dates me, but there were some great songs...

And, as they say, "this is the rest of the story." And yes, I also love Tony Bennett.

A devoted reader,

—Doris Dale

Thanks for sharing, Doris. That is a terrific song: "There'll be Bluebirds Over the White Cliffs of Dover."

—Mike Buda
mbuda@countrylines.com

I am an old guy (89 in March) who grew up in the Depression and pre-World War Two years, the 1930s, so I like that old music. I lived most of my life in Hazel Park, a suburb of Detroit, although I was born on a Montana homestead,

moving to Michigan when I was about four. The house I grew up in was built on cedar posts, no foundation, no bathroom...an outside toilet, to take a bath was in a wash tub in the kitchen, heating water on a stove.



Country Lines reader and music lover, Bob English

Throughout my life I had lots of hobbies and was not very good at any of them, but enjoyed them. As a boy, I built crystal sets and one-tube radios which I would listen to radio programs with earphones in bed, and I built model airplanes (rubber band motors, couldn't afford small gas engines) and did photography...

Now, about music, I can't carry a tune, never learned to dance (can't keep time with the music) but I enjoy listening. While in high school (Big Band Era), my friend had a portable radio with a record player on top, played one 78 record at a time (33s or 45s were not yet out); he had a collection of about 20 or 30 records. You couldn't listen to too many records as the phonograph motor would drain the batteries and then batteries were not rechargeable.

In 1973, I bought a cottage on the Black River, near Alverno, to stay in when we visited my daughter who lived in Cheboygan. Still own the cottage, that's how I still get *Michigan Country Lines*. My

wife passed away in 2002, and I moved to Cheboygan to be near my daughter, a couple years later my son moved to Cheboygan.

My current hobbies are going to yard sales and auctions and buying phonograph records. I must have about 4,000 or 5,000, nothing valuable, but a lot of good tunes.

Of these, I have copied about 1,000 or more into my computer, which I listen to while playing solitary on my computer.

I enjoyed your article "The Music in Our Lives" very much, thank you for writing it.

—Bob English, Cheboygan
P.S. I did work...retired in 1972 after 30 years at Ford Motor.

Hats & Energy

I would like to respond to Carolyn Laarman's "Idea for Keeping Warm & Saving Energy."

While I think wearing a hat inside is an awesome idea to help stay warmer, this is not possible at my children's school. They have a strict "no hat/hoodie" policy in force at North Ohio Elementary in Gaylord. The only exception to this rule is at lunchtime. The kids dress for recess BEFORE they go to lunch. They sit in a crowded cafeteria for 20 minutes, fully dressed, while trying to eat and then go out in the cold for recess. I asked about it last year when my kids were in kindergarten. I was told it is easier for teachers to assist kids in dressing in the classroom before lunch and then the teachers can take their lunches while the kids eat and their prep hour while the kids are on recess, and that there are not enough aides to help after the kids are done eating.

—Billie Zinke

Tell us about your favorite Michigan-made products!

Share a few paragraphs with us about your favorite Michigan-made product and we may write about it. Be sure to share why you like it and if you have a unique story to go with it, please send that, too. Email by March 10 to czuker@countrylines.com or send to: *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864.



Cherryland to Hold PSCR Meeting

Cherryland will hold a meeting for members on Feb. 21 to discuss its Power Supply Cost Recovery (PSCR) charge. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. at Cherryland's office in Grawn.

The PSCR allows a utility to pass along to its members any increases or decreases in the cost of fuel or purchased power.

After hearing member comments, Cherryland's board will decide on a PSCR increase that will affect all rate classes.

Pay Your Bill Online

Want to save money and pay your Cherryland Electric Cooperative bill online? It's easy to do. You can set up your accounts to get only an email bill—no more paper bills.

If you would like to do this, access your account on cherrylandelectric.com. It will prompt you immediately after you sign in to make a decision on whether or not you want the paper bill to continue; if you do, check the box. If not, simply press "update."

Questions about online payment can be answered by Cherryland's member service department at 486-9200.

Financing Program for Energy Efficiency Goes Statewide

Now, every homeowner in Michigan with an old, drafty home and high energy bills can make it more comfortable and energy efficient with no up-front cost, thanks to the Michigan Saves Home Energy Loan Program.

On Feb. 15, 2011, this exciting new program will be available statewide to offer Michigan families easy and affordable financing options for energy-saving home improvements. Qualifying improvements include weatherization, furnace and water heater upgrades, and windows and doors—improvements aimed at saving electricity, propane, heating oil or natural gas.

"Energy efficiency is always a smart investment," said Michigan Saves program director, Jeff Williams. "Michigan Saves is committed to making energy efficiency easy and affordable for Michigan families. With Michigan Saves, even cash-strapped homeowners can afford the kind of home improvements that make their home more comfortable and use less energy."

Through the Home Energy Loan Program, homeowners who qualify can get unsecured financing at 7 percent APR for up to \$12,500

in energy efficiency improvements. Your authorized contractor will walk you through the loan application process. The application process takes just a few minutes, and no home equity or home appraisal is needed. Borrowers must have a credit score of 640 or better, and some additional underwriting criteria applies.

This program is another example of how electric co-ops are working to serve their members.

Cherryland Electric helped

make the Home Energy Loan Program possible by sponsoring a pilot program with Michigan Saves, Brown Lumber Sales and Service, and Members Credit Union through most of 2010. Based on that experience, Michigan Saves was able to offer loans to even more people at an even lower rate.

Homeowners must work with a Michigan Saves authorized contractor in order to access the financing. Don't be cold this winter! Visit michigansaves.org to find an authorized contractor near you and learn more about this statewide program that makes "going green" easy and affordable.



Scholarships

Cherryland Electric Co-op's scholarship for a high school senior is worth \$4,000, and an adult scholarship for \$500 is also available. *See page 28 for details.*

Teen Travel

Cherryland offers travel opportunities for high school students. *See back cover.*

Annual Meeting is June 16

Cherryland Electric Cooperative will hold its 73rd annual meeting on Thursday, June 16, at Wuerfel Park, home of the Traverse City Beach Bums minor league baseball team.

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

"Switching the annual meeting to Wuerfel Park has been wildly popular with our members," says General Manager Tony Anderson. "We used to attract between 300 and 400 members when our meetings were at Cherryland. Now we are averaging four times that number—about 1,600 members—since we moved the meeting to Wuerfel Park four years ago."

Wuerfel Park is a Cherryland Electric Cooperative member.



New Regulations on Horizon

The EPA is moving beyond Congressional intent on greenhouse gas emissions.

Efforts by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to regulate emissions of greenhouse gases from stationary sources, like power plants, as pollutants under the federal Clean Air Act have drawn objections from Congressional and state leaders and others who say the law—last revised in 1990—was never intended for such purposes.

“EPA is not equipped to consider the very real potential for economic harm when regulating [greenhouse gas] emissions,” stated governors of 20 states in a March 2010 letter to congressional Democratic and Republican leaders. “Without that consideration, regulation will place heavy administrative burdens on state environmental quality agencies, will be costly to consumers, and could be devastating to the economy and jobs.”

Created in 1970, EPA fashions regulations to protect the environment and safeguard public health as authorized in bills passed by Congress. Over time, its jurisdiction has grown to cover numerous items that impact electric bills, including power plant emissions, coal combustion byproducts, and water.

While EPA has begun promulgating a series of climate change-themed rules that will boost the cost of electricity and other energy prices—resulting in higher prices for consumers and businesses—few actions have been as controversial as its move to curb greenhouse gas emissions, notably carbon dioxide, from stationary sources. A 2007 U.S.

Supreme Court ruling determined that EPA can regulate greenhouse gas emissions from new motor vehicles under the Clean Air Act if the agency determines they threaten public health and welfare. In April 2009, EPA took the formal step of issuing an endangerment finding on the emissions and soon began developing greenhouse gas regulations that have since expanded to include power plants (as of January 2011).

Electric cooperatives are urging Congress to delay EPA regulation of greenhouse gas emissions from power plants until there is sufficient time to consider a legislative solution.

“It is the responsibility of Congress to decide this issue, not EPA,” declares National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) CEO Glenn English. “The Clean Air Act remains the wrong tool to handle greenhouse gas emissions from stationary sources—it was designed to reduce specific pollutants on a local or regional level where proven technology existed. When it comes to controlling carbon dioxide emissions from coal- and natural gas-fired power plants, tested, commercially viable solutions are not available.”

He concludes: “In many ways, regulating carbon dioxide emissions under the law is akin to using a hammer to tighten a screw. You may eventually get the screw hammered in, but better tools are needed—ones that don’t put your electric bills at risk during these tough economic times.”

“In many ways, regulating carbon dioxide emissions under the law is akin to using a hammer to tighten a screw.”



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

COOL AS ICE

Never heard of ice climbing? Climbing bloggers and others call it “one of Michigan’s greatest wonders.” Here, Linda Wappner climbs in “the Amphitheater”—one of the many ice curtains that line Sand Point Road, near Munising.



Michiganders fish, snowmobile, ski, skate and slide their way through winter, but ice climbing may be a sport you haven't heard of for battling Cabin Fever. Surprisingly, ice climbing has been here for over 30 years, and our state has the third largest ice climbing festival in the U.S., just behind New Hampshire, with Colorado ranking first.

The Michigan Ice Fest (Feb. 4-6; 906-226-7112 or michiganicefest.com), near Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore in Munising, is a chance to see if this sport is your cup of hot chocolate.

The nonprofit event is bringing in five of the best professional climbers in the U.S. and the world to teach how-to and safety, says Fest organizer Bill Thompson, a seasoned climber and co-owner of Down Wind Sports in Marquette, which provides rental gear and equipment demos at reasonable rates for the three-day weekend; lessons are additional.

The pros are 30-year climbing veteran (including Himalayan expeditions) Mark Wilford; Michigan native Sam Elias, who specializes in solo climbing (the most free and dangerous type); Roger Strong, a leading mixed-terrain climber, best known as the captain on the first two seasons of "The Deadliest Catch" on the Discovery™ Channel; worldwide climbing guide Majka Burhardt; and Steve House, the best all-around climber in the U.S. and best high-altitude climber in the world.

"Having these guys come [to teach ice climbing] is kind of like having Larry Byrd, Michael Jordan and Magic Johnson come in to do a basketball clinic," Thompson says.

Last year's event drew over 400 men, women and kids, from first-time climbers to guys who get paid to climb. "In the evenings," Thompson says, "we pack everyone together in a room above Sydney's Restaurant and make some of the professionals get up and tell us stories. It's a

great time to meet new people or catch up with old friends."

While some enthusiasts even night-climb with a head lamp, Thompson believes the sport is actually safer than others. "It's probably safer than snowmobiling," he says. "No one in Michigan... or the world...has died while ice climbing, and about 30 people die every year just in the U.P. from snowmobiling." The Ice Fest is about teaching people proper technique and safety to lessen those risks, and to shorten the learning curve.

Megan Ostrowski, 22, a local ice and rock climber, agrees. "It's safe if you do it right...I'm accident prone but have never gotten hurt," she laughs, and believes it's something most anyone can do because you don't need previous climbing skills to try it. Climbers wear safety gear, but the biggest danger, she says, is ice breaking off. However, she hasn't seen anyone with injuries other than a few lip or face cuts.

Lake Superior's shore, mostly near Munising, Grand Island and Big Bay, is about the only Michigan area where you can do natural ice climbing, Thompson says, but if going north isn't an option, you can still try this sport. Artificial ice climbing is offered at Peabody Ice Climbing (peabodyiceclimbing@gmail.com or 810-908-1735), with two towers, 45 and 75 feet tall, located on an old farm in Fenton. It's a good place for seasoned climbers to train and beginners to learn. Indoor rock climbing walls and climbing gyms are also good training, Thompson says, and have helped ice climbing gain popularity in the last six years.

People are drawn to rock climbing, he explains, partly because it's something you can't just go and buy gear for and do on your own, and it takes place in spectacular, beautiful areas. "There's something romantic about climbing in general—it's very unique."

Winter Camping?

If ice climbing isn't your idea of celebrating winter, how about winter camping? At least 10 Michigan state parks offer this unique experience, including Algonac, Bay City, Fort Custer, Ludington, North Higgins Lake, Tahquamenon Falls and the Waterloo Recreation Area-Portage Campground. Mitchell, Traverse City and Rifle River parks offer heated restrooms and many offer mini cabins with varying amenities. You can even rent round, pointy-top yurts at Pinckney and Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park.

Most parks plan plenty of winter activities, including a free fishing weekend in February, snowshoe-making classes, cross-country skiing by lantern, and snowmobile trails. Or, stop at Muskegon State Park Winter Sports Center to enjoy the new quarter-mile skating trail in the woods, as well as skating rinks and a luge run.

Visit michigan.gov/dnre or contact Maia Stephens (stephensm3@michigan.gov or 517-373-8378) for camping plans, and michigan.org or the "GO-Get Outdoors" website for activities at state parks, recreation areas and harbors.



Photos: © Shawn Malone

Above: A helmet, ice tools and boot crampons are some of the gear needed for ice climbing, as shown by Aaron Wener, making his way down after a climb. **Left:** At 6 feet 2 inches tall, Brian Malone stands dwarfed by magnificent ice curtains, formed as water seeps along the Grand Island cliffs in Lake Superior, across from Munising. For the **cover** shot, photographer Shawn Malone, an Alger Delta Co-op member, dangled 80 feet in the air from a harness to get the angle.



RED TAPE OVERLOAD

A flurry of government regulations are set to hit your electric bill.

The cost of electricity hinges on several things—availability, prices for power plant fuels and materials, and the amount of power consumers demand. Now a slew of volatile federal rulemaking has hit power producers.

Perhaps the most pressing challenge facing electric utilities involves U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulation of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases as pollutants under the federal “Clean Air Act.” On Jan. 2, EPA began restricting the amount of greenhouse gases emitted by fossil fuel-burning power plants and other stationary industrial sources.

This action will significantly impact electricity production. Fossil fuels like coal and natural gas fuel 70 percent of America’s electricity generation. Since electric co-ops are more dependent on coal than investor-owned utilities and municipal electric systems, the end result will be higher electric bills.

“Clearly, EPA is wielding the Clean Air Act as a bludgeon, pressing it into service because the outgoing Congress was unable to agree on how to curb greenhouse gas emissions blamed for contributing to climate change,” notes Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Association (NRECA) based

in Arlington, VA.

By failing to pass legislation addressing carbon dioxide and greenhouse gases, Congress essentially left the decision-making up to the EPA. But the Clean Air Act was never intended to regulate carbon dioxide—it was enacted to fight smog and acid rain with proven technologies. No viable, commercially tested solution exists to remove carbon dioxide emissions from power plants.

“Co-ops expect EPA’s rulemaking will eventually have the practical effect—absent breakthrough technology—of eliminating coal as a power plant option,” remarks English. “On top of this, the cost of switching from coal, which has traditionally been plentiful and affordable, to other fuels will be high.”

Only two alternate baseload generation sources can meet America’s demand for safe, reliable and affordable electricity—natural gas, which is priced on a volatile commodities market (and has carbon dioxide emissions to contend with), and nuclear power, requiring a long lead time for construction.

“Electric co-ops are urging Congress and the White House to approve a two-year moratorium on EPA regulation of carbon dioxide greenhouse gases—a delay giving lawmakers

Even if Congress grants a reprieve on greenhouse gas regulations, **RED TAPE** from other EPA rulemaking efforts will trigger higher electric bills.

the opportunity to fashion climate change legislation that protects consumers and keeps electric bills affordable,” English stresses.

Even if Congress grants a reprieve on greenhouse gas regulations, red tape from other EPA and various government rulemaking efforts—the “Clean Air Transport Rule,” cooling water intake requirements, and a decision on treating coal ash as hazardous waste, for starters—will trigger higher electric bills.

Clean Air Transport Rule

Released in 2010, EPA’s Clean Air Transport Rule aims to cap emissions of sulfur dioxide and nitrogen oxides from power plants across 31 eastern states and the District of Columbia. The regulation enables “downwind” areas whose air quality is compromised by power plants to their west to meet federal standards. By 2014, EPA claims the Transport Rule, when combined with other state and federal measures, will reduce power plant sulfur dioxide emissions by 71 percent and nitrogen oxides emissions by 52 percent from 2005 levels—at a cost to utilities of \$2.8 billion per year.

The Transport Rule requires 180 coal-fired power plants to install new pollution-control technology, activate existing pollution controls, or shut down. A second-round version under consideration could impose even tighter standards.

“We’re expecting a number of existing power plants to simply be retired,” notes Kirk Johnson, NRECA vice president of energy & environmental policy. “The cost to comply with the regulation will simply be too much.”

Cooling Water Intake Requirements

Power plants use water from lakes or rivers to cool generating equipment. The federal “Clean Water Act Section 316(b)” sets standards for cooling water intake structures, requiring plant operators to use “best available technology” to protect the environment.

The EPA began reviewing the standards in 2010, launching a cost-benefit analysis of imposing stricter regulations. The rule is expected to be unveiled this month.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation (NERC), the nation’s bulk

power grid watchdog, estimates this EPA rule will have the greatest potential impact on American energy reserves. If strictly enforced, NERC contends one-third of U.S. electricity capacity may need to be retired.

Coal Ash Debate

To ensure the safe disposal of fly ash and other residues produced by coal-fired power plants, EPA is considering designating the materials—for the first time—as hazardous waste.

Classifying these “coal combustion byproducts” (CCBs) as hazardous could cost billions and force increases in electricity rates. Each year, the U.S. electric utility industry produces about 130 million tons of CCBs (roughly 8 percent from power supply cooperatives).

“In previous analyses, EPA determined CCBs do not warrant regulation as hazardous waste under the federal Resource Conservation and Recovery Act; oversight was generally in place at the state level to ensure adequate management,” points out Johnson. “Nothing about CCBs has changed since then. Electric co-ops contend coal ash is appropriately regulated and oppose efforts to have it branded as hazardous waste.”

Carrying the hazardous label in any form (EPA could classify CCBs as “special wastes,” making them subject to all permitting, handling and disposal requirements that apply to toxic items) will severely hamper beneficial uses of CCBs, Johnson warns. “No matter how you slice it, CCBs will be considered unsafe.”

Currently, one-third of fly ash (used as a cement replacement) and more than one-fourth of scrubber sludge (converted into synthetic gypsum for wallboard manufacturing) are recycled. For every ton of cement replaced by fly ash, a ton of greenhouse gas emissions is avoided.

More than 10,000 co-op consumers sent letters to the EPA in 2010 voicing their concern and asking EPA not to brand coal ash as hazardous. EPA had not reached a final decision as of press time.

Perry Stambaugh writes on consumer and cooperative affairs for NRECA. Megan McKay-Noe, CCC, contributed to this article.

We’re expecting a number of power plants to simply be retired. The **COST TO COMPLY** with the regulation will simply be too much.

—Kirk Johnson, NRECA

Beware of Dramatic Heating, Cooling Claims

Get the facts before buying into a “miracle” electric heater or evaporative cooler.

If something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.” That saying rings especially true when it comes to claims about energy-saving devices, particularly those that indicate they can dramatically cut your heating and cooling costs.

Electric Heaters

Ads made to look like news stories abound for “Amish style” fireplaces, a “miracle device” that supposedly can slash your heating bills. In actuality, the appliance is simply a space heater hidden inside a false fireplace with a wooden mantle.

If you were to use a space heater eight hours a day, five days a week for a month, it would cost about \$15. But whether it can cut your heating bill depends on several factors.

Space heaters only warm a small area. You may save some money if you turn down

the thermostat (sometimes to as low as 50 degrees), site the space heater in a room with people in it, and then close off that room from the rest of the house. But space heaters cannot come close to replacing energy-efficient central heating or weatherization improvements. So, while it’s technically possible to cut your heating bill by 50 percent using space heaters, for most people, it’s impractical.

Evaporative Coolers

On the flip side are evaporative coolers that say they will inexpensively cool a room in your home. The inside of the unit consists of cold water and frozen ice packs, like you would use in a lunch box. The water wets a curtain; a fan blows air through the curtain and over the ice packs, theoretically providing a cool breeze. Evaporative coolers operate best in low-humidity regions.

But do they actually work? A *Consumer Reports* experiment found that even in desert-like conditions, one device cooled a test room only 2 degrees over four hours.

“When it comes to saving energy, there are no magic solutions,” asserts Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for energy efficiency at the Cooperative Research Network, the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. “Anyone promising to slash your utility bill by double digits is stretching the truth to the breaking point.”

The bottom line: there’s no substitute for good old-fashioned energy efficiency measures like weatherstripping around doors, caulking around windows, adding insulation to your attic, plugging leaks in ductwork, and regularly cleaning or replacing furnace filters. Visit ConsumerAffairs.com for more information.



Building Value Days Sales Event

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 from 8 a.m.–6 p.m.

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Garages | Machine Storage | Equestrian | Hobby Shop | Farm Shop | Homes

A “Two Pronged” Approach to Home Electrical Safety

Consumers can depend on a pair of important safety devices to protect them from electrical hazards in the home: ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) and arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). Each device protects against different dangers: GFCIs address shock hazards while AFCIs fight fire hazards.

Get Grounded!

According to the Electrical Safety Foundation International, GFCIs have cut the number of home electrocutions by one-half. By detecting ground faults—an unintentional electric path between a source of current and a grounded surface; essentially, current leaking to the ground—a GFCI protects you from severe or fatal electric shocks. It can also prevent some electrical fires.

If you have ever experienced an electric shock, it probably happened because part of your body contacted an electrical current and provided a path for the current to go to ground. If your body provides the path, you can be seriously injured.

The GFCIs constantly monitor electricity moving through a circuit. If the current flow differs from that returning, the device quickly switches off power.

Fighting Fire

The AFCIs, a relatively recent technology, help prevent home fires caused by arcing faults in damaged or deteriorated wires and cords. Home wiring problems, such as sparking, are associated with more than 40,000 home fires each year, according to the Consumer Product Safety Commission. These

fires kill more than 350 and injure 1,400 victims annually.

Nominal arcs may happen in the brushes of a vacuum sweeper or light switch; dangerous arcs can occur in frayed cords. When unwanted arcing occurs, it generates high temperatures that can ignite nearby combustibles such as wood, paper and carpets.

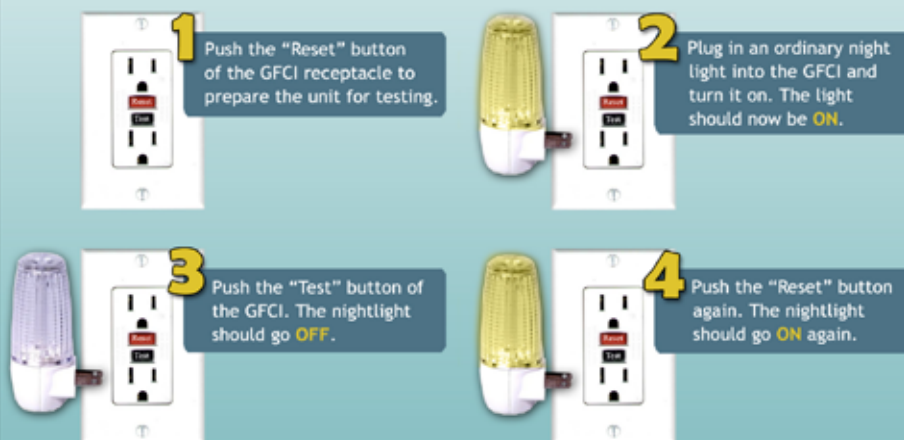
Conventional circuit breakers only respond to overloads and short circuits. By the time a fuse or circuit cuts power to defuse these conditions, a fire may have already started. The AFCIs use unique current-sensing circuitry to discriminate between normal and unwanted arcing conditions. In the event of an arcing fault, the AFCI shuts off electricity flowing through a circuit.

For more information on where to install GFCIs and AFCIs, visit cpsc.gov.

How to test electrical outlets

Since the 1970s ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs) have saved thousands of lives, helping cut the number of home electrocutions in half. The safety devices prevent deadly shock by quickly shutting off power to the circuit if the electricity flowing into the circuit differs from the amount returning. The safety devices should be used in any indoor or outdoor area where water may come into contact with electrical products.

GFCIs should be tested once a month to make sure they're working properly. To test a device, follow these four steps:



Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International



Stay Clear, Stay Safe!

A downed power line could cause serious injury or death. Follow these simple tips to stay safe:

- Assume all power lines are energized and dangerous. Even lines that are de-energized could become energized at any time.
- NEVER touch a downed power line! Immediately call 9-1-1 or your electric co-op to report it.
- If someone is injured as a result of contact with electric current, call 9-1-1 immediately. DO NOT try to assist them—you could be injured or killed.
- If a power line falls across your vehicle while you are in it, stay inside until help arrives.

Raising Ethical Kids

Nellie is crazy about stories. And not just any stories. At three-and-a-half, she favors stories about familiar characters facing fanciful dilemmas.

Nellie: Grandma, tell me a story about Nellie and Annie and their cousins who fall into a Strawberry Shortcake story and they meet a polar bear at the North Pole and he gets lost and turns into a dolphin.

Me: Rrrrrriiiiiight.

Like storytellers of old, adults try to spin a moral into each story. Fictional Nellie and Annie walk away learning about honesty, perseverance and (this is a biggie) obedience. Why miss an opportunity to impart good values through the vehicle of imagination?

If ever there was a time to find engaging ways to influence our kids' beliefs and behaviors, it's now. Parents compete for the attention and interest of today's plugged-in, media immersed children. Stories can be a powerful tool in helping children "see" ethical behavior in action.

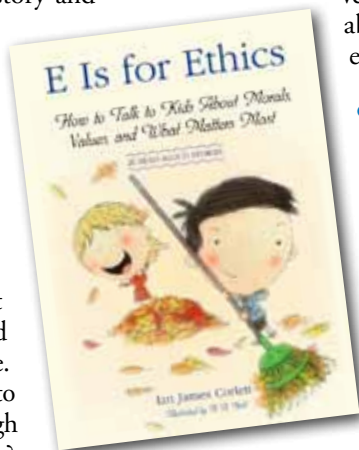
Fortunately, anthologies of "character stories" are available to help imagination-challenged adults. A new book called "E is for Ethics: How to Talk to Kids About Morals, Values, and What Matters Most," goes one step further. Author Ian James Corlett adds thought-provoking questions after each simple story—geared towards kids three to 10 years old—to foster family discussion about specific ethics.

"This book was not meant to be an authority on all things ethical, says Corlett, an award-winning animated film maker and veteran in children's television programming. "It is meant to help parents who may not be able to whip up a batch of 'teaching' stories at the drop of a hat and to spark discussions with their kids."

As it turns out, discussion is good, because ethics training takes more than just listening to good stories. It's a way of life that begins when your little one is born and takes place every single day.

"When we had our own kids I became very meditative about how to best build strong

character," explains Corlett, a father of two. "My background in writing and creating children's programming gave me a unique perspective on how to reach kids. We started our weekly 'family fun time' discussions as soon as our kids could sit up and listen. Even very young kids have an amazing ability to grasp these topics, especially if they are presented



“Modeling ethical behavior starts by showing a child respect, no matter how little he is.”

in a 'story time' setting.”

Corlett chose topics for the book that would appeal to a broad range of families, no matter what their background or faith. Each of his 26 stories demonstrates a different human ethic such as forgiveness, courage, loyalty, gratitude, and acceptance.

"I strongly believe that every family wants to build kids who have strong character," Corlett says.

Ready to start? Researchers point to some winning strategies—including storytelling—that will help you give your child a strong ethical foundation that will last a lifetime.

Raise sensitivity

Morals and ethics are really all about having empathy and making choices that are good for others. Expand children's emotional vocabulary by describing the emotions you see them expressing. When discussing moral transgressions, use the same words: "Tim feels sad when you don't share your toys."

Talk with older children about scandals in the news. Ask: "What do you think that person really did wrong?" If your child believes that getting caught was the only downside of unethical behavior, then point to the damage done to others as a result.

Talk about and model ethical decision making

Modeling ethical behavior starts by showing a child respect, no matter how little he is. Then, watch for teachable moments as daily dilemmas emerge.

"When you see someone pop change into a charity jar, take that opportunity to talk about what just happened," Corliss suggests. "Or when someone is polite and holds a door open, talk to your kids about ethics, values and kindness."

Talk about the ethical dilemmas you've faced or that your children might face with friends or at school. What choices could they

make? What might result from each choice? (Using questions rather than preaching generally works better.)

Motivate and reward

Help children see why behaving ethically matters. Acknowledge ethical choices when you see your children making them. Help them feel proud of their own good deeds, which becomes motivation for ethical behavior.

Build character

Teach children to put others' needs first, even when it's hard to do. Reward perseverance, teach them to wait for what they want, cultivate courage, and support their leadership in situations that call for it.

Be patient—and have fun!

These lessons take time, and very young children especially will not absorb them easily. But over time they can learn to become ethical citizens in a modern world.

"Spend time with your kids. That is the single most important thing you can do as a parent," Corlett advises. "When a solid dose of fun is added, I think that kids really do grasp ethics, even if it involves deep or abstract concepts."

Linda Wacyk is a regular Country Lines freelance writer, educator, grandmother and content empty-nester.



Building Pickford Library

Grassroots efforts build better communities, especially in hard times.

It's reminiscent of the grassroots efforts that brought electric power to the Eastern Upper Peninsula in the 1930's to form what is now Cloverland Electric Cooperative. The residents in and around Pickford (population 1,584), have pulled together the resources to open a public library in an abandoned shoe store in a mostly deserted section of Main Street. What's more, they did it during an economic downturn.

The library, which opened its doors in October 2010, is more than just a collection of books. It's a meeting and learning place for residents in this rural area and, surprisingly, a potential driver of economic growth.

"Studies have shown when people come to libraries they do more downtown," explains librarian Kenneth Miller, director of the Bayliss Library in nearby Sault Ste. Marie. He also said more people use libraries during a sour economy.

The new library, which is a branch of Bayliss, has just about everything you find in a larger library: internet access, a statewide lending library, and an invaluable research tool commonly referred to as MeLCat (Michigan eLibrary Catalog and Resource Sharing System).

Pickford library, however, has maintained a decidedly country charm with the old store front, tall ceiling and hardwood floors. The building, which is over 75 years old, was chosen by architects for its solid construction and by organizers for its spaciousness and potential for expansion.

Getting the branch library opened in this small community was no walk in the park. Miller, a 35-year library veteran, had his doubts when the idea was first proposed in 2008, mostly because of the cost associated with starting and maintaining a library. But then he didn't know Pickford resident Melanie Greenfield. A tireless volunteer and former business owner, Greenfield got the idea for opening a library after attending a community foundation meeting where the idea was casually tossed around. The rest, as they say, is history.

With the wheels now in motion, Greenfield gathered as many people as she could to start the fundraising efforts. What followed were

some of the usual fundraisers: bake sales, a used book sale, proceeds from restaurant dinners, including the "Flying Pancake Breakfast," and a portion of the proceeds from a Farmer's Market and Fall Fest. Even 4th grader Cassie Beemish got into the act, selling cookies she baked from her grandmother's recipes.

"We needed to prove ourselves," Greenfield recalls of those early days of fundraising. "If we wanted it, we needed to make it happen." At the time, the group was looking to raise \$117,000—enough to open the doors and run the place for three years.

And make it happen they did. Soon, larger donations were coming in from outside the area, including \$5,000 dollars from an anonymous donor in Traverse City, and most recently over \$34,000 from the Sault Tribe of Chippewa Indians. Besides cash donations, local businesses donated their time, talent and materials. Marble Construction worked on the most pressing concerns with building improvements; Josh and Jared Dyer did the plumbing; Savoie Electric wired the building; and Ledy Cabinetry donated the materials for and built a beautiful marble circulation desk. Lighthouse.net, a subsidiary of Cloverland Electric Cooperative, supplied and installed the equipment needed for internet service.

"Every time we turned around somebody was giving us something," says Miller, who is astonished to this day at how the community pulled together to bring a library to this mostly farming community. So is Bob Hunter, a library board member who was impressed by how much support came from outside of Pickford.

Bayliss library donated expensive shelving units, but something even more valuable: their expertise. Miller and his experienced staff made the 20-minute drive out to Pickford to help volunteers and new librarian Michelle Satchell arrange the furniture and other items so that patrons can read, study,



Micki Schmitigal and her daughter Jill enjoy some story time together at the Pickford Library.

play with puppets, and simply relax.

The fundraising efforts aren't over nor are plans to expand on the services currently offered. Satchell hopes that the spacious room in the back of the library can be used for various classes, especially in the midst of cuts made to school programs, such as art, in the Pickford area schools.

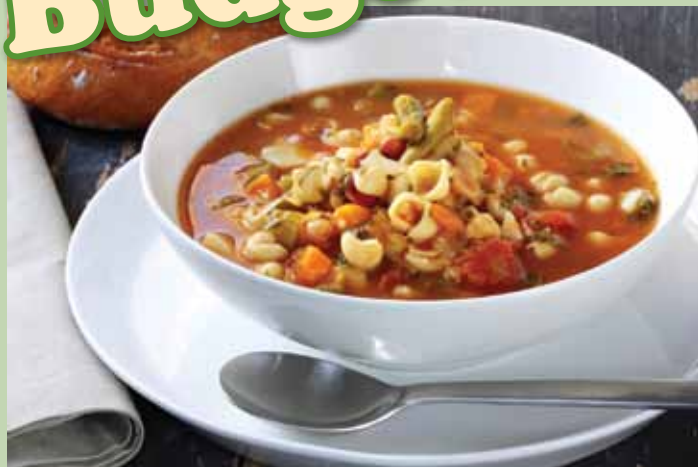
The real challenge may be in keeping the doors open, which will depend largely on a successful millage and additional fundraising efforts.

"I didn't think at first (it would be sustainable), but I think there is a group of people out there that will make it happen," Miller adds.

For information on making a donation to the library or hours of operation, call 906-647-1288.

What's building in your community? Email a few short paragraphs describing it to knudtson@countrylines.com or send to G. Knudtson, *Michigan Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Budget Friendly



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You won't skimp on delicious or nutritious with these recipes sent in by readers. Find hundreds more at countrylines.com.

Mexican Wedding Cake

- 2 c. flour
- 2 c. sugar
- 2 eggs
- 2 t. baking soda
- 1 20-oz. can crushed pineapple, with juice
- 1/2-1 c. chopped walnuts, reserve 1/4 cup

Frosting:

- 1 stick butter or margarine
- 1 t. vanilla
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 2 c. powdered sugar

Mix all cake ingredients together and pour into an ungreased 9x13-inch cake pan. Bake at 350° for 35-40 minutes until a toothpick inserted near the middle comes out clean; cool. For frosting, beat butter, vanilla, cream cheese and powdered sugar with an electric mixer until smooth. Spread on cooled cake. Sprinkle with remaining nuts.

Dee Cook, Fenwick

Steak and Vegetable Braciole

- 1/2 c. shredded carrot
- 1/3 c. chopped zucchini
- 1/3 c. chopped red pepper
- 1/4 c. sliced green onions
- 2 T. grated Parmesan cheese
- 1 T. snipped fresh parsley
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1/4 t. ground black pepper
- 2 lbs. boneless round steak
- 2 c. marinara sauce
- hot cooked pasta of choice

Cut meat into six serving-size pieces. Place each piece of steak between two pieces of plastic wrap. Using a meat mallet,

pound steak pieces to 1/4-1/2-inch thick. For filling, in a small bowl, combine carrot, zucchini, sweet pepper, green onions, cheese, parsley, garlic and black pepper. Spoon 1/4 cup of filling onto each piece of meat. Roll up meat around filling; secure with clean kitchen string or wooden toothpicks. Place meat rolls in a 3 1/2 or 4-quart slow cooker. Pour marinara sauce over meat rolls. Cover and cook on low setting for 8-10 hours or on high setting for 4-5 hours. Remove string or toothpicks; discard. Serve over hot cooked pasta.

Jenn Rekus, Detroit

Taco Pie

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 onion, diced
- 1 packet taco seasoning
- 15 oz. tomato sauce
- 1 tube Pillsbury® Pizza Crust
- 8 oz. shredded Mexican blend cheese

Brown ground beef with onion; drain. Add taco seasoning, tomato sauce and amount of water specified on taco seasoning packet; simmer 10 minutes. Spray a 9x13-inch baking dish. Press pizza crust over bottom of pan. Top with meat mixture and cheese. Bake at 400° for 20-25 minutes.

Marge Bagnell, Mancelona

Zesty Minestrone Soup

- 1 med. onion, chopped
- 2 c. diced zucchini
- 2 cloves garlic, finely minced
- 1 T. vegetable oil
- 1 t. oregano
- 2 T. chopped parsley, fresh or dry
- 1 10-oz. pkg. frozen corn, in butter sauce
- 3 14.5-oz. cans diced tomatoes, with green chilies
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained

- 4 c. water
- 1/2 c. dry pasta, elbows or small seashells

Microwave corn according to directions on package; set aside. In a large saucepan, heat oil over medium heat. Sauté zucchini, onion and garlic until tender. Stir in corn, tomatoes, beans, water, oregano and parsley. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer 15 minutes. Add pasta and cook until tender, 8-10 minutes.

Carlyn Page, Traverse City

Soupa

- 1-1 1/2 lbs. hamburger
- 1 onion, minced
- 1 24-26 oz. can tomatoes, diced or crushed
- 1 49.5 oz. can chicken broth
- 12 oz. tomato paste
- 1 lg. head cabbage, coarsely shredded and chopped
- salt and pepper to taste
- 1 loaf white bread, sliced

Brown hamburger, drain and add onion, tomatoes, salt and pepper. Simmer 15 minutes. In

a large bowl, dissolve tomato paste with chicken broth. Butter a large covered roaster pan. Spread half of the cabbage on the bottom; salt and pepper to taste. Layer half of the bread over the cabbage. Spread hamburger mixture over bread and top with remaining cabbage. Salt and pepper to taste. Layer remaining bread over cabbage. Pour broth mixture over all. Bake, covered, at 325° for 2 1/2 hours. Do not uncover during cooking.

Marilyn Eaton, Lake

Chicken Noodle Soup

1 roasting chicken or 4 boneless chicken breasts
5 carrots, sliced 1/4-inch thick
4 stalks celery, sliced
3/4-1 c. diced onion
1/2 t. salt
Noodles:
2 eggs, beaten
4 T. milk
1 t. salt
2c. flour

Clean and cut-up a whole chicken; place pieces into an 8-quart stockpot and cover with 2 quarts water. Add salt and bring to a boil. Cook until chicken is tender; remove

from pot, reserving broth. Remove skin and bones from chicken pieces; tear meat into small pieces. Return chicken pieces to broth and add carrots, celery, and onion; cook for 30 minutes. Meanwhile, combine eggs and milk; add salt and flour, mixing to a soft dough. On a floured surface, form dough into a ball. Roll dough out very thin. Cut dough into 1/2-inch by 1 1/2-inch strips. Drop noodles into boiling soup and cook about one hour, until noodles are tender and cooked through. Season with salt and pepper to taste.

Pat Essner, Lake Odessa

Grandma Rose's Rice Bake

1 c. cheese, cut into small cubes
2 c. cooked rice
2 T. butter
3 eggs
1 c. milk

Mix rice and cheese in a bowl. Beat eggs and milk together in another bowl. Pour egg mixture over rice mixture; stir well. Pour into a buttered 2-quart baking dish; dot with butter. Bake at 325° for 30 minutes.

Pat Thomas, Evart

Saucy Stuffed Peppers

8 oz. box Spanish rice mix
1 lb. ground beef
1 26-oz. jar pasta sauce
2 lg. green bell peppers
1 t. black pepper
1 t. dried Italian seasoning
1/4 c. grated cheese
1 c. shredded cheese, any variety

Prepare rice mix as directed; set aside. Wash and clean peppers. Cut in half lengthwise. In a bowl, combine cooked rice and ground beef. Generously fill peppers with mixture. Place peppers in a casserole dish. Pour pasta sauce over peppers; sprinkle with black pepper, Italian seasoning and grated cheese. Cover and bake at 350° about 45 minutes. Uncover; sprinkle with shredded cheese and bake until cheese melts and peppers are tender.

Mike Harrington, Wayland



Send in your recipes! If published, you'll receive a kitchen gadget. Send in: **CHEESE recipes by Feb. 10, MARSHMALLOW recipes by March 10** and **BBQ recipes by April 10**. Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email jhansen@countrylines.com.

Feta-Stuffed Chicken

1/4 c. crumbled basil-and-tomato feta cheese
2 T. cream cheese
4 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves, about 1 1/4 lbs.
1/4-1/2 t. black pepper
dash salt
1 t. olive oil
1/4 c. chicken broth
1 10-oz. pkg. fresh spinach, trimmed
2 T. walnut or pecan pieces, toasted
1 T. lemon juice
lemon slices for garnish

In a small bowl, combine feta and cream cheese; set aside. Using a sharp knife, cut a horizontal slit through the thickest portion of each chicken breast half to form a pocket. Stuff

pockets with cheese mixture. Secure openings with wooden toothpicks. Season chicken with salt and pepper. In a large nonstick skillet, cook chicken in hot oil over medium-high heat about 6 minutes on each side until it is tender and no longer pink; remove from skillet. Cover and keep warm. Add chicken broth to skillet. Bring to boiling; add half of the spinach. Cover and cook about 3 minutes just until spinach is wilted. Remove spinach from skillet, reserving liquid in pan. Repeat with remaining spinach. Return all spinach to skillet. Stir in nuts and lemon juice. To serve, divide spinach mixture among 4 dinner plates; top with chicken breasts and garnish with lemon slices.

Jennifer Hansen, MECA



Cool Whip Pie

1 20-oz. can unsweetened, crushed pineapple, do not drain
1 3.5-oz. box instant vanilla pudding
8 oz. Cool Whip®, thawed
1 9-inch graham cracker pie crust

In a large bowl, pour pineapple in its juice. Sprinkle pudding mix on pineapple; blend until pudding mix is dissolved. Fold Cool Whip into pineapple mixture. Spoon mixture into a graham cracker crust. Cover; refrigerate at least 2-3 hours or freeze until ready for use.

Robert Serocke, Goetzville

Lemon Tuna Cakes

2 cans tuna fish, well drained
3/4 c. real mayonnaise
2 c. Italian dried bread crumbs
1 T. parsley
1/2 t. salt
1/4 t. pepper
1 t. hot sauce
2 T. lemon juice
4 c. cooked noodles, any style
1/4 c. vegetable oil

In a large bowl, combine tuna, mayonnaise, bread crumbs, parsley, salt, pepper and hot

sauce; mix well with a fork so there are no lumps of tuna. In a large skillet with a lid, heat vegetable oil over medium heat. Using 1/4 of the mixture at a time, form tuna mixture into burger-sized patties, about 5-inches in diameter and 1-inch thick. Fry patties in hot oil for 3-5 minutes on one side, turning when browned and cooking about 3 minutes more on the other side, cooking until browned. Sprinkle lemon juice evenly over all patties. Serve with hot noodles of choice.

Danielle Cochran, Grayling

State's Forests Face New Foreign Insect Threats

While some resource managers are keeping their focus on invasive fish, such as the Asian carp or other foreign-sourced aquatic or land-based plants, one veteran Michigan forester is keeping his eyes on new threats to the health of the state's 19 million acres of forest.

Bill Botti, a retired veteran DNR forester and current executive director of the Michigan Forest Association, says each new foreign insect and plant disease invader from other parts of the world brings a threat to our valuable state forestlands.

Michigan is considered one of the most forested states in the U.S. Our many woodlands support thousands of jobs in forest industries that provide people with needed wood and fiber products and one of the largest recreational tourism bases in the country. In the Upper Peninsula alone, forestry is the number one industry and job source.

With so much at stake economically, each new exotic threat to forest health is now being given serious attention within the forest community. Forests also support the wild game sportsmen seek; they protect, shade and cool streams where fishing is high in interest; and they offer hiking and skiing trails, birding, nature preserves and wildflowers.

All of these forest experiences are at risk.

The emerald ash borer is a prime example of a recently arrived invasive insect that has cost major damage to the state's native ash trees. First discovered in southeast Michigan in 2002, it has now spread to both peninsulas. Many thousands of acres of valuable ash have been destroyed in trying to stem this invader's spread.

"Once one of these insects becomes established in this country, we move it all around in firewood," Botti explains. "We know better, but we just can't seem to break the habit."

New threats seem to appear every year. "Thousand Cankers Disease of walnut has (now) been found east of the Mississippi—in Tennessee. The disease is carried by the walnut twig beetle, which is thought to be native to northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest," Botti adds. Perhaps the beetle won't thrive in the colder climate of the North, but hang-on to that thought.

Foreign insect invaders are not new to Michigan. It was once thought that Dutch elm disease wouldn't cause any damage in

northern Michigan because the vector, the European elm bark beetle, couldn't survive the cold winters. Wrong! Dutch elm disease, which just about wiped out most of our stately American elms, has been in this country for many years, arriving in shipping cargo from Western Europe.

One of the older foreign invaders to do major damage is the Gypsy moth, which still has periodic outbreaks that threaten many hardwoods. This



An invasion by the Asian longhorn beetle (above, right) could cause tremendous damage to Michigan's woodlands.

moth came from Europe and in spite of major efforts to halt its damages—from aerial spraying to the removal of infected trees—this pest is still with us.

With today's increased world trade, new invaders keep appearing, Botti says. "One worrisome exotic is the Asian longhorn beetle that has caused tremendous damage in New York City and Chicago." A large outbreak was found in Worcester, MA, a year or two ago and is being treated aggressively. This bug especially likes maples, but will also kill poplars, willows, elms, chestnut and others. Botti notes that shipping between states opens the door for a wider spread, so tracking its spread is vital to Michigan's important maple woodlands.

Just as many of the current invasive fish, mussels and threats from other foreign invaders were brought in via Great Lakes shipping, new insects are being found more frequently and with further potential impacts on our native forests.

"These pests are moved around the world

in wood products with bark still attached," Botti says. "Seems as if it would be simple to stop—just outlaw crates or pallets with bark on them. But policing that is very difficult—especially when inspectors are more concerned about searching for bombs or explosives."

Each invading foreign insect holds new threats to Michigan's valuable forests that are every bit as serious as the Asian carp threat is to the Great Lakes, but Botti

notes we haven't given it as much public attention as the invasive fish.

"Maybe this year – the International Year of Forests – we will give it some more public attention."

"Early detection of any pest offers the greatest opportunity for administering control options. Private landowners and citizens alike are encour-

aged to play a more active role in early detection of forest pests, foreign or domestic," adds Rick Lucus, conservation district forester in Osceola/Mecosta counties.

"Forest owners should get in the habit of watching for needle and leaf discoloration, missing foliage, shoot and branch injury, and/or shoot and branch galls on your trees.

"When any of these signs appear, collect a sample and bring it to your nearest Conservation District office, MSU Extension office or MDNRE Service Center for identification and control recommendations," Lucus advises.

Owners of large wooded acreages might consider discussing their situation with a consulting forester. The Michigan Forest Association (MFA) has listings of consulting foresters who serve your area. Contact miforest@acd.net for more information.

MFA represents the 350,000-plus private, nonindustrial forest owners and tree farmers who own more than one-half of Michigan's forests. The author also edits Michigan Forest Magazine for MFA.



Don Ingle is an avid outdoorsman and award-winning outdoors writer that submits regularly for Country Lines.



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This story breaks my heart every time. Allegedly, just two years after the discovery of tanzanite in 1967, a Maasai tribesman knocked on the door of a gem cutter's office in Nairobi. The Maasai had brought along an enormous chunk of tanzanite and he was looking to sell. His asking price? Fifty dollars. But the gem cutter was suspicious and assumed that a stone so large could only be glass. The cutter told the tribesman, no thanks, and sent him on his way. Huge mistake. It turns out that the gem was genuine and would have easily dwarfed the world's largest cut tanzanite at the time. Based on common pricing, that "chunk" could have been worth close to \$3,000,000!

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Inspect Ductwork Before Cleaning

Healthy indoor air should be a goal for any family. This is particularly true in today's more energy efficient, airtight houses where the air quality is often worse than outdoor air. In addition to some dust from the ducts, there are many sources of indoor pollutants, including cleaning, cooking, and the release of gases from synthetic materials in the home. Many of these can be removed from indoor air with a combination of whole-house, furnace-mounted air cleaners and smaller individual room air cleaners.

Much of the dust in heating and air-conditioning ducts tends to adhere to the duct surface, so it never gets into the air circulating throughout the house, according to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Just because you see some dust collecting on the grill over air registers does not mean the ducts are very dirty and need to be cleaned.

Other than just a benign, fine layer of household dust, some potentially harmful particles can be hiding inside the ducts. For example, especially in humid areas, mold spores can cause serious allergic reactions in some people.

Bacteria can also live in some ducts under certain conditions. Very fine particles from cigarettes or wood-burning fireplaces can become airborne and cause respiratory problems. Test kits are available to take a sample of the dust from inside the ducts and have it tested for mold and other harmful contaminants.

Although it is commonly referred to as "duct cleaning," if you choose to have it done, it is important to have the entire HVAC (heating, ventilation, air conditioning) system cleaned. This includes the furnace and air conditioner blower, heat exchanger/coils, and drain pans in addition to the ductwork. Air conditioner evaporator coils can collect a lot of dirt because they get damp when the unit is running, and dust in the air sticks to the wet surfaces. This reduces the energy efficiency of the entire system.

If the contractor who services your HVAC system also does duct cleaning, you may get a discount by having both done at the same time. The typical cost for a complete cleaning ranges from about \$500 to \$1,000, depending on the size of your home and the



A long vacuum hose is inserted into the wall return duct. It is connected to an indoor vacuum unit with a HEPA exhaust filter.

complexity of the duct system.

You may want to have the duct system inspected before going to the full expense of a cleaning. Look for a company that will deduct the inspection cost from the total cost should you choose to have it cleaned. Technicians conduct the inspection by looking into ducts and the furnace blower unit and using mirrors at bends. They can also move a mini TV camera through the ducts.

When selecting a duct-cleaning company, there are several factors to consider. As with any project, the reputation of the company is highly important. Although the ducts can be inspected afterward to see how well they were cleaned, your best assurance is to start with a reliable contractor. Always check references with their past customers.

The National Air Duct Cleaning Association (NADCA) is the trade group that certifies HVAC system cleaning contractors. The certification is legitimate and requires extensive training. For a company to be certified, it must have a certified specialist on staff. Find a national listing of certified companies, along with its number of specialists, at nadca.com.

Also, when selecting a contractor, ask about the type of cleaning equipment each uses. If an indoor vacuum unit is used, it must have a high efficiency particulate arrestance (HEPA) filter on the exhaust to trap all the

particles. Some of the particles they dislodge from the duct walls can be very fine, and a lesser quality filter will not remove them from the exhaust air.

Another option is an outdoor truck with a built-in vacuum unit and a long hose. Because it is located outdoors, the exhaust filter is not critical. These large vacuums are very powerful to overcome the air flow resistance in the long hose. The only problem is that during winter they suck quite a bit of the heated air out of your house during the cleaning process.

Some duct-cleaning companies may suggest spraying a chemical biocide inside the ducts to kill mold and bacteria and to keep them from growing in the future. If you do have this procedure done, make sure they use EPA approved chemicals designated for sheet metal ducts.

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

James Dulley is a nationally recognized mechanical engineer writing about home energy issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.





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Wolverine Purchases Ownership in OVEC Power Plants to Serve Members

Wolverine Power Cooperative has purchased a 150-megawatt ownership in the Ohio Valley Electric Corporation (OVEC) from FirstEnergy Generation Corp. The sale was completed in December 2010.

OVEC consists of two coal-fired generating plants with a combined total of 11 units, each capable of generating 217 megawatts. The Clifty Creek plant, located in Madison, IN, has six units. The remaining five are located at the Kyger Creek plant near Gallipolis, OH.

“The OVEC plants are baseload power plants,” explains Dan DeCoeur, vice president of power supply. “They typically operate 24 hours a day, seven days a week.”

Wolverine needs baseload supply to serve its members. Energy from these plants will replace, in part, the cooperative’s primary wholesale power contract, set to expire at the end of 2011. Wolverine was able to purchase OVEC for a competitive price at a time when interest rates are low.

“OVEC has installed modern pollution control equipment on the Kyger Creek and Clifty Creek units,” DeCoeur says. “The two plants operate

more cleanly than most power plants in Michigan and the Midwest.”

A group of utilities formed OVEC in the mid-1950s to serve the Atomic Energy Commission’s uranium-enrichment facilities in Portsmouth, OH. When the commission’s facilities were closed, the OVEC utilities received the full output of the two plants.

FirstEnergy will remain an owner in OVEC, with approximately 100 megawatts. Several other utilities, including American Electric Power, Duke Energy and Buckeye Power, an electric cooperative, also have ownership interests in OVEC.

This is Wolverine’s second purchase from FirstEnergy. In March 2010, Wolverine acquired the natural gas-fired Sumpter peaking plant near Belleville, MI. Sumpter’s four units are capable of generating 340 megawatts of electricity and are operated during periods of high demand.

Wolverine formed a new subsidiary, Peninsula Generation Cooperative, to purchase ownership in OVEC.

“The OVEC purchase offers us affordability and reliability for

our members,” DeCoeur says. “While it’s a significant purchase, we will continue to pursue additional baseload opportunities, including the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture development near Rogers City, MI.”

WCEV Update

Wolverine filed an appeal in Missaukee County Circuit Court in August 2010, asking the court to reverse the denial of the air quality permit for our Wolverine Clean Energy Venture (WCEV) power plant development and return it to the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and Environment for reconsideration.

Wolverine also asked the court to declare Gov. Jennifer Granholm’s “Executive Directive 2009-2” unlawful. The directive imposed substantial need-based procedural requirements on air permit applicants.

The court had not ruled on the appeal as of the deadline for this story.



The Clifty Creek plant is located in Madison, IN. It has six units capable of generating 217 megawatts each.



Located near Gallipolis, OH, the Kyger Creek plant has five 217-megawatt units.



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Surviving the Winter Season

Extrême cold temperatures and ice and snow storms make staying warm and safe a challenge. Here is how to create a winter survival kit for your home to help you and your family survive the cold grasp of winter.

The Essentials

Food: Food that requires no cooking or refrigeration such as bread, crackers, cereal, canned foods, and dried fruits. Remember baby food and formula if you have young children.

Water: In case water pipes freeze or rupture, keep a supply of tap water or purchase bottled water. The recommended amount of water to keep is 5 gallons per person.

Medicines: Roads may be inaccessible for several days due to a winter storm. Make sure to order in advance or refill any prescriptions that family members may need.

Identification: Make sure to keep forms of

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identification handy, such as social security card, passport, photo ID, and driver's license. In addition, make sure to have bank account information and insurance policies.

Emergency Materials

- ▲ Alternate methods to heat your home:
 - Dry firewood for a fireplace or wood stove
 - Kerosene for a kerosene heater
 - Furnace fuel (coal, propane, or oil)
 - Electric space heater with automatic shut-off switch and non-glowing elements
- ▲ Blankets
- ▲ Matches
- ▲ First Aid Kit and instruction manual
- ▲ Multipurpose, dry-chemical fire extinguisher
- ▲ Flashlight
- ▲ Battery-powered radio, clock/watch
- ▲ Extra batteries
- ▲ Shovel
- ▲ Rock salt
- ▲ Non-electric can opener

When creating a winter survival kit for your home, take into consideration factors that are specific to your home and family. For instance, if your home is isolated or on the outskirts of a residential area, making it more difficult for help to reach you, make sure to stock additional amounts of food, water and medicine. Listening to weather forecasts regularly can provide you with several days notice to allow you to check emergency materials and stock up on essential supplies.

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The Lost Art of Autographs

There's almost nothing that represents how our world and culture have changed over the last 50 years better than an autograph.

Remember the autograph? That's when you got close enough to one of your heroes to ask for his or her signature on a picture or piece of paper.

That's when elite musicians, actors and ballplayers still lived their lives among us—the regular folks. In fact, most ballplayers back in the 1950s and '60s worked winter jobs to make ends meet. And there were many actors and actresses who worked as waitresses and waiters between movies in the old days.

Many players saw themselves as “lucky to be doing something they love” for eight months and then working alongside the general public the other four months.

There was no eBay back then, and very few collectors. So when a musician, actor or ballplayer was asked for an autograph, they generally took the time to write their name, carefully and with decent penmanship. They weren't worried that anyone was making money off their signatures.

Of course, some signatures were better than others.

Take the case of the late Charlie



Nick Edson

Gehring (below, left), who was a Hall of Fame second baseman for the Detroit Tigers back in the 1930s and '40s. He had what I think is the most beautiful autograph I've ever seen, and you have to take into account that “Gehring” is not a short name.

Still, he painstakingly wrote every autograph with clarity. The

same is true of another Detroit Tigers

Hall of Famer, Al Kaline. Of course, his name is much shorter and easier to write, but I have never seen an Al Kaline autograph I can't read.

Fast forward to today's world. An autograph from one of your heroes is getting tougher and tougher to obtain for various reasons. The No. 1 reason is that stars are almost inaccessible because of the huge amount of money they make. They deal with what I call the “Fear Factor”—people who are out to take advantage of them or hurt them. It's just the way it is in today's world.

Most people obtain autographs from their heroes by paying for them, either online or by standing in line at a book signing or show. So there is no story for

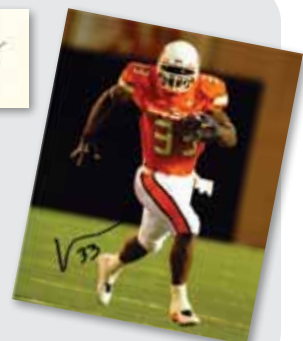
fans to tell about meeting and greeting someone they look up to. They simply plunk their money down for an autograph.

And that's sad.

The irony is that even by paying for an autograph, it's not guaranteed to be 1) authentic; and 2) one that you can read. There is simply the first letter of the first or last name, then a long line following. The message from the person giving the autograph is: My time is too valuable to



The late Charlie Gehring always signed his name with painstaking clarity (above), while cultural stars of today might scribble it, or in this case (right), Oklahoma State runningback Vernand Morency's “V” autograph.



write out every letter in my name.

What gets me is the price some of these new stars charge for an autograph. Many stars today—with the help of their agents—won't sign autographs for less than \$100 apiece. And if you're lucky enough to meet them in public, at a mall or some public appearance, they will scribble their autograph. You feel lucky to have it—until you look at it. Usually it's indecipherable.

I was checking some autograph prices the other day and I was astounded at what I found. An autograph of an all-time great like Charlie Gehring was \$25. An autograph for most modern stars started at \$100 or more.

And there lies the rub. In today's world, many people obtain autographs to re-sell them on eBay or other places. It's supply and demand.

When I was growing up, we got an autograph and usually a story to tell about meeting our heroes. So the memory was worth more than the autograph.

And to me, it still is.



◀ Charlie Gehring sits on the steps of the Detroit Tigers dugout in 1935.

You Can Serve on Your Co-op's Board of Directors

Any qualified Cherryland Electric Cooperative member can be elected to serve on the cooperative's board of directors.

To be nominated in 2011, candidates can file a petition with the cooperative's administrative assistant starting on the first day of March and ending at 4 p.m. on the last business day of March. Nominating petitions shall be signed by at least 25 active members of the cooperative, in good standing, and all signatures must be obtained within 60 days prior to the date the petition is filed.

Nominating petitions shall be in the form prescribed by the board and are available at Cherryland's headquarters in Grawn. The nominating petitions must specify the geographic service area for which the candidate is being nominated.

The term of office is three years. Three directors will be elected at this year's annual meeting, which will be held Thursday, June 16, at Wuerfel Park. This year's directors will represent Leelanau County plus one at-large position.

Nominees must meet the director qualifications set forth in the bylaws under Section 2 of Article III.

Any member interested in becoming a candidate is invited to visit the cooperative's office and learn about the duties performed by directors.

In the event no qualified candidate is nominated to fill the vacancy of a director whose term has expired, the newly elected board will appoint sufficient directors to fill the vacancies. The election will be by majority vote of the board and must be done within 60 days of its first meeting.

Directors elected in this manner will serve until the next annual meeting, when members will be given an opportunity to fill the balance of the regular three-year term.



The term of office is three years. Three directors will be elected at this year's annual meeting.

Space Heaters & Your Electric Bill

Space heater advertisements often claim that they can cut your home heating bills. While your propane, natural gas or fuel oil costs may decrease if you turn down the thermostat and only use an electric space heater, your electric bill will increase significantly.

If you use a 1,500-watt space heater for three hours a day, you'll add an extra \$16 to your monthly electric bill. That amount increases to \$126 per month if the heater is used 24/7.

There are a variety of space heaters on the market and the best one is not necessarily the most expensive.

The heater you use should be sized appropriately for the space. If it's too small for the room, it will run more and add more kilowatt-hours to your electric bill.



Cherryland Offers Scholarships

STUDENTS: High school seniors whose parents or guardians currently receive monthly electric service from Cherryland and live in our service area may apply for a \$4,000 college scholarship (\$1,000 for each of four years).

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

1. Complete the form at right; or,
2. Contact your high school guidance

counselor; or,

3. Contact Nick Edson, communications coordinator at Cherryland, as noted earlier.

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

The scholarship goes toward covering the cost of a course or courses taken in a calendar year, and will be awarded on the basis of need, grades and community service. It is a one-time award.

Members may request an application by emailing Nick Edson with their name and address to nicke@cecelec.com, calling him at 486-9222, or write to him at Cherryland Electric, 5930 U.S.-31 South, Grawn, MI 49637.

2011 Student Scholarship Application Request

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Home Phone _____

Cherryland Account # _____

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



All scholarship applications are due by Friday, April 8, 2011.

Dog Days of Winter

For the first time in my life, I have a dog. Or, maybe, a dog has me. I'm not quite sure yet how this relationship works.

But I do know we aren't a couple yet. I'm applying for a dog with the Animal Placement Bureau, a nonprofit organization whose primary goal is to place homeless dogs into loving, lifelong homes. The volunteer foster care network has no paid staff and no sheltering facility. The dogs in their care live with volunteers and become as much a part of their family as their own dogs.

I know this dog very well. Bandit is a 57-pound Australian Shepherd, rescued last spring from a breeder's kennels, after the awful economy left the kennel with more dogs than it could sell or adequately care for.

A mature 5-year-old, he's calm and protective, not given to barking, timid around strangers, and has a tender gaze. Typical of his breed, he is a one-person dog. He will run you over on his way outside. His joy at romping in snow is unmatched. Actually, it's more like a dance in which he whirls and twists in mid-air and then falls spread-eagle in the snow, in which he buries his nose and comes up with a mouthful of white water.

He was 'left' to me by Mike Peters, with whom I worked at the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, and who is moving to Madison, WI, to run WPPI Energy, a regional power company serving 51 customer-owned electric utilities. Because the circumstances of his travel and living arrangements won't give him the time to tend to a dog, he was faced with giving Bandit back to the Placement Bureau or giving someone he knows a chance to adopt him in his stead.

So, here I am, filling out adoption papers for a dog. Here's a sample of the questions:

What do you like about the dog you're interested in adopting?

"He is gentle, yet spirited; intelligent and

playful. He smiles."

What will your first day with your new dog be like?

"We've already had a first day. He found his way around the house, located his food dish and water, explored the yard, and warmed up to my petting. It took a couple of days for him to get comfortable."

What are your feelings about dog obedience training?

"I'm all for it if it will help improve our relationship and help him adjust to life with us."

What are your feelings about cosmetic surgery for dogs (i.e. cropped ears, docked tails)?

"Don't like it."

There are questions about grooming, vaccinations and vet check-ups, leaving the dog home alone, sleeping arrangements, crating (which is the practice of confining the dog in a crate that he has been conditioned to enjoy, a place where he can feel safe and secure), and our preferred brand of pet food.

This may seem like a lot of work to

get a dog. But to their great credit, the Placement Bureau and its volunteers have a lot invested in each dog they rescue. They want to ensure their rescue animals are placed in an environment where they can thrive. They do good and necessary work, and it's worth our effort.

Jim Hough, whose columns graced this page for 25 years, told me a dog column could never go wrong. I believe him because they always generated a ton of mail.

Learn more about the Animal Placement Bureau at apbpets.com or by calling 517-346-4505.



Mike Buda, editor emeritus of Country Lines, enjoys the pure glee in Bandit's greetings. Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com or comment on his columns at countrylines.com/column/ramblings/



Clockwise starting top left: Caño Negro Wildlife Refuge; Tortuguero Park Canal Cruise; White Faced Monkey; Keel Billed Toucan; Pacific Ocean Beach; Rainforest Hike

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— *Arthur Frommer’s Budget Travel*

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— *Audubon Magazine*

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— *New York Times*

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Teens,

You could win a trip to Washington, D.C.!

If you're a 10th or 11th grade high school student who will be 16 or 17 by June 2011, and your family receives electric service from Cherryland Electric Cooperative, you are eligible to apply. You may be selected to attend **Co-op Teen Days** and then be considered to **win a free trip to Washington, D.C.**

For an application or more information, call or write:
Amanda Olds, P.O. Box 298, Grawn, MI 49637; 231-486-9254;
or email aolds@cecelec.com.

Also learn more about the programs at countrylines.com,
and click on "Youth." Also check out YouthTour.coop to see
videos and photos.



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