

A Service of **Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association**

July/August 2011

# Michigan

## COUNTRY LINES



*Ways to experience*  
**Lively  
Lansing 10**

4 Staff Changes  
At Your Co-op

5 Water Heater  
Give-away!

8 No Place  
Like Home

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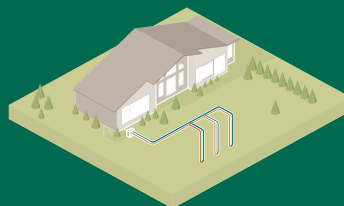
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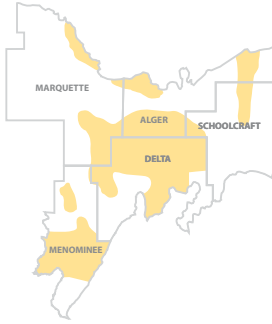
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A young Lansing Lugnuts baseball fan meets the team's mascot, Big Lug.

Photo – Brendan Dwyer/Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau



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**MANAGER'S MESSAGE**

# Summer Is Here!

This is the July/August issue of *Michigan Country Lines* and summer is in full swing. Every season has its good parts, but summer seems to be an especially great time of the year. School is out, vacations are happening; things just feel a little more relaxed and carefree. No coats, hats and “bundling up”—just head outdoors and enjoy the warmth and beauty of the season and all it has to offer.



**Tom Harrell**  
General Manager

Summer is also when many of our seasonal members come to their camps and cottages in the woods and on the abundant

lakes and rivers here in the Upper Peninsula. Whether you come for a short time or live here year-round, the season and feeling of the place call us to come and relax...to go fishing...to take a swim. Or, how about biking, hiking, sight-seeing and trail walking? There is so much to do—or not do—and thankfully, long hours of daylight in which to do it.

All of us here at Alger Delta hope you have a fun and safe summer, and that you get all the enjoyment from this great season that you wish.

## Alger Delta Staff Changes

With the recent retirement of four long-time employees, Alger Delta Cooperative has undergone several changes in its workforce over the past six months. Steve Pyke, Robert Snowaert, Robert Helman, and Laurie Young retired this past November.

**Steve Pyke** worked at the cooperative for 39 years. His last position was engineering manager, in which he planned various electrical projects and improvements and occasionally directed other work activity.

**Robert Snowaert** began his employment at Alger Delta in 1979 as a laborer on the brushing crew, and over his 31-year tenure he worked his way up to lead lineworker.

**Robert Helman** followed a similar path, beginning employment at the cooperative in January 1980. Over his 30 years, Helman attained positions of increasing responsibility and finished as a journeyman lineworker.

**Laurie Young** worked at Alger Delta from 1977 until 2000, and again from 2002 to 2010, amassing a total of 31 years. Young finished up as a member services representative.

All of these employees made significant and lasting contributions to the cooperative. In late October, a wind storm caused numerous outages in our service area. No one would have known it was their last week of work as they all worked many hours of overtime, showing their dedication right up to the very end. They will all be missed.

**Co-op Finishes Audit** – Alger Delta completed its annual audit when the CPA firm of Joki, Makela, Pollack & Ahonen PLLC, of Ironwood, gave its final report to the board of directors at their May meeting.

In its report, the firm states “In our opinion, the financial statements...present fairly, in all material respects, ...in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”

The audit verifies the accuracy of the financial statements and helps ensure that Alger Delta is in compliance with accounting standards, policies and procedures. It also evaluates whether the co-op exercises appropriate controls over cash, materials and other assets.

### Miles Departs

Debbie Miles, Alger Delta’s office manager, has left to accept the position of general manager at another co-op—Ontonagon County REA—in the western Upper Peninsula. Miles began her career at Ontonagon and returns to that co-op’s top spot after stints at Presque Isle, NISC, and Alger Delta.

### New Finance Manager

Amanda Seger has joined Alger Delta as your co-op’s finance manager. Seger has a degree in accounting and has worked in public accounting, including auditing. More recently, she worked as controller for a precision manufacturing and machining company. Welcome, Amanda!

# Enter Our Water Heater Give-away

**A**lger Delta Cooperative has a limited number of high-efficiency electric water heaters, and you may be eligible to receive one absolutely free!

This water heater replacement program is designed to improve energy efficiency on our electrical system. To qualify, you must be a permanent residential member of the co-op and reside in your home for at least nine months of the year. You also must already have an electric water heater that is over seven years old or less than 90 percent efficient. These requirements are to ensure the co-op achieves the efficiency improvements needed to make the program cost-effective.

Interested members must complete a qualification form which can be downloaded from [algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com) or by calling 906-428-4141. Completed forms can be hand delivered, mailed, faxed or emailed to [algerdelta@algerdelta.com](mailto:algerdelta@algerdelta.com) (write "Water Heater Program" in the subject line), but must be received by 5 p.m. (ET) on Aug. 5, 2011. Recipients will be randomly selected on Aug. 8.

This is the first time we have offered this program, and it is limited to 30 high-efficiency electric water heaters. Alger Delta is receiving support for the program from WPPI Energy, our wholesale power supplier. Program rules do not allow "fuel switching" (changing from gas or propane to an electric water heater). That is why owning an electric water heater is required to qualify for the program.

Members who are selected to receive a water heater must arrange for pick up and installation by a qualified and licensed installer. Provided that the water heater is installed by Sept. 30, members may also receive up to a \$200 credit to help pay for installation. Credit will be provided directly to the member in the form of a check after the installer certifies the installation is complete and provides the appropriate documentation.

For information, visit [algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com) and click on the "Water Heater Program" link.

**Learn more at [algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com) by clicking on "Water Heater Program."**



Alger Delta board member Dennis Gramm (second from right) is shown with the co-op's safety award at the MECA annual meeting. Other Michigan electric co-ops, including Great Lakes Energy, Thumb Electric, and Ontonagon County REA, also received awards, presented by Joe McElroy (back row), MECA safety and loss control specialist.

## Your Co-op Receives Safety Award

**A**lger Delta Cooperative received a safety award from the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) at its recent annual meeting and energy symposium in Grand Rapids. The co-op was recognized for achieving one year with no lost-time accidents.

"This is a great achievement that all of our employees participated in and can be proud of," says Tom Harrell, Alger general manager.

Working on Alger Delta's power lines and equipment involves traveling to and from job sites, loading and unloading materials and equipment, working on buried lines and equipment, climbing poles, working from an

aerial lift, and being exposed to contact with live, energized parts. Lineworkers are required to know and follow safety-related work practices, such as wearing rubber gloves and sleeves, and using rubber cover-up materials and insulated tools when working on energized equipment. The award also recognizes time spent in responding to outages, which are often at night and during bad weather that presents added safety hazards.

Office staff are also required to follow safety rules, participate in safety meetings, and help eliminate hazards in the office Harrell credits the MECA safety meetings and programs with contributing to employee safety.

## Board Members Seated at Annual Meeting

Alger Delta seated three board members at its annual meeting on June 15. Kevin Webber represents District 5 (Gourley, LaBranche, Cornell); Gail Petersen, District 7 (Rapid River); and Nick Denessen, District 8 (Isabella, Nahma).

Webber, Petersen and Denessen were re-elected in district voting that took place in April. Each director serves a three-year term. Webber serves as vice president, and Petersen is secretary/treasurer. Denessen serves on the policy committee and has been the board representative on the co-op's safety committee for several years.



Kevin Webber



Gail Petersen



Nick Denessen

**Thanks to all who attended the annual meeting!**



## Scholarship Winners Announced

**K**ayla Bischer and Brandon Gregg have each won a \$1,000 scholarship from the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA).

Kayla, daughter of Thumb Electric Co-op members Daniel and Sharon Bischer, graduated from Harbor Beach High School with an academic letter for maintaining a 4.0 GPA. She was class vice-president for three years, a member of the National Honor Society, played varsity softball for four years, and received three all-conference scholar-athlete awards. Kayla plans to study accounting in college.

Brandon, son of Midwest Energy members Clarence



Kayla Bischer



Brandon Gregg

and Katrina Gregg, graduated from Edwardsburg High School where he served on the student council, the National Honor Society, and received an academic award for excellence. He also received a Michigan High School Athletic Association Scholar Athlete Award this year. Brandon played varsity football, ice hockey and ran track, and he has been very active in 4-H. He plans to go to medical school and become an anesthesiologist.

A total of 156 scholarship applications were received by MECA, which publishes *Michigan Country Lines* for the state's nine electric co-ops.



### Energy Efficiency *Tip of the Month*

Heat from sunlight coming through windows and hitting the roof can increase air conditioner use significantly. Use shade trees and shrubs in landscaping design to reduce cooling costs. Block heat in the summer—but let it through in the winter—with deciduous trees, which will lose their leaves in the winter.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

## MYSTERY PHOTO

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

**We will no longer accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone!** Email [mysteryphoto@countrylines.com](mailto:mysteryphoto@countrylines.com), or send by mail to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and co-op. The winner will be announced in the September 2011 issue.

The May contest winner is Debbie Nowak of Alpena, who correctly identified the photo from the Great Lakes Maritime Heritage Center in Alpena.



May photo

Do you know where this is? ▶



## Life-changing Experience!



Back row (L-R): Alyssa Zuiderveen, Grace Wiesner, Alli Rayburn, Katelyn Waters, Sen. Debbie Stabenow, Ashley Fogarty, Kaylee Kessler, Jenni Herrema and Dory Shaffer. Front: Justin Dahl, Carlos Portillo, Tyler Orlando, Heath Welch, Cade Dailey, Nate Millen, Matthew Richards and Allan Cramer.

**S**ixteen teens representing seven Michigan electric co-ops didn't expect a free trip to Washington, D.C., when they applied to attend Michigan Electric Co-op Teen Days in April, but that's what they experienced in June as part of the National Rural Electric Youth Tour.

The tour is designed to bridge the gap and personalize the relationship of youth and government, and they joined more than 1,500 students representing electric co-ops from across the country.

The Michigan teens visited memorials, museums and monuments. Highlights of the trip included guided tours through Arlington Cemetery, the National Cathedral, Library of Congress and U.S. Capitol, seeing a play at the Kennedy Center, and a riverboat cruise on the Potomac. The group also visited Sen. Debbie Stabenow and U.S. Reps. Dan Benishek, Bill Huizenga, Dave Camp and Fred Upton on Capitol Hill.

"The Youth Tour experience

changed my life. I was able to connect with history and establish my standings as an American," commented Jenni Herrema of Custer. "I am so grateful for this opportunity."



Tyler Orlando (left), a junior from Lake Isabella, was voted by his peers to serve on

the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association's Youth Leadership Council. He will return to D.C. in July to attend a youth conference that strengthens leadership and public speaking skills.

Youth Tour participants are chosen by their co-op, who sponsors them on the trip. Participating co-ops included Cloverland Electric, Cherryland Electric, Great Lakes Energy, Presque Isle Electric & Gas, Wolverine Power Cooperative, HomeWorks Tri-County, and Midwest Energy.

Learn more about co-op-sponsored youth programs at [countrylines.com/youth](http://countrylines.com/youth).

## 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](mailto:czuker@countrylines.com) or send to: *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, MI 48864.



## More Michigan-made

I just read your article “Game On” in the latest issue of *Michigan Country Lines*, and saw your request for favorite Michigan-made products. Well, have I got a site for you! A few months ago, I created a new Facebook page called Favorite Michigan Products (no kidding)! There are daily posts about a variety of products made right here in our home state—beer, baked goods, spices, chocolate, hotdogs, baby goods, jewelry, fashion wear, and more!

There’s no end in sight when you really start looking. We make a lot of great stuff here! In fact, I just posted a link about the Carrom Company, which was the subject of your article.

I think it would be wonderful, and much appreciated, if you could post a bit of information about this new Facebook page in your next issue. The link is [facebook.com/favoritemichiganproducts](http://facebook.com/favoritemichiganproducts). If you “Like” the page, you’ll start to get a flavor for our daily posts in your own Facebook newsfeed. And in case you didn’t know, this page is open to the public, so anyone can post a link or comment, and a growing number of people are doing that.

Thanks for considering!

P.S. I am a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op member, which is why I get your magazine.

— Jodi Bollaert

## About Wild Things

Get your great little magazine every month and have enjoyed reading the articles that make our electrical system available!

The May issue contained a “letter” that needs clarification, as it could influence a person to a major misconception of how to handle a wild creature (skunks).

Having the opportunity to

live in the great North, and being privileged to be part of a conservation system that allows hunting as part of their management practice, and even to keep predators in balance, through harvest is legal, and traditional.

Your magazine readers should be made aware that wild creatures have their own instincts and habits that must be addressed before you try to handle them. And if the unqualified person tries to remove one by putting the wild animal in a defensive position, the creature will defend itself.

To allow your readers to believe that any wild animal is easily handled is misleading and should be corrected.

Rabies are carried by certain wildlife species and if bitten by an infected animal, could cause a fatal viral disease.

Believe your readers should be properly informed.

— Doug Mummert, Gaylord

## Single Moms Are Strong, Too

Wow, I am still bristling over the “Strong Dads Make Strong Families” article. In an area where a lot of children are raised by only their mothers, in just a few keystrokes Lisa Doublestein has told us that our children are misfits, possible criminals and probably couldn’t find their way out of a room with only one door. To ease the pain of knowing that we are raising such devastated children, however, she has added “on average” so we don’t feel that all of our children are doomed to failure. Then she blames single mothers for part of the federal government’s budget problems.

I am delighted that Lisa’s husband is active in her children’s lives. However, there are reasons (and usually very good ones) for why mothers raise their children alone, and this article effectively slapped all single mothers in their collective faces and told us that we have failed our children miserably by raising them without a father. Shame on you. Interestingly enough, the sidebar

about things fathers can do to share their interests with their children are things that a single mother does do every day (and sometimes even better!).

I hope *Michigan Country Lines* will be more aware of the dynamics of their readers in the future.

— Yolanda Lyons

*You bring up good points about single moms that we should all be aware of. However, the article wasn’t intended to criticize them—merely to celebrate the value of dads near Father’s Day, and discuss facts about how some (not all) kids are faring and ways they might be helped. Thanks for writing. —Ed.*

## Vernors Ginger Ale

Having grown up in Detroit myself, I enjoyed the article by Marjory Priest about Vernors Ginger Ale (June). I too have memories of getting it if I was sick to my stomach, or occasionally as a special treat. I also remember reading the bottle label as a kid, and back then, it was called Vernor’s Ginger Ale and it touted that it had been “aged 4 years in wood barrels.” Currently, the label now reads “Vernors Ginger Soda” and it is “Barrel Aged for 3 years.” I have been wondering when this change actually took place and has the successful recipe for the

product been altered for any special reason? Any insight for the change would be appreciated and answer my curiosity.

— Barbara Wolf

## In “Ruff” Weather...



We received this pillow at an open house in Suttons Bay. Thought it was great, so did our cocker spaniel, Rockford. He has always carried around socks and things, but this pillow is his favorite. Of course we would like to see his picture in *Country Lines*, but either way we wanted to share this with you.

Couldn’t help but think of this as a possible caption: “When the weather gets ‘Ruff,’ Rockford, our cocker spaniel, depends on Cherryland Electric.

— Paul Dover, Lake Leelanau

## Bulbs Die Differently

Worried when you hear a compact fluorescent light-bulb (CFL) pop or sizzle? According to Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL), a nonprofit firm that tests and sets standards for electric items, CFLs die differently than their incandescent cousins. These sounds actually signal that the bulb is working safely in its final hours. Smoke, a popping noise, and even a slight odor are typical and do not pose a fire risk.



Traditional incandescent lightbulbs tend to burn out with a pop and a flash. When shaken, a familiar rattle confirms that the bulb needs to be changed. With CFLs, light dims over time and the lamp may produce a more dramatic exit, as noted above. Sometimes the plastic at the base of a CFL will turn black, which is normal in most cases as safety standards require application of special flame-retardant plastics.

Consumers should look for the UL mark on packaging when purchasing CFLs to know that it meets safety requirements. For more information, visit [SafetyAtHome.com](http://SafetyAtHome.com).





"This picture was taken on a 'walking street'—a street that doesn't allow bikes, cars, etc., and is solely for shopping. I am with American friends who lived in Chengdu (minus the two Chinese students from my father's school). I am the one with the glasses and red shirt."



"We found this rock dragon while rowing a boat on a large lake at a park in the countryside."

# No Place Like Home

I moved to China with my family for two years because my father got a job teaching English at a university in Chengdu. **Brianna Ecklid**

**Y**ou'll miss it here!" someone shouted as I rushed to throw the last of my luggage into the van. "Doubt it," I mumbled under my breath. I was 16 and on my way to a new adventure. There is no way I will miss this small town. I slung myself into the empty seat, turned on my music, and looked one last time at the home I had lived in for the past 13 years. I was moving to China—to a city of 12 million people—and I wasn't coming back.

For two years I lived in Chengdu, China. The city is loud, dirty and culturally shocking. I would be a liar if I said I didn't like it there. There are many advantages to city life: information is easier to come by, and art, culture and the availability of goods are just a few more of the upsides of city living. Plus, I was living in a culture and country not my own. It made for a very educational experience. Most 16-year-old girls are worried about high school dances and boys. I was concerned with a new language, new food, and how to avoid getting hit by a taxi while crossing the street.

This new city had rules that didn't exist in Gladstone, MI: I was no longer allowed to walk alone at night; I had to constantly lock the doors and be careful of pickpockets and thieves. In Gladstone, the only noises heard in the morning were birds or children. But in Chengdu,

the city constantly buzzes with sound. In the morning, I could hear the sounds of people exercising and selling their goods. At night, fireworks (which people loved to set off when the sun went down) and car alarms carried through the air. Everything shuts down in Gladstone around 6 p.m., but in Chengdu one could easily find a place to eat at 2 a.m.!

In Chengdu, I was surrounded by grey concrete and smog. Without the trees and lakes of home, it did feel claustrophobic at times. So, there were days when homesickness set in. I missed the lakes, bright sunshine and, crazily enough, the snow. While in Gladstone, I never had to travel too far to be lost in the countryside. It took hours to get away from Chengdu and its people. I missed the ability to be alone in nature.

Even with the homesickness, I honestly did not think I missed the U.P. too much. I didn't want to leave my new friends and life, and certainly did not want to come back to a "boring" place. I felt really bummed out as I packed my suitcases to come back to the states for a summer visit.

One 12-hour plane ride later, I was in loud, colorful, annoying Chicago. I grumbled my way through customs and waited to get on a tiny plane that only sat about 40 people. The plane took off and I stared at the buildings and people below. Then, something caught my eye—the huge and lovely Lake Michigan. I sat up a bit more

to get a better view. I forgot how stunning, big and blue the lake is. From my vantage point in the sky it looked calm and glassy. I thought about how often I walked to the beach every summer, and then about not being able to swim in China because the water was too polluted. About an hour later, the plane landed at K.I. Sawyer airport. Unlike O'Hare airport, where the plane docked at a terminal and I simply strolled into the building, I stepped onto the tarmac where the warm June air brushed my face and the sun shined proudly. Breathing in deeply and long, I took in the smells of sweet grass, flowers and clean air from the land I once rejected. After spending months living in a city where ash and smog made my asthma a nightmare, it was freeing to take in air as it is supposed to be, and smiling, I looked at all the glorious, proud trees. A warm feeling of happiness came over me while a spring found its way into my step.

I spent a long time thinking that I hated a place only to learn that I actually loved it. I've been to the other side of the world and met many people and experienced new places and exciting things. And, while I have seen beauty everywhere I went, I can say with certainty that no place is as gorgeous, clean or free as Michigan's Upper Peninsula. It took two trips around the world for me to realize that I am very proud to call this place home.

*Brianna Ecklid, now a 22-year-old, returned to her hometown of Gladstone and completed a degree in journalism. She enjoys gardening, knitting, crocheting and baking in her spare time.*



# Engaging Washington

Michigan co-ops take the message to Capitol Hill.

**L**ike it or not, your member-owned electric co-op is deeply rooted in politics. The Roosevelt Administration believed it was the government's duty to supply electric power where private enterprise claimed it was not profitable, and therefore not possible. In 1935, the Rural Electrification Administration (REA) was created to bring electricity to America's rural areas. Thus began an interesting, and sometimes unusual, relationship.

While your co-op is democratically run by its members, state and national political decisions continue to affect how it works to provide you with safe, reliable and affordable electricity.

Recently, representatives from Michigan's electric co-ops joined nearly 3,000 others from around the nation for a legislative conference in Washington, D.C. The Michigan co-op group met with 11 members of Congress and their staff to communicate four key legislative goals that are important to your co-op:

## Access to Affordable Lending

Over 75 years of partnership with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Rural Utilities Service (RUS) makes it possible for co-ops to construct and maintain their distribution and generation systems.

Loans available through the RUS electric program help make these worthwhile investments possible. While President Obama's 2012 budget recommends an acceptable loan level, it would restrict two-thirds of the lending to renewable-related or carbon sequestration projects only.

Because several Michigan co-ops rely on the RUS loan program for a portion of their financing, your co-op leaders urged members of Congress to support the program, but to let locally-driven business decisions, not Washington, D.C., determine what type of projects are constructed. While co-ops support renewable energy initiatives that make good business sense, there is a greater need



Photo - © iStockphoto.com/Svetlana Foote

for basic infrastructure—backup generation, poles and wires—here in Michigan.

## Development of Renewable Generation Incentives

Electric co-ops can play an important role in developing the nation's renewable energy resources. However, not-for-profit co-ops cannot directly utilize conventional tax incentives that Congress provides the for-profit energy sector. Electric co-ops pay state and local taxes, but as nonprofit utilities they do not have the federal income tax liability they would need to utilize the Treasury Grant Program and are ineligible to participate directly.

New renewable generation remains more expensive to install than conventional gas or coal generation. Your co-op leaders urged members of Congress to develop co-op-friendly incentives—such as renewable energy bonds or tax grant programs—that would allow co-ops to cost-effectively develop renewable energy generation.

## Continued Reuse of Coal Ash

Coal combustion residuals, or coal ash, are materials produced when coal is burned to produce electricity. When properly managed, coal ash offers environmental and economic benefits because it can be recycled into roof shingles, wallboard, bricks and highway construction materials.

Unfortunately, the U.S. Environmental

Protection Agency (EPA) has proposed federal regulations governing the disposal of coal ash. This type of regulation would create significant compliance costs at coal-based generation facilities—where most of the electricity in the Midwest comes from—to levels that would force some plant closures and raise consumer electric rates.

Your co-op leaders support working with the EPA to ensure a consistent level of safe handling of coal ash, but also urged members of Congress to support policies that further the goals of reliable, affordable electricity—without overly-burdensome regulations.

## Promoting Competition

The nation's antitrust laws are meant to protect consumers and the general public from businesses that try to stifle competition, but railroads are exempt. Lack of competition has allowed freight railroads to manipulate the market, reaping huge profits from coal delivery without marketplace or legal consequences. At several generation and transmission co-ops, low coal stockpiles have threatened the reliability of the electric system. Some have even been forced to buy more expensive foreign coal because they can't rely on timely railroad deliveries. When replacement coal is unavailable, co-ops must rely on more expensive natural gas. Both alternatives drive up consumer electric bills.

Your co-op leaders urged members of Congress to support the Railway Antitrust Enforcement Act. This legislation would force the railroads to comply with antitrust laws, and thereby provide co-ops with a more reliable—and cost effective—fuel for generating electricity.

We're forever grateful to the Roosevelt administration visionaries that helped make the dream of bringing electricity to the countryside a reality. And we'll continue to work with elected officials to provide our member-owners with a safe, reliable and affordable energy future.

# Ways to experience

# LANSSING

In the heart of Michigan, our capital city (the state's fifth largest by population) is a diverse region where people come together to enjoy music, food, recreation, the arts and so much more. Here are some highlights. **Lori Lanspeary**



Photos - Greater Lansing Convention and Visitors Bureau

## Capitol ◀

Step back into the Victorian era with a visit to Michigan's award-winning Capitol Building. Designed by Elijah E. Myers, one of the foremost architects of public buildings during the Gilded Age (1865-1914), construction took six years to finish and has over nine acres of hand-painted surfaces. The building was dedicated to Michigan citizens in 1879 and underwent an extensive three-year restoration that was completed in 1992, removing years of "modernization" including half floors and unsightly drop ceilings. This building is a national historic landmark and a state treasure. It's open to the public for tours weekdays, 9 a.m.- 4 p.m. Tours of the public areas and the House and Senate galleries are available every half-hour. Visit [michigan.gov](http://michigan.gov) to learn more.



## Potter Park Zoo ▶

This is Michigan's oldest zoo (1920), and is home to over 600 animals, many of them endangered. The zoo offers seasonal camel and pony rides, a Zoo-venir gift shop, concession stands and multiple interactive exhibits such as "Wings from Down Under." Purchase a seed stick and delight as birds flutter down to perch and nibble. Nestled in an oak forest, the zoo is a relaxing stroll that can be completed in two hours. See hours and fees at [potterparkzoo.org](http://potterparkzoo.org) or call 517-316-4222.

## Historical Museum

The Michigan Historical Museum surrounds visitors with history from prehistoric times through the late 20th century. Exhibits include a three-story Michigan relief map, a copper mine, one-room schoolhouse, and more. Explore all 26 galleries and the museum store with unique items reflecting the state's rich heritage. Open weekdays 9 a.m.-4:30 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.-4 p.m., and Sun. 1-5 p.m. Free. [michigan.gov/museum](http://michigan.gov/museum) or call 517-373-3559.



## Lansing Lugnuts/ ▲ Cooley Law School Stadium

Enjoy good times with good friends as Lansing's minor league baseball team, the Lansing Lugnuts, celebrates its 16<sup>th</sup> season. Its family fun at an affordable price, so don't miss out on the action and your chance to "GO NUTS." Admission starts at \$8. [lansinglugnuts.com](http://lansinglugnuts.com)



## OldTown ▲

OldTown is Lansing's historic boutique and arts district. The neighborhood's beautiful Victorian buildings are filled with unique galleries, tasty eateries, quaint specialty shops, creative businesses, nightclubs, and more. Voted one of the top places to bring visitors and the winner of IKEA's "Main Street Makeover," OldTown is an urban neighborhood with a small-town feel. This district also hosts festivals, gallery walks and farmers markets year-round and is "the place" for exceptional customer service. Located at Grand River Avenue and Turner Street, one mile north of downtown Lansing and at the northern point of the city's 13-mile River Trail. [iloveoldtown.org](http://iloveoldtown.org)





Photo - Greg Smith

### Michigan's Festival Capital

With 58 area events and festivals, Greater Lansing sets the stage for you to enjoy a wide array of music and cultural events that are as diverse as they are engaging. From the quaint celebrations of surrounding communities to the heart-pounding week-long Common Ground Music Festival, the Lansing region invites you to come and experience a kaleidoscope of festivals and events!

### Coming up:

**July 11-17 • Common Ground Festival**  
[commongroundfest.com](http://commongroundfest.com) • 517-267-1502

**July 30 • Car Capitol Celebration**  
[reoldsmuseum.org](http://reoldsmuseum.org) • 517-372-0529

**Aug. 5-6 • Lansing JazzFest**  
[jazzlansing.com](http://jazzlansing.com) • 517-371-4600

Visit [lansing.org](http://lansing.org) for more, and [michigan.org](http://michigan.org) for surrounding area events.

### Impression 5 Science Center

Impression 5 is a hands-on learning environment that challenges visitors to experience, discover and explore! Exhibits include “Bubbles,” “Throwing Things,” “Light & Color,” “Electricity & Magnetism,” the “Giant Eye,” and more. After exploring the exhibits, make “Slime,” and shop in the Science Store! And, don't miss the newly opened First Impressions Room for young explorers ages 0–4 years old and their caregivers. Open Mon.–Fri., 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sat. 10 a.m.–7 p.m., Sun. noon–5 p.m. Admission: Ages 5 and up \$5, ages 0–4 pay your age. 10 percent discount for seniors/grandparents. [impression5.org](http://impression5.org) or call 517-485-8116.

### Lansing Metro Marinas

Lansing Metro Marinas provides river boat tours, private cruises and taxi services on the Grand River. The pontoon rides let you experience all of the new vibrant downtown Lansing developments and natural surroundings from the water's view. Hop aboard outside of the new Lansing City Market, water conditions permitting. Mon.–Fri., 11 a.m.–2:30

p.m., 5–8 p.m., Sat.–Sun. 11 a.m.–5 p.m. [metromarinas.com](http://metromarinas.com) or call 517-410-0801.

### Lansing City Market

An urban public market with a diverse merchant mix begins its second 100 years in a new state-of-the-art venue situated on the Grand River. Offering produce, meats and poultry, artisan breads and desserts, cheese and dairy, gourmet coffee, full-line grocery, ethnic, food and horticultural artisans. Open year-round Tue.–Fri. 10 a.m.–6 p.m., Sat. 9 a.m.–5 p.m. [lansingcitymarket.com](http://lansingcitymarket.com) or call 517-483-7460.

### Lansing's River Trail

Among the largest in the country, the River Trail traces the banks of the Grand and Red Cedar rivers and connects comfortable parks, historic sites and urban activity centers for over 13 miles through Lansing and East Lansing. Public parking is available at regular intervals, including Saginaw and Oakland Avenues, Turner-Dodge House, Potter Park, and others. [lansingrivertrail.org](http://lansingrivertrail.org)

### RE Olds Transportation Museum

This collection of vehicles and memorabilia is a tribute to the auto industry, courtesy of one of Lansing's most prominent citizens, Ransom Eli Olds. The very first Oldsmobile, built in 1897, is on display along with antique REOs, Stars, and auto advertising memorabilia. This gift shop has diverse auto-related items. Open Tue.–Sat. 10 a.m.–5 p.m., Sun. noon–5 p.m. Admission: Adults \$5, students and seniors (65+) \$3, family up to 5 \$10. [reoldsmuseum.org](http://reoldsmuseum.org) or call 517-372-0529.

# Taking an Energy Detour

Engaged co-op members are helping to reduce energy traffic and their electric bills.

**M**any electric co-ops are asking their members to help save energy during times of “peak demand,” which is the industry’s equivalent of rush-hour traffic—when power supply costs are highest. By working together, co-ops and members are reducing energy use and higher power costs during these high-traffic periods.

Electricity can’t be easily stored, so it must be used as soon as it’s generated. As a result, electric co-ops must be ready to supply enough energy to meet spikes in electricity use. If energy use could be spread more evenly over time instead of peaking once or twice each day, fewer power plants would be needed and power costs would level out.

The National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, electric co-ops, public power districts, and public utility districts can shave 6 percent of their peak demand—including about 1,440 megawatts (MW) of residential load—through programs known variously as demand-side management, load management, or demand response. These measures help keep electric bills affordable.

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the nation’s bulk power grid watchdog, estimates America needs to build 135,000 MW of new generation by 2017 to meet growing demand for electricity. Power plants on the drawing board, however, will only deliver 77,000 MW. To fill this gap, a 2009 Federal Energy Regulatory Commission assessment found that 150,000 MW could be offset by conservation and energy efficiency measures, or by lowering peak demand.

Efforts by co-op members to curb energy use during peak times may provide a detour to new plant construction, at least temporarily.

## The Rush-Hour Toll

We use a steady amount of energy, whether we’re at home or away. Refrigerators, air conditioning and heating systems, and appliances create base load power requirements—the minimum amount of electricity your co-op needs to reliably supply all of its members.

Lots of consumers tend to use electricity at the same time—in the morning to warm up the house and get kids ready for school, and after work when making dinner and settling in for the evening.

The price for power rises and falls depending on the fuel type (coal, natural gas, nuclear, hydro, etc.) used to generate electricity, and the fuel used often depends on when power is needed. For example, generating a steady flow of power with a baseload coal, nuclear, or hydro plant costs far less than starting up a natural gas peaking plant on a hot, humid summer weekday afternoon or extremely frigid winter morning.

As a result, when power is required during demand peaks, your electric co-op—and you the co-op member—pay a steep toll.

## Detours Save Money

Up to 75 percent of your monthly electric bill goes directly to buying power—the rest must be stretched to cover bucket trucks, poles and wire, right-of-way trimming, payroll, and other operating expenses.

The easiest way to cut power costs is to use less energy—stay off the road—during rush hour. Some co-ops ask members to stop using energy when electricity use surges, an effort commonly called “Beat the Peak.”

“When we started our Beat the Peak program, everybody told us, ‘It won’t work, you can’t measure it, you can’t sustain it,’” recalls Bill Andrew, CEO of Delaware Electric Cooperative. “Today more than 35,000 of our members participate, and 10 percent of the co-ops in the United States have launched similar programs. That’s pretty good!”

With the help of in-home peak indicators and aggressive communications (text alerts, radio ads, e-mails, social media), this co-op cut 50 MW off its 345 MW summer peak.

In El Dorado, KS, Butler Rural Electric faced a 9 percent rate increase. To keep electric bills affordable, the co-op gave incentives for cutting energy use during peak times.

“By allowing our members to decide when to use electricity, they gained more power over their electric bills,” explains Travis Griffin, Butler’s member services representative. “After a year, we experienced only a 5 percent rate increase because members began shifting when they did certain chores, like washing clothes and running the dishwasher, to off-peak times.”

## Managing Traffic

Some electric co-ops take peak-shaving fur-

ther by installing load control equipment. Devices attached to electric water heaters, air conditioners, and other special appliances can cut demand by briefly switching them off—an action generally unnoticed by the homeowners who volunteer to take part.

“Our primary goal is to reduce peak demand and delay construction of new power plants,” explains Stephanie Cornett, senior analyst for East Kentucky Power Cooperative’s demand-side management effort called “SimpleSaver.” The Winchester, KY-based generation and transmission co-op and its 16 distribution members offers incentives to consumers who let them manage air conditioners and electric water heaters during peak demand.

“Comfort level is a common concern,” admits Cornett. “I tell participants, ‘You should experience no more than 2 degrees difference in your home, if that much.’ Our cycling strategies are frequent, with very brief on and off times—most people never notice a change.”

But the savings on electric bills adds up. “Our 2009 research summed it up simply: folks want to lower their electric bills,” notes Cornett. “For some, a bill credit is a big draw. Others want to support the environment. The bottom line is that most members want to help their local co-op cope with rising costs.”

In Delaware, electric bill savings have been hard to miss. “We lowered our wholesale power costs by \$10 million in 2009 and another \$1.5 million in 2010,” Andrew says. “We encourage, educate and inform our members about the role they play in Beat the Peak. Our members want to help. If you show people what they can accomplish, they show up big time.”

## Help Us Keep Your Electric Bill Affordable

The Michigan Electric Cooperative Association and your local electric co-op remain committed to providing you with affordable power, but there are some costs we can’t control. Our energy efficiency programs help you manage your energy use, and we’re deploying state-of-the-art solutions to help us control operating costs and improve service reliability. For more ways to cut costs, visit [TogetherWeSave.coop](http://TogetherWeSave.coop).



# Home Canning Gets Preserved

What warms body and soul better than a jar of home-canned food? **Gail Knudtson**

**T**he art of canning food is trendy again, and a Michigan man has invented a tool to help preserve it.

Loren Stieg, a tool-and-die maker by trade, invented the “Tattler Reusable Canning Lid,” during a shortage of the metal canning jar lids.

“A scarcity of canning lids, causing a frustrating market condition for home canners in the mid-’70s, led to exploring the feasibility of a plastic reusable product,” Stieg explains. Besides being reusable, the plastic lids won’t corrode.

The lids are made at Chippewa Plastics in Evart, which has produced over 1 million since startup in spring 2010, and are packaged and shipped from the Stiegs’ Reed City location. A new box design, tooling and rubber rings were finished this year and built by



Loren Stieg invented the Tattler Reusable Canning Lid.

Bawnco, a local tool shop. Stieg is proud that his products are “Made in the USA.”

Stieg and his son Brad figured if the business could survive and be stable for a year or two, they would have a good chance at success.

“My son in Colorado has become my business partner, and at the end of our first year (March

2011) we have experienced more than 10 times projected sales,” Stieg says. They also now produce and ship from his son’s location in Grand Junction, CO, and ship to all 50 states, Canada, and other countries.

While most sales are online, the small company also has nearly 100 retailers sell-

ing the lids, and they have met with Hope Network (Moarc) of Paris, MI, to discuss a need for more packing capacity. Stieg says increased demand for the lids has meant more production, and therefore more jobs.

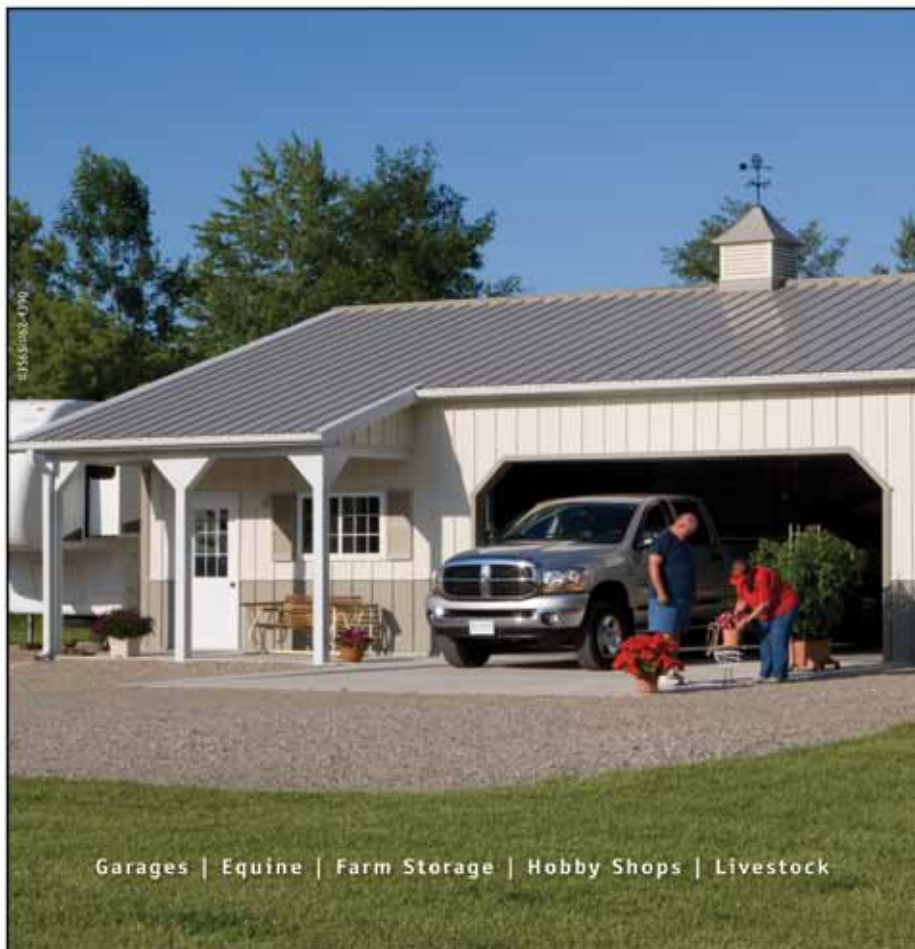
Other factors driving interest in canning are a desire for local, whole foods and recent food safety scares. “The home canning industry continues to thrive, and has seen a recent resurgence due to economic conditions, individual resourcefulness, increased self-sufficiency, and a bit of nostalgia,” he says.

The reusable lid saves money and time, he adds, and “...are fantastic for those of us who wish to reduce, reuse and recycle.” The BPA-free and FDA-approved lids work extra well for acid foods, like peppers, and some of his customers have used them for over 30 years.

A recent *Detroit Free Press* story notes that sales of home canning equipment is up 10 percent from last year.



Photos Courtesy—Loren Stieg



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# Kayaks Gain Paddlesport Popularity

The view from the Hoxeyville Bridge, high over the Pine River, is a good place to see or photograph canoes in the season of paddling sports.

But slowly and surely, kayaks are catching up with canoes as a popular watercraft for floating Michigan's streams; viewed from this bridge, it seems that more kayaks than canoes go floating downriver these days.

Women seem to be taking to the sport as much, or maybe more so, than men. A kayak is a lot lighter load to handle, launch and retrieve than a canoe, and this finds favor with lady paddlers.

At many of the established canoe liveries, including Baldwin Canoe Rental in Baldwin, Wisner's Canoe Rental and Powers Outdoors in Newaygo, River Rat Canoe Rental in Grant, Kellogg's Canoe Rental in Hesperia, the Sawmill in Big Rapids, and many of the canoe liveries serving the Au Sable in Grayling, kayak rentals are reaching a par with canoes for day trippers. This trend is also appearing in the sales of adventure watercraft. Canoes are still first in total numbers on our streams, but kayaks are closing the gap more each season.

Eric Sharp, *Detroit Free Press* outdoor writer, once summed up the sport of kayaking this way: "Kayaking is like bicycling—the more you do it, the better you get and the more you enjoy it, and like cycling it can be enjoyed at many levels, from a casual, hour-long sunset cruise around the lake at the family cottage to week-long expeditions on wilderness waters."

Sharp noted that few other states can match Michigan for easy access to waters suited to kayaking. From four of the Great Lakes that border our state, to some 36,000 miles of streams and thousands more inland lakes, the kayaker can pick and choose water to match their skills or their idea of a pleasant paddle.

Our state also has several national forests where kayaking access is easy. The Huron-Manistee National Forest offers nine rivers (AuSable, Big Manistee, Big Sable, Hersey, Little Manistee, Pere Marquette, Pine, Rifle and White) that have about 550 miles of stream suited to canoeing and kayaking



Photo - ©iStockphoto.com/Gene Churka

within the Forest's boundaries.

Most river launches are for car-top boats, canoes or kayaks, except for those at some of the larger dam ponds.

Beginner and novice canoeists and kayakers should be able to handle most of the rivers, although log jams, sharp hairpin turns and fast currents on some stretches may challenge novice to intermediate paddlers.

Most state rivers (except a few of the larger watersheds) range from 20 to 80 feet wide, meandering through deep cuts in glacial sand and clay banks, then flowing over wide, flat, flood plains. The larger ponds, created by hydroelectric dams, provide slow lake canoeing and kayaking options. (High winds may present a hazard, so novice paddlers should watch weather conditions on larger open waters.)

There are a number of schools and training sources for kayaking newcomers, but if you are a woman, one of the best perhaps is offered by the Michigan DNR's B.O.W. program (Becoming an Outdoor Woman). This successful program has led the way for women (18 and above) to learn many outdoor

skills in the company of other women. Kayaking is one of the program's more popular summer courses, and includes six hours of intensive hands-on instruction.

"This course teaches participants how to paddle the proper way to make their experience on the water safe and more enjoyable," says Lynn Marla, BOW coordinator.

"We are very pleased to have top-notch women instructors lined up for our two-day workshops," she adds. The workshops are limited to 16 women to allow for individual instruction. Dates and a registration form are available at [michigan.gov/bow](http://michigan.gov/bow) or by calling 517-241-2225.

If you want to paddle your own canoe—oops, make that kayak—our region's rivers and lakes are the perfect place for paddle-sport fun.

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





# Monkeyball Takes Hold

**O**n the first Saturday in August, a diverse and widespread community of leisure-sport enthusiasts knows to block out their calendars and avoid all wedding invites. They know to pack their camp chairs, kids, coolers, trail mixes and canopies. They know to hydrate and bring the “A-game” they’ve been honing for a full year—all for a sport called “Monkeyball.”

Monkeyball is known by many other monikers, including (but not limited to) Hillbilly Golf, Polish Horseshoes, Ladderball and Bolo Toss. However, devotees of this sport reject them all. Monkeyball, a game frequently seen at tailgate parties and backyard barbecues, is played with ladders made from PVC pipe and “monkeyballs”—two golf balls connected by rope. The object is to toss the monkeyballs onto the pipe ladder and outscore your opponent.

The unique distinction Monkeyball claims over other imitators rests in the regulations and formality of its events. Founder and commissioner Andy Frushour, a DeWitt, MI, resident, explains. “The difference between Monkeyball and others is that we have our own rule book (which varies slightly from other versions of the game), we have world rankings, we have fun t-shirts, and most importantly, we host the biggest ‘ladder golf’ tournament in the country—the annual World Championships.”

In 2011, the seventh annual Monkeyball World Championships will take place in Dimondale, MI. The tournament (known colloquially as ‘MB7’) will be on Aug. 6, with first matches beginning at 10 a.m. Competition is individual, and the tournament is partially seeded to accommodate both experienced players and those new to the game. Commissioner Frushour invites all to play. “Anyone is welcome to play in the 7th annual event—rookies & veterans, young & old. We’re expecting over 100 players, a third of which usually hail from the Lansing area.”

Frushour, who also claims the No. 2 spot on the Official Monkeyball World Rankings list (ranks over 550 players), is happy with how the game has taken hold.

“I’m the self-appointed ‘Grand Pooh-Bah’



The seventh Monkeyball World Championships (“MB7”) are Aug. 6 at The Old Orchard (3426 N. Michigan Rd.) in Dimondale, MI. See [playmonkeyball.com](http://playmonkeyball.com), or call 517-449-8256, for information about the sport and related events.

of Monkeyball. Since 2005, we’ve hosted over 100 tournaments across eight states with over 700 different players. And, we’ve had a lot of fun while playing this silly backyard game.”

While the tournament focuses on individual play, the camaraderie amongst the Monkeyball community spans across competition. With all ages welcome to participate,

it is not unusual to see a 5<sup>th</sup> grader advancing through the first round. A family-friendly event, the Monkeyball World Championships are an affordable and terrific way to spend an afternoon meeting new friends, playing a “new” game in an organized setting, and enjoying the outdoors.

— Andrea Osters

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# STATE OF MICHIGAN

## BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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### NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF ALGER DELTA COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION, CLOVERLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE, MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE, ONTONAGON COUNTRY RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ASSOCIATION, PRESQUE ISLE ELECTRIC & GAS CO-OP, THUMB ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, and HOMEWORKS TRI-COUNTY ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE,

**CASE NOS. U-16678, U-16681, U-16682, U-16683, U-16684, U-16685, U-16686, AND U-16687**

- Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association, Cloverland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Midwest Energy Cooperative, Ontonagon Country Rural Electrification Association, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-Op, and Thumb Electric Cooperative plan to file Energy Optimization Plans in compliance with the "Clean, Renewable, and Energy Efficient Act" (2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001) and Michigan Public Service Commission Order in Case Nos. U-16678, U-16681, U-16682, U-16683, U-16684 U-16685, U-16686, AND U-16687, dated March 17, 2011.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write the Cooperatives' attorney, Mr. Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933, Phone: 517.374.9100 for a free copy of its application, which will be available on or before August 1, 2011. Any person may review the application at Dykema's offices or at the respective offices of the Cooperatives.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

**DATE:** August 9, 2011, This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

**TIME:** 9:00 a.m.

**PRESIDING OFFICER:** Administrative Law Judge Theresa A. Sheets

**LOCATION:** Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Suite 7, Lansing, Michigan

**PARTICIPATION:** Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider the August 1, 2011 joint application of the above named cooperatives to file Energy Optimization Plans, which include specific line item charges on customers' bills as follows:

#### **Energy Optimization Plan Charge**

For residential customers, a per kWh charge, not to exceed 2.2% of the total annual retail sales revenue.

For all other customers, an itemized charge not to exceed 1.7% of the total annual retail sales revenue.

The Commission has selected this case for participation in its Paperless Electronic Filings Program. The Commission recognizes that filers may not have the computer equipment or access to the Internet necessary to submit documents electronically. Therefore, filers may submit an original and one paper copy to the: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, Michigan 48909. Otherwise, no paper documents will be required to be filed in this case. Requirements and instructions for filing electronic documents can be found in the Electronic Filings Users Manual at: <http://efile.mpsc.cis.state.mi.us/efile/usersmanual.pdf>. You may contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6170 or by email at [mpscfilecases@michigan.gov](mailto:mpscfilecases@michigan.gov) with questions and to obtain access privileges prior to filing.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by August 2, 2011. (Residential customers may file petitions to intervene using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon the Cooperatives' attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

Any person wishing to make a statement of position without becoming a party to the case may participate by filing an appearance. To file an appearance, the individual must attend the hearing and advise the presiding administrative law judge of his/her wish to make a statement of position.

A copy of the Cooperatives' request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at <http://efile.mpsc.cis.state.mi.us/efile> and at the office of Dykema Gossett PLLC, or the respective cooperative office, on or before February 18, 2008. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6170.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.51 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

Dated: June 30, 2011, Lansing, Michigan





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# Eggplant recipes



Eggplant has a reputation as a versatile vegetable even though it's technically a fruit. Smaller ones are generally less bitter because they have fewer seeds. Find more recipes at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com).

## Ratatouille

3 c. eggplant, cut in 1½-inch cubes  
1 c. zucchini or summer squash, cut in 1/4-inch slices  
2 cloves garlic, chopped  
1 small onion, sliced  
1/2 med. Anaheim chili pepper, cut in strips  
2 T. chopped fresh parsley  
1 T. chopped fresh basil or 1/2 t. dried basil  
2 T. water  
1/2 t. salt  
1/4 t. pepper

2 med. tomatoes, cut into eighths

Combine all ingredients in a heavy saucepan or Dutch oven. Cover and simmer on stove top for 1-2 hours. Serve with chicken or lamb or over rice. Leftover ratatouille can be added to spaghetti sauce.

*Edith Heezen, Fowler*

## Caponata

4-5 c. peeled and cubed eggplant  
1/3 c. chopped green pepper  
1 med. onion, coarsely chopped  
3/4 c. sliced fresh mushrooms or 1 4-oz. can, drained  
2 cloves garlic, crushed  
1/2 c. vegetable oil  
1 6-oz. tomato paste  
1/4 c. water  
2 T. wine vinegar  
1/2 c. green salad olives, chopped  
1½ t. sugar  
1/2 t. oregano  
1 t. salt  
1/8 t. black pepper

In a large fry pan, combine eggplant, green pepper, onion, mushrooms, garlic and oil; cover and cook gently for 10 minutes. Add remaining ingredients and mix well. Cover and simmer 20 minutes. Serve warm or well-chilled with crackers.

*Beth Kingsley, Belleville*

## Lamb and Eggplant

### Meatballs:

1½ lbs. ground lamb  
1 T. minced garlic  
1 T. yellow mustard  
1 T. Worcestershire® sauce  
2 slices white bread  
1 egg  
salt and pepper to taste

### Sauce:

2 T. olive oil  
1 small onion, minced  
1 garlic clove, minced  
2 stalks celery, chopped  
2 pts. sweet cherry tomatoes  
1 6-oz. tomato paste  
1 c. chicken broth  
1 T. ground coriander  
1 T. ground cumin  
1 cinnamon stick

### Eggplant:

2 eggplants  
milk  
1 c. canola oil  
2 eggs, beaten  
1/2 t. salt  
1/2 t. pepper  
1/2 t. garlic powder  
2 c. Panko® breadcrumbs  
fresh mint  
fresh Italian parsley

Peel and slice eggplant into 1/2-inch slices. Place in a pan and cover with milk. Let soak about an hour to remove bitterness.

Meanwhile, in a bowl, combine lamb, garlic, mustard and Worcestershire sauce. Rinse bread slices under tap water; squeeze out water and shred. Add to lamb mixture along with egg, and salt-and-pepper to taste. Blend all ingredients well. Roll into 2-inch balls; place on a cookie sheet and bake at 375° for 30 minutes.

While meatballs are baking, combine 2

tablespoons olive oil, onion, garlic and celery in a large pot; sauté until onions are transparent. Add tomatoes, tomato paste, chicken broth, coriander, cumin and cinnamon stick. Cover and simmer for 20 minutes. Add salt and pepper to taste; add cooked meatballs; keep warm.

In a large frying pan, heat 1 cup canola oil. Remove eggplant slices from milk; discard milk. Combine eggs, salt, pepper and garlic powder. Dredge slices in egg mixture and coat with breadcrumbs. Fry in hot oil until brown; turn slices over and brown other side. Serve meatballs and sauce over fried eggplant. Remove cinnamon before serving. Garnish with thinly sliced mint and parsley leaves.

*Mary Gorshe, Suttons Bay*

## Grilled Eggplant

1 eggplant, do not peel  
olive oil

Italian bread crumbs

Wash eggplant; slice into 1/2 or 3/4-inch thick round slices. Dip each slice into a bowl of olive oil, coating both sides. Place each slice in a bowl of bread crumbs, cover evenly on both sides. Place prepared eggplant slices on freshly oiled grill and cook 10-15 minutes until fork tender.

*Bea and Bill King, Copemish*

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## Eggplant and Zucchini Lasagna

2 lbs. fresh ricotta cheese  
2 lbs. fresh mozzarella cheese  
1 c. grated Parmesan cheese  
4 eggs  
2 oz. fresh parsley, chopped  
salt and pepper to taste  
2 eggplants  
4 zucchini  
10 eggs  
4 c. all-purpose flour  
1/4 c. chopped fresh parsley  
4 c. bread crumbs  
4 c. tomato sauce  
1 c. Parmesan cheese  
1 c. extra virgin olive oil  
salt and pepper

In a bowl, mix first 5 ingredients together; mix well and season with salt and pepper to taste; refrigerate briefly to make mixture firm.

Slice eggplant and zucchini into 1/4-inch slices. Set zucchini aside. Fill a bowl with lightly salted water; add eggplant (only) and soak for 1 1/2-2 hours.

Place flour in a shallow bowl. In another bowl, beat eggs with a fork until blended. In a third bowl, mix together breadcrumbs,

Parmesan cheese, parsley, salt and pepper. Line bowls up next to each other.

Carefully dip a slice of eggplant and zucchini into flour, making sure both sides are covered. Dip each slice into egg mixture and finally dip into bread crumb mixture. Coat both sides very well while gently tapping off any excess. Transfer to a serving plate, season with salt and pepper, and set aside while repeating with the remaining slices.

In a large, heavy skillet, heat olive oil over medium heat. Add zucchini and eggplant slices; sauté on both sides until golden brown and cooked all the way through. Remove from pan; place on paper towels to drain excess oil.

In a large baking pan, add 2 cups tomato sauce, a layer of eggplant and zucchini, and then a layer of the cheese mixture. Repeat process 2 more times. Top with a layer of tomato sauce and sprinkle with Parmesan cheese. Bake at 450° for 20 minutes. Serves 6.

*Jennifer Hansen, Mason*

3 garlic cloves, minced  
1 large eggplant, cubed, about 1 1/2 lbs.  
1 28-oz. can crushed tomatoes  
1 green pepper, diced  
1 red pepper, diced  
3/4 c. bread crumbs  
1 t. basil  
grated cheese, any flavor

In a large saucepan, brown turkey, onion and garlic for 5-6 minutes. Add eggplant, tomatoes, peppers, bread crumbs and basil; bring to a boil. Transfer mixture to a greased 9x13-inch baking dish. Cover and bake at 350° for 40-45 minutes until vegetables are tender. Uncover; sprinkle with cheese and bake 15 minutes longer. Let stand 5 minutes before serving.

*Marcia Albosta, Lewiston*



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## Turkey Eggplant Casserole

1 1/4 lbs. ground turkey  
1 onion, chopped

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# 'Hypertufa' Makes Gardening Easy

These containers with a goofy name are a fun gardening option that you can make yourself.

**Y**ou know the drill. Haul out your containers in spring, fill with potting soil, buy your plants, plant them. For the rest of the summer water every week, fertilize every other week. Then as winter approaches, pull out the dead plants, empty the soil, wash out containers. Come spring, start the process all over.

What if you could have a container that didn't require all that work? Just plant it once and let nature take its course, watering only during a drought and fertilizing...well, forget about it. 'Not possible' you say, but think again. Think hypertufa containers.

Hypertufa containers are made from a combination of Portland cement, peat moss, sand and vermiculite or perlite. They have the appearance of stone, without the weight, and can even be left out during Michigan winters without the worry of breakage. These containers look even better with age, getting a rich patina of moss and lichens reminiscent of garden troughs in a British countryside.

Glenda Hopp and her son Chris, of Farmbrook Designs ([farmbrookdesigns.com](http://farmbrookdesigns.com)) in Royal Oak, have been making and selling hypertufa containers since 2000.

"Hypertufa containers have a refined, rustic look. They enhance plants, providing a lovely gentle effect," Glenda says. When Hopp lost her job in the high-tech world, she decided to combine her love of gardening with a business venture. She noticed that gardening was one of the fastest-growing hobbies in Michigan. Since her son Chris was eager to look at other job possibilities as well, they decided to open Farmbrook Designs together.

It was at one of the many garden shows that Glenda met Karen Bovio. "We were a good match," says Bovio, whose love of gardening also lead her to start a business—Specialty Growers ([specialtygrowers.net](http://specialtygrowers.net)) in Howell,



This carefree, sun-loving hypertufa container is filled with hardy sedums. The large rock in the center is surrounded clockwise starting with a blue-green sedum *sieboldii*, a bright green sedum *tetractinum*, a yellow-green sedum *reflexum* "Angelina" and a grey-green sedum *canticola*. A few hens and chicks are tucked in the corners to complete this eye-pleasing design.

back in 1982. Bovio's nursery specializes in providing gardeners, landscapers and nurseries with high-quality, outdoor-grown perennials and herbs. "Today, there's lots of interest in succulent plants as well as drought resistant plants. This interest has increased the appeal of hypertufa containers," states Bovio.

Back when Bovio started her nursery, there were very few people selling perennials. It was a niche market. Today, with the explosion of different cultivars and a growing interest in perennials, there are a lot more gardeners planting them. When people think of hypertufa containers they often think of containers with sun-loving plants such as succulents like hens-and-chicks and low-growing sedums and miniature evergreens such as dwarf spruces and pines, but Bovio points out that miniature hostas, ferns and campanulas do well in hypertufa containers placed in the shade. Even a woodland setting is perfect for them.

For a showy look, Bovio adds that people do use annuals in hypertufa containers, including dwarf ornamental peppers, alyssum, trailing lobelia and calibrachoa, although more care is required.

The important thing to remember when stocking your hypertufa container is to pick plants that are shallow-rooted and miniature. Bovio suggests the following for containers placed in the sun: low-growing sedums or "stonecrops"; dwarf dianthus; creeping thymes (elfin or wooly); or hens-and-chicks.

For containers in shade and part-shade, choose small-growing ferns like maidenhair spleenwort or dwarf Japanese painted ferns, dwarf goatsbeard, viola syletta, alpine species of Columbine. An extensive plant list for hypertufas can also be found at [michigangardenerscompanion.com](http://michigangardenerscompanion.com).

As gardeners get older and downsize their gardens, hypertufa containers make great additions to smaller landscapes. Hypertufa containers add texture, interest, low maintenance and portability.

Hopps teaches a hypertufa-making class every summer at Bovio's Specialty Growers Nursery (July 23, 10 a.m.; click the "Events" tab at [specialtygrowers.net](http://specialtygrowers.net)), but she also offers tips for making your own. Hopps explains that it is much easier to use a mold, such as a foil pan, rather than putting the hypertufa material around an object. Also, line your mold with a plastic garbage bag, which makes for easy removal of the cement mixture once it has dried. It is important to make your mixture the right texture. It should resemble a crumb topping on a pie, but not be so dry that it falls apart as you are packing the mold.

Also, check your local nursery for hypertufas or type "how to make a hypertufa container" in Google or another internet search engine and you'll find how-to articles.

*Rita Henehan is freelance writer whose book, "The Michigan Gardener's Companion: A Insider's Guide to Gardening in the Great Lakes State" is available at bookstores and online.*



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# All Hands on (an Energy Efficient) Deck!

**A**dding a deck to a house, especially if you do most of the work, increases the home's resale value by several times the deck's cost.

A deck can actually be energy efficient in several ways. If having a deck allows your family to spend more time outdoors, then you should be able to set your central air-conditioning thermostat higher during the time you're primarily outside. Setting the thermostat higher, even for just a few hours a day, will reduce your electric bill.

If you are outdoors more often, you will become accustomed to the heat and be more comfortable indoors without as much air conditioning. Try to air-condition as little as possible.

A properly designed deck with a pergola or some type of tall side-wall, facing south or southwest, can also provide shade for your home. This is particularly helpful if it can shade an exterior glass patio door. Even with the most efficient glass in the door, a tremendous amount of heat transfers in through the glass when it is exposed to direct afternoon sun.

Besides saving energy, you can make environmentally friendly choices for the deck materials. For the framing, engineered lumber can be used instead of standard solid 2x2 lumber. Engineered lumber is stronger and often made from smaller wood pieces so less prime wood is required overall. Its strength may allow for fewer posts and longer spans without creating a springy feel.

The choice of deck material is most important. Pressure-treated wood is abundant, the least expensive material, has the nicest appearance and feel on bare feet, and is easy to work with for most do-it-yourselfers. The only environmental drawbacks to wood are its limited life and the cleaning and sealing chemicals which must be applied every year or two to extend its life.

Composite decking is another option. Trex® recently developed a new material, Transcend®, which is environmentally friendly. It is made from 95 percent recycled materials, primarily plastic bags and sawdust.

This decking is different from other composites in that it has a thin polymer top cap that reduces staining and mildew. It is more



James Dulley is shown installing composite decking using hidden fasteners. Since these planks are not as rigid as wood, it is important to make sure you have proper maximum spacing between the joists.

expensive than other composite materials, but its minimal maintenance makes it a reasonable investment.

Another option is cellular PVC decking. I used light-colored Azek® cellular PVC decking on a second-floor deck off my bedroom. It uses more virgin materials than composites do, but it is very durable, low maintenance, and does not stain or mildew.

If your deck is exposed to direct afternoon sun, selecting light-colored composite decking reduces the heat buildup and heat radiated to your house wall and windows. My first-floor composite deck is dark brown, and too hot to walk on barefoot in the afternoon.

Building a vertical wall on the southwest side of the deck fosters effective shading and provides privacy. The simplest design uses standard posts covered by lattice. The lattice openings allow breezes to pass through. Planting climbing vines along the lattice also enhances the natural cooling effect of water that evaporates from the plant leaves.

Another option for the shading wall is to

install horizontal slats. By tilting them at the proper angle, the direct afternoon sun can be blocked while providing ample area for breezes. The best angle depends upon your area's latitude and the deck's orientation to the sun. Make some sample cardboard slats to test for the best angle.

To block the sun from a more overhead direction, build a pergola over the deck. You can build one from lumber or buy a composite pergola kit. This is attractive, and by allowing plants to grow up and over it, it provides additional shading.

These companies offer alternative decking materials: Azek, 877-275-2935, azek.com; Timbertech®, 800-307-7780, timbertech.com; and Trex, 800-289-8739, trex.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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The factory can barely keep up with this fevered demand for the Wedge Sound System.

Survey results show over 73% of people pick the new Wedge Sound System over the more expensive \$500 Music System.

More people preferred the Wedge based on sound quality, sound clarity, number of features and build quality.

And 64% of people said the Wedge has a sound equal or superior to the \$500 Music System!

And at only \$147, it has music lovers buzzing with excitement. That's a \$350.00 savings!

For the first time, anybody will be able to afford a top of the line sound system!

Plus the company that has designed the Wedge is offering a 60-day Money-Back Guarantee so the public can hear the crystal clear sound for themselves risk-free.

A truly unique aspect of the Wedge is you will never have to set the clock. The Wedge is already set for you when you plug it in and even adjusts for Daylight Savings Time.

Another unique feature is the dual battery back-up. If the power goes out, the Wedge won't and your alarm will still go off. You will never be late again!

And you can listen to any part of your music collection on your Wedge. From CDs and MP3s, to your favorite radio station, the Wedge plays them all.

The Wedge even stores up to 20 of your favorite radio stations

for quick and easy access.

To get the scoop on this new and groundbreaking technology, I spoke to the head of Product Research and Design for the Wedge, Paul Goodman.

**Q. How can you offer such a high quality sound system in the Wedge for only \$147 when the Leading Brand's radio goes for \$500?**

A. We have designed the Wedge Sound System from the ground up. All costs are closely monitored and, through a streamlined manufacturing technique, the Wedge is able to be offered at this ultra low price.

**Q. How can the tabletop Wedge Sound System produce such lifelike sounds?**

A. Our special engineering team has developed a revolutionary design enabling the Wedge to fill a room with crystal clear sound.

The Wedge has the perfect balance of power flowing to its speakers so the sound is crystal clear with the volume on low or high.

**Q. How easy is it to set up the Wedge Sound System?**

A. The Wedge is highly advanced but is a super easy-to-use sound system. All the fine tuning has been done for the consumer so all they have to do is plug it in and enjoy the Wedge's crystal clear sound.

No figuring out where to place multiple speakers and no confusing wires to hook up.

**End of interview.**

Readers can get the Wedge Sound System with a FREE Remote and FREE shipping and handling if they order within the next 10 days. Please see the Special Reader's Discount Coupon on this page. For those readers ordering after 10 days, we reserve the right to accept orders at the discounted price.

Plus you will get FREE Shipping and Handling! Complete and mail in the coupon at the right or call. If lines are busy, please try back - you don't want to miss out on a owning a high quality sound system for only \$147.



*Plug, Play, Listen*

**Wedge Sound System shocks the music community!**

The new Wedge Sound System has music lovers buzzing with excitement. Never before has a such a high quality sound system been offered to the public at such a low price. Finally a high quality sound system anybody can afford.

Wedge has more features!	Wedge	Leading Brand
Price	\$147	\$500
Adjusts for Daylight Savings Time	YES	NO
Stores 20 Favorite Radio Stations	YES	NO
2 Separate Battery Back-ups	YES	NO
2 Separate Alarms	YES	NO
SD Memory Slot for Mp3s	YES	NO
Displays Day of Week	YES	NO
Nap Alarm	YES	NO
Remote Control	YES	YES
Able to Operate Without Remote	YES	NO
Play Music From iPod® (mp3 player)	YES	YES
#1 Pick in Survey	YES	NO

**Here's what a few of the thousands of Wedge listeners have to say:**

"The sound is so rich and clear from such a small piece. I was really amazed and pleased."

-Bronwyn M. Owens, Taylor, MI

"Radio has excellent sound. Its clarity is excellent and it's like people are in the room. Who needs a stereo system!!"

-Shelley Pearson, Poplar, WI

"Wow, you caught me off guard. The compact Wedge System sounds and looks great. I was very surprised..."

-Chuck Zabriski, St. Petersburg, FL

**SPECIAL READER'S DISCOUNT COUPON**

Readers of this publication get a **FREE Remote Control and FREE shipping** (\$10.00 value) with this coupon and pay only \$147, if you order within 10 days. And get additional savings when ordering more than one. 2 Wedges are only \$139 each, and 3 are only \$133 each. That's a savings of up to \$42.00! There is a strict limit of 3 Wedge Sound Systems at the discount price - no exceptions please.

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I am ordering within 10 days of the date of this publication, therefore I get a **FREE Remote Control, plus FREE shipping and handling**. My price is only \$147 for 1 Wedge, only \$278 for 2 Wedges and only \$399 for 3 Wedges. Quantity: \_\_\_\_\_

I am ordering past 10 days of the date of this publication, therefore I do not get the FREE Remote or FREE shipping and pay \$157.

Enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_ in:  Check  Money Order (Make payable to IHS)

or charge my:  VISA  MasterCard  Am. Exp./Optima  Discover/Novus

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# You Can Pay Online



**A**lger Delta members can pay their electric bills online. Go to the Alger Delta website ([algerdelta.com](http://algerdelta.com)) and click on “Pay Your Bill” in the upper right hand corner. From there, just follow the prompts.

Members have the option of paying one time or setting up their account for automatic monthly payments. Online payments may come from a checking account or be charged to a credit card. There is no fee for using this secure online payment service.

In addition, members can pay over the phone by calling 866-885-3719 anytime, day or night. Other payment options include credit card, recurring automatic electronic funds transfer (EFT) from a checking account, or automatic credit card payments. Of course, members can still pay in person, or by mailing a check or money order. Never send cash in the mail.

Your co-op’s customer service representatives are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. (EST) to help you with paying your bill and can help determine which plan works best for you. Call us at 906-428-4141.

## Public Act 295: The Clean Renewable and Energy Efficient Act Annual Energy Optimization Report Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association MPSC Case Number U-15813

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

CLEARResult Consulting, Great Lakes LLC, was selected to implement the Residential, Commercial Industrial Programs, and the Energy Optimization (EO) website [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org). CLEARResult has subcontracted with Franklin Energy, JACO, Enercom, and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association to assist with EO program delivery.

In 2010, Alger Delta collected \$119,805 through the Energy Optimization Surcharge and spent \$86,779 resulting in an overcollection of \$33,026 which will be applied towards the 2011 EO Program delivery expenses and goal achievement.

Alger Delta achieved 755.6 MWh of energy savings in 2009–2010. The full report can be obtained at [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or at [michigan.gov/mpsc](http://michigan.gov/mpsc).

## Members-only Pricing!

Your electric cooperative is offering members valuable rebates for the purchase and installation of ENERGY STAR® products. Rebates are available for items purchased at any store.

Visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) (click on your utility and choose Residential ENERGY STAR Program) to learn more about the energy-saving products and download rebate applications.

*\*Smart power strips are also available for purchase online at a discounted price; however, rebates do not apply.*

*Must be a Michigan resident and cooperative member to be eligible for this program. Items purchased must be installed in a home that receives service from a participating cooperative. For residential accounts only while supplies last. Restrictions may apply.*

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\$20	Per Smart Power Strip* (limit 2) <i>Must include 1 uncontrolled socket connected to a primary device</i>
\$25	Per Clothes Dryer (limit 1)
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[michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org)  
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Learn about all of your electric co-op’s programs at [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) • Questions? 877.296.4319

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*Tip of the Month*

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– Source: U.S. Department of Energy

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# Managing Costs

Issues largely outside the direct control of your local co-op will impact electric bills in coming years.

**A**fter two years of declines, the price tag for building power plants and buying utility equipment is climbing once again. An improving world economy and hikes in costs for skilled labor, fuel and raw materials are driving expenses up. These higher prices likely will affect electric bills over the long-term.

“Electric co-ops have an obligation to keep the lights on and electric bills affordable at a time when costs for components needed to construct generation, upgrade existing power plants, expand transmission facilities, and modernize distribution systems are steadily rising,” acknowledges Glenn English, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). “Combined with the costs of complying with new regulations, these are pressures that will affect electric bills in years to come—all of which are largely beyond the control of local co-ops.”

## Keeping the Lights On

The North American Electric Reliability Corporation, the nation’s bulk power grid watchdog, estimates the U.S. will need to build 135,000 megawatts (MW) of new generation by 2017 to meet demand. Facilities already on the drawing board, though, will only deliver 77,000 MW. Electric co-ops—experiencing average annual load growth well above the levels of other electric utilities—estimate they will need to bring about 12,000 MW of new generation on-line over the next decade.

“However, this generation will be the most expensive in history, coming at a time when construction materials like steel, copper and concrete are shooting upward,” English remarks.

The past 20 years have witnessed nations in Asia, Eastern Europe and the Middle East transform themselves from backwater provinces into economic “tigers,” particularly in the areas of manufacturing, tourism, information technology and financial services. Flush with cash, these countries have embarked on unprecedented construction binges, erecting thousands of power plants, factories, residential high-rises and office towers.

Projects of this scope commandeer vast

amounts of basic resources—along with engineering and skilled labor expertise—and push up prices for items like oil, timber, steel, nickel and concrete.

After a brief downturn due to the global recession, worldwide commodity prices have rebounded—steel soared 42 percent between 2009 and 2010, while copper, used for wire and to ground electrical equipment, topped record highs of \$4.50 per pound earlier this year.

For new coal-fired and nuclear power plants, overall costs jumped 25 percent and 37 percent, respectively, compared to the year before, reports the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Capital costs for a pulverized coal plant now average over \$2,800 per kilowatt (kW), while a nuclear plant runs about \$5,300 per kW.

Wind generation capital costs increased, as well—about 21 percent, to \$2,400 per kW for land-based wind farms, and 50 percent, to \$5,975 per kW, for turbines placed offshore. Geothermal power plants also leaped 50 percent, to \$4,140 per kW.

On the other hand, costs for solar power dropped. The cost to build photovoltaic arrays, which convert sunlight directly to electricity, decreased 25 percent, to roughly \$4,755 per kW. But for both wind and solar, backup power from coal or natural gas must be built to be available when the wind isn’t blowing and the sun isn’t shining.

Natural gas-fired power plants, both peaking units (operate only when electric consumption crests) and baseload (full-time) facilities, currently boast the most stable costs. Total costs are generally much lower for combustion turbines and other natural gas generation equipment. This is true because they are manufactured in a factory and assembled on-site. Coal and nuclear plants, however, are built from the ground up—a more costly and time-intensive process.



Photo: Basin Electric

A project engineer and manager inspect the gate valve during air blows at a substation that is under construction in Wyoming. The air blows process removes debris from the new power plant’s piping before startup. The 385-net megawatt coal-based power plant will be complete this summer.

The bottom line? A portfolio of power plants that cost \$100 billion to erect in 2000 would cost about \$215 billion today.

## Hometown Effects

For most local electric co-ops, the biggest expense involves buying power. Wholesale power purchases can account for as much as 75 percent of your co-op’s budget, which also impacts your electric rates.

Then there’s basic operations—everything from replacing poles and wire to maintaining rights-of-way and fueling line trucks. Costs for these activities continue to escalate. Between 1990 and 2010 in the north-central part of the nation, for example, prices for utility poles, towers and fixtures skyrocketed 98 percent while transformers spiked 154 percent.

## Regulations on a Roll

Looming government regulations also pose a threat. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering four major rules that could become game-changers for electric utilities: cooling water intake, coal ash disposal, interstate transport of air pollutants, and using the best available technology to curb power plant emissions. In addition, the



# LIVE WIRE: Help Electric Co-ops Battle Copper Crime

agency has begun regulating greenhouse gases from new and modified large stationary sources, including coal and natural gas power plants, under the federal Clean Air Act. The bulk of these EPA regulations are due to court-imposed decisions and deadlines.

“It’s entirely possible tighter emissions standards and other rules will have a multi-billion dollar impact on the cost of doing business for electric co-ops,” says Kirk Johnson, NRECA senior vice president of government relations.

## Combating Rising Costs

In May, thousands of co-op leaders traveled to Washington, D.C., to call for more certainty on how electricity generation will be regulated.

“Co-ops need Congress’ help to break out of the planning gridlock and set the rules for power generation today and in decades to come,” stresses English. “Not knowing the rules is costing us valuable time and delaying critical decisions. Until the government provides more certainty, electric co-ops, along with the rest of the utility industry, are hamstrung in making informed decisions to provide generation and reliable power for our future.”

Following orders and deadlines set by court orders, the EPA in recent years has begun issuing regulatory proposals that will affect power plants, however, what the final regulations will look like remains unclear.

“Rest assured, local electric co-ops are working together to keep your electric bills affordable,” relates Craig Borr, CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. “We’re controlling costs through innovation. No matter what government mandates come our way, we’ll continue to put you, our members, first.”

Michigan electric co-ops are “Looking Out for You.”

Sources: *Cooperative Research Network, NRECA Strategic Analysis, U.S. Energy Information Administration, Handy-Whitman Index of Public Construction Costs*

**W**ould you risk being hit by lightning for \$100? Seems a bit ludicrous, but desperate times cause folks to do foolish things.

Thefts of copper, bronze and aluminum to sell for scrap metal are on the rise at abandoned commercial buildings, empty homes, and—most dangerously—at power substations near neighborhoods. This theft from co-ops and other electric utilities causes power outages, additional maintenance and expenses, diminished service reliability, and in some cases, serious injury or death (to lineworkers, as well as the thieves).

In Michigan, a man was recently fined \$5,179 and faces a prison sentence of two to 15 years for copper theft from a Wolverine Power Cooperative substation. In Oklahoma, electric co-op members are facing a \$1 million repair bill because thieves wrecked a substation for just \$100 worth of copper. In New Mexico, a man was found dead beneath a power pole, electrocuted while trying to cut copper wiring from a live transformer. A Texas man died when he cut into a live power line while trying to steal copper. Similar accidents have been reported across the country.

“To a would-be thief, stealing copper may seem like a quick way to make a buck,” says Joe McElroy, loss control specialist and safety consultant for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. “But it’s illegal, costly, and it’s not worth a life. Working with any metal and electricity is a dangerous combination, even for trained employees using proper equipment.”

It’s hard to understand why folks would put their life on the line for a few dollars, but many law enforcement officials believe that methamphetamine users are responsible for much of the problem.

The price of scrap copper fluctuates, but has increased 542 percent since 2001. Your electric co-op uses copper to ground equipment, protecting it from power surges and lightning by giving electricity a safe path to the ground. A lot of copper wire is also used in substations, where high-voltage electricity arriving from distant power plants is stepped-down before it travels to your neighborhood. Then, another transformer near your home—either mounted on a utility pole or in a (usually green) box on the ground—lowers the voltage again so you can use the power at home. Copper is an essential component every step of the way.

Lineworkers are highly trained professionals who understand the dangers of working with electricity and take proper safety precautions. To protect the public, utilities surround their substations with secure fencing and warning signs, but some thieves will not be deterred.

Please help your electric co-op keep equipment safe, prevent outages, and save lives by helping to prevent these thefts. Consider installing motion-sensor lights outside your home or business to deter thieves, storing tools and wire cutters in a secure spot while you’re away, and if you work in construction, do not leave any wires or plumbing unattended or leave loose wire at the job site, especially overnight.

If you notice anything unusual, such as an open substation gate, open equipment, or a hanging wire, call your local electric co-op immediately. If you see anyone other than utility personnel or contractors around substations or other electric facilities, call the police.



Photo - GMFC



The arrow shows where the copper wiring was cut off. The photo at right is an example of extreme copper theft in Michigan. Thieves used a chain saw to topple a transformer power bank pole and other tools to get the copper coils inside the transformer. A large quantity of oil from the transformer spilled on the ground, which is also a disregard for environmental safety.

# More Close Encounters

In a previous column I wrote about the chance encounters I had with memorable people in July 1967, and I asked readers to share similar stories. Here are experiences from four of you.

## The Singer

“While attending a postmaster convention in Kansas City in 1980, my wife and I learned that singer Lynn Anderson was going to perform at an outdoor venue next to our hotel.

Much to our disappointment, we found out that her performance would be during our closing banquet so we would be unable to see her. As we were getting on the elevator on our way to the banquet, I was still complaining about missing her performance when the elevator door opened a few floors below ours, and Lynn Anderson stepped in.

I was so surprised that I couldn't even say hello!”

*Wayne Zwolinski, Petoskey*

## Navy Seals

“Girls weekend in Washington State! Friends for 52 years. Though face-to-face meetings are few, friendship and feelings are as close as ever.

Girl 1 arrives on September 10, 2001. Girl 2 is scheduled to fly in on September 12. Girl 3 flies from Detroit Metro at 8:45 on September 11.

I notice that the scenery seems closer than on previous flights across the country. September color is beginning to appear. A glorious autumn day filled with anticipation!

I recognize the plane taking evasive action! During a sharp turn, fighter jets fly overhead. We're going to be shot down! I begin to pray. The pilot at long last states: “We have a national emergency!”

We land in Kansas City to chaos. TV monitors capture and hold everyone's attention.

My only desire is to return to my family in Michigan. As a child during WWII in Europe, I know that did not always happen.

My uncommon name, correctly pronounced, comes over the loudspeakers, a never-before event for this frequent flier. A tall man, 6 ft. 2 in. or more, roughly my age, asks me to identify myself. I do!

Then I assert myself and say, “You know who I am, but how do I know who you really are?”

He pulls out a card and says I have a description of you, “Blonde hair, big blue eyes, and big boobs.” I know for certain that irreverent and irrepressible Girl 1 had given that description! All is well.

He tells me he is a Navy Seal, like my intended host. He and a companion Seal will take me to his home and we will work out plans.

Next day I rent a car and make my way successfully home to family and Michigan with gratitude.

Some folks are deserving of fame, but their heroic deeds are kept secret, known but to God and comrades-in-arms. These Navy Seals are among them.”

*Ilze Bailey, Alpena*



Photo - Courtesy Nick Edson

Dominic (Boston Red Sox) and Joe DiMaggio (New York Yankees) were part of baseball's greatest rivalry in the 1940s. The brothers get together during pre-game in 1949.

## The Sluggers

“As a high school sophomore living in Honolulu in 1943, I would often eat at a sports bar at the end of my block. Due to so many servicemen, management would seat waiting customers at the first empty seats, even with others at the table.

One day the owner, who knew me, seated me and my friend at a table with two soldiers.

He then asked, “Jack, do you know who you are sitting with?”

One did look familiar, but I answered, “I don't.”

He then introduced Joe and Dom DiMaggio. A nice conversation followed, and I still have their autographs.”

*Jack H. Myers, Toledo, OH*

## The President

“Thousands of Lithuanians escaped to the West from the oncoming Russian Army at the end of WWII.

Valdas Adamkus and I ended up in the same refugee camp in Bavaria, Germany. Being about 10 years older, he was an athlete and our hero.

Fast forward to Illinois in 1981. He had become an engineer and was appointed director of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency Midwest Region. After retiring, he was twice elected president of Lithuania.

On Oct. 3, 2009, he was honored in Lemont, IL, where he graciously signed an autograph for my grandson Gytis, and posed for a picture with me.”

*Romualdas Kriauciunas, Ph.D., Lansing*

I have my own “singer” story. When I was working for a photographic association in the '70s, we contracted with singer, actor and dancer Sammy Davis Jr. to be the spokesman for a national photography promotion. We met him in San Francisco for a photo shoot, and he invited us to his apartment on Nob Hill for drinks at the end of the day. Despite his gregariousness on stage, he seemed to prefer the privacy of his simple apartment. He was proud of his video equipment, which I recall as a professional Betamax system, which allowed him to watch movies he borrowed from the studios. He was especially proud of his cooking, and although he may have cooked for himself, there was nothing in his kitchen except canned food.

I was sad when we left, because he seemed lonely. Whenever I saw him on TV or in movies afterward, I realized how much he was really acting.

Thanks for sharing.

*Mike Buda is editor emeritus of Country Lines. Email Mike at mbuda@countrylines.com or comment on his columns at countrylines.com/column/ramblings*







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