

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



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Barbecue

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Safety

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Contractor List

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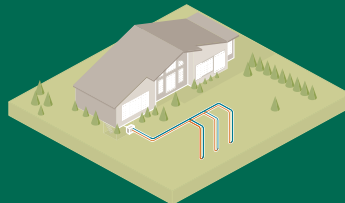
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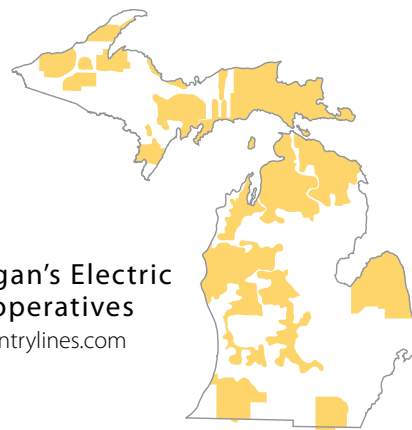
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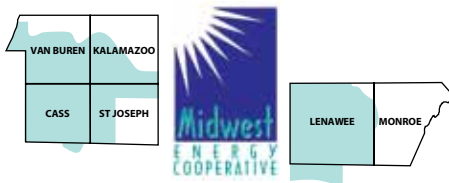
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On the Cover*

Bob (L), Mary, Josh and Jenn Hance enter their smokin' good food in barbecue competitions.

Photo – Roger Boettcher, Leavenworth Photographics



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Electrical Safety is Required!

My heart sinks every time I hear about a tragedy involving electrocution. One of the more recent stories involved the death of three members of a California family. Authorities believe high winds caused a 12,000-volt line to topple into the back yard of their San Bernardino home, where a 43-year old man apparently was electrocuted either by contact with the wire or by the voltage radiating from the point where the wire touched the ground. His wife and 21-year-old son were subsequently electrocuted when they attempted to rescue him.



Robert Hance
President/CEO

The electricity Midwest Energy provides day-in and day-out is a phenomenal resource, powering our modern lifestyles in a safe, reliable and affordable way. But electricity must be respected. If safety isn't made a priority, what changes our lives for the better could change them for the worse in an instant.

Being an electric lineworker is ranked by the U.S. Department of Labor as one of the top 10 most dangerous jobs. So, safety practices are not only encouraged, they are required and considered a key part of our corporate culture at all levels and in all positions. Unfortunately, electrical safety is not so top-of-mind for the general public. Poles and wires are so integrated into our landscape that we don't often stop to consider the danger lying within.

That's why our safety commitment is not just an internal effort. We preach what we practice and take the safety message out—through the pages of this magazine, in our bill inserts, on our website, and through community programs—to help make sure that you understand the risks and know what to do when faced with potentially unsafe situations. Furthermore, it's something we actively consider as we're working with homeowners and communities on planning structures and clearing lines. Anything that is considered climbable and in proximity to a power line poses a safety hazard, and we will do what we

can to eliminate that risk.

I heard a story last year about two teens in Indiana who were driving down the road when they lost control of the vehicle and slid into a utility pole. The pole came down, lines and all, right on top of the overturned car. The natural response would be to vacate the car, but these teens knew better because they had attended a safety demonstration at their school sponsored by their local electric co-op. They stayed in the car until the power was cut, and walked away from

the scene with just a few minor injuries. We offer a similar program in our efforts to spread the word on electrical safety. In fact, in April we conducted our annual Safety Contest with about 20 fourth grade classrooms in seven schools across our service territory. In total, we delivered a comprehensive electrical safety message to nearly 500 kids, who will hopefully share that message with others. The program is fun, interactive, impacting and free for the asking. It's the kind of program that saved the lives of the two Indiana teens, and could very well save the life of a young person right here in our community.

Take time to learn how to be safe around electricity. Great resources are available at TeamMidwest.com, as well as SafeElectricity.org and Electrical-Safety.org. If you're interested in our safety demonstration, contact us at 800-492-5989.

Make it a priority.

Midwest Energy offices will be closed for Memorial Day on Monday, May 30. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.



Have a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend!

Home Energy Makeover Update

Energy savings from their home makeover are providing incredible relief for the Stone-McEnaney family.

Great results continue to pour in from last year's Home Energy Makeover project, and the Steve and Jaime Stone-McEnaney family couldn't be more thankful.

"When I got the January bill from Midwest, I took it around to everyone to share the good news," laughs Jaime. The family's January 2011 energy use was less than one-third of their January 2010 usage, thanks to the improvements made during the makeover project. But the reduced usage and resulting financial savings is only part of the story for this appreciative family.

"There's just so much," Jaime says. "We don't have to get up at 3 or 4 a.m. anymore to start the furnace; we wake up to a nice, warm and comfortable home." They're also thankful that the days of dealing with the hassle and smell of fuel oil are gone.

Prior to October 2009, an old fuel oil furnace was the primary heat source for the family, which includes Jaime and Steve, son Stevie, nephew Tommy, and Jaime's parents, Annette and Jim. However, the furnace failed that October and the family couldn't afford to replace it. Multiple electric space heaters became the primary heat source during the winter of 2009-10.

Safety was obviously a huge concern. "The space heaters were not only expensive, but I feared for the safety of my family and my home," Jaime shares. "It's such a huge, huge relief to be able to leave home with the heat on and not have to worry about coming home to a burning house."

That relief came after the Stone-McEnaneys won the 2010 Midwest Energy Home Energy Makeover. Last fall, Midwest employees and a host of business and community partners and donors installed various measures and upgrades to the small Decatur home to create a more energy efficient and comfortable living environment. The team installed a WaterFurnace® geothermal unit, along with all new ductwork, sealed off and insulated the basement and crawlspace, removed the chimney to eliminate a significant source of air leakage, and upgraded existing appliances to Energy Star® models. Other actions included caulking and sealing all electrical receptacles and light switches, replacing all

incandescent bulbs with efficient compact fluorescent lightbulbs, applying insulated pipe wrap to all water lines, and installing a programmable thermostat.

Earlier this spring, Bartholomew Heating & Cooling returned to install an energy recovery ventilation (ERV) system and a team from Home Depot in Three Rivers installed new energy efficient windows.

"This has been an incredible journey from

reflect that.

"Regardless, there are many ways, large and small, to better manage your energy usage and that's the story we wanted to tell." Bowser adds that rebates and other incentives are available through the co-op's Energy Optimization program for many of the measures used in this project. For details about available programs, visit Michigan-energy.org and click on the Midwest Energy Cooperative link.



Whole-house Ventilation

On March 14, a team from Bartholomew Heating & Cooling returned to our Home Energy Makeover house to install an energy recovery ventilation (ERV) system. This is a whole-house system that provides a controlled way of ventilating a home while minimizing energy loss. A mechanical ventilation system is necessary to provide an adequate fresh air exchange for a home that is particularly well-sealed.

start to finish," says Roger Bowser, Midwest Energy's manager of energy programs and services. "Our goal was to do something amazing for a deserving family, and to provide meaningful information about energy efficiency measures and results to our membership. I feel that we accomplished that and so much more through this effort with Jaime and Steve.

"It's important to understand that this situation was extreme, and a typical home won't necessarily see this level of savings," Bowser continues. "This family went from heating with nine incredibly inefficient and unsafe space heaters one winter to using a highly efficient geothermal system the next. It's one extreme to the other and the savings

Outside of the savings, the family has enjoyed many other unanticipated benefits from this project. Over the winter, they loved the constant heat and being able to walk around on warmer floors. And, they weren't charged as much when their septic system was pumped because the new energy efficient appliances use much less water. Produce stays fresh much longer in the new refrigerator, and the filtered water dispenser helps them save on the cost of bottled water.

Jaime says that even three-year old Stevie has appreciated the benefits as he walks from room to room saying, "House warm."

Watch for the Home Energy Makeover year-in-review story in November.

Home Energy Makeover: Before and After Comparison

	2010		2011	
January	4,561 kWh	\$514.09	1,351 kWh	\$162.05
February	3,741 kWh	\$423.87	1,633 kWh	\$192.64
March	3,579 kWh	\$406.04	1,354 kWh	\$162.36



State Sen. Nofs Speaks to Co-op Leaders

Sen. Mike Nofs, chair of the Senate Energy and Technology Committee, spoke to a group of co-op managers, directors and staff during the April annual meetings of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association and Wolverine Power Cooperative.

"It's an interesting time [for Michigan]—we're looking at doing things differently," Nofs said. Issues of note included deregulation of the state's telecommunications industry, renewable and energy efficiency standards for utilities, and making business and pension tax

revisions he says will make Michigan more competitive.

"We're taking on tough issues because we don't want to leave a legacy of debt for our kids," Nofs added.

MECA is the service organization for Michigan's nine distribution co-ops, and Wolverine is the state's only electric generation and transmission co-op.

The two groups also held their board of directors elections with Tony Anderson of Cherryland Electric Cooperative in Grawn as MECA's chair, and Dale Farrier of Kalkaska chosen as Wolverine's chairman.

Shocking? May is National Electrical Safety Month

Protect your home and family from fires and electrocution.

Electrical problems in older homes account for nearly 55,000 fires every year. These blazes cause more than 500 deaths, injure more than 1,400 people, and rack up \$1.4 billion in property damage.

The risk of such fires is significant since one-half of all homes in the United States were constructed and wired prior to 1973, according to the U.S. Census Bureau—before the advent of garage door openers or home computers. Even more telling, one-third of U.S. homes were built before hair dryers or electric can openers were even invented!

"As each year goes by, Americans consume more energy in their homes," says Brett Brenner, president of Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI). "Many homes and electrical systems are simply being overburdened, which leads to fires, injuries and deaths."

ESFI has created a checklist

that lets consumers identify electrical dangers commonly found in each room of the house. Owners of older homes can upgrade their electrical systems with newer fire prevention technology, such as arc fault circuit interrupters (AFCIs). These advanced electronic circuit breakers detect dangerous conditions in a home's wiring and cut off power before a fire develops.

Additionally, those living in older homes with children can install tamper-resistant receptacles. These devices look like normal electrical outlets, but they have a built-in shutter system that prevents children from inserting foreign objects into the slots. Using tamper-resistant receptacles would prevent most of the 2,400 burns suffered by children each year from outlets.

More resources on National Electrical Safety Month can be found at electricalsafety.org, or call (703) 841-3229.

MYSTERY PHOTO

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

Call in your entry to *Country Lines* at 517-351-6322, ext. 306, email jhsen@countrylines.com, or mail it to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and co-op. The winner will be announced in the July/August 2011 issue.

The March contest winner is **Connie Pritchard of Blanchard**, who correctly identified the building in Bertha Brock Park, Ionia County.



March photo

Do you know where this is? ▶



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Don't keep your refrigerator or freezer too cold. Recommended temperatures are 37° to 40° F for the main refrigerator compartment and 5° F for the freezer. If you have a stand-alone freezer, it should be kept at 0° F. Appliance settings may vary, so an easy way to check the temperature is to use a meat thermometer.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Tell us about your favorite Michigan-made products!

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



Skunks

The article “Spring’s Little Stinkers” (March) was very disturbing, to say the least. Starting with a little background, my grandfather was Mark Crow, who was one of the first game wardens north of Lansing. As a child, he raised me in the woods. My father was the ad manager for the *Michigan Farmer*, a bi-monthly farm publication. Both were hunters and fishermen and taught me to never shoot (kill) any animal that I would not eat. They both considered “sportsmen” who killed for the fun of it like coyote hunters to be the lowest of the so-called outdoorsman. We hunted, we fished, and we ate what we hunted and fished for.

There is no reason to kill a skunk unless you don’t know any better and/or enjoy killing.

Skunks are inquisitive and yes, they will spray when threatened. If they are not threatened, they WILL NOT SPRAY because spraying is a defense behavior. Let me give you an example or two. Where we live we have skunks come to our front yard to clean up under our bird feeders. I go out in the yard and sit down within 20 feet of them and set quietly. They ignore until they feel safe and then they will walk right up to me. Because I’m no threat, I have never been sprayed or even threatened.

If a skunk gets into the house it’s easy to get them out without being sprayed. For a skunk to spray it must lift its tail and curl it over its back. Very quietly and slowly go into the room where it is and sit down in the middle of the floor. If you sit quietly

the skunk will in a short time come right up to you. Quickly grab the tail and quickly lift it up so it is hanging down. In this position it can’t spray. Simply walk out into the yard and swinging it by the tail let it fly. It will hit the ground running and you’re home free. And, so is the skunk.

In short, I not only question Mr. Ingle’s sportsman’s attitude, I question his methods that lead to killing. Maybe he should learn what my grandfather and father taught me regarding hunting and fishing.

— *Michael Cromley, Afton*

Carron Games

I enjoyed the article about Paul Kruska’s collection of Carron games made by the Carron Company in Ludington. I collect cribbage boards and am a member of the Cribbage Board Collector Society. My primary focus was cribbage boards made by the Druke Company, of Grand Rapids. The Carron Company purchased Druke in the early ’90s and moved it to Ludington. I have roughly 125 different Druke boards made from the ’40s through the time they were bought by Carron.

My wife Betty and I are hosting the 12th annual CBCS convention here in Grand Haven this September. My Druke collection will be on display at the Tri-Cities Historical Museum, in Grand Haven, for three months during that time.

By the way, the game of cribbage was invented by Sir. John Suckling in 1635, so cribbage is an OLD game!

— *Cecil Bradshaw, Grand Haven*

Enjoyed the article about the Carron board games. It brought back fond childhood memories as my grandparents had one. My cousins and I played Carrons until our “flicking fingers” were sore.

We also had Daisy BB guns and would play for hours in

the sand with our metal trucks and cars. I did know the Daisy factory was in Plymouth, but did not know the Carron boards were made in Ludington or that they are still being made. Guess I will get one for my grandkids.

— *Judy Heslip, Goetzville*

Experience Portland

I just finished reading your article about Portland. I wanted to take the time to tell you how awesome I thought it was! You did a great job describing our town and made me very proud to say I belong to this great community. I never really realized how blessed we were with so many fun activities and the beauty of our own little town until I saw it there in color on a two-page article. How cool!

— *Tanya Schafer*

Big-city Volume

For both economical and environmental reasons it makes sense to make our homes and

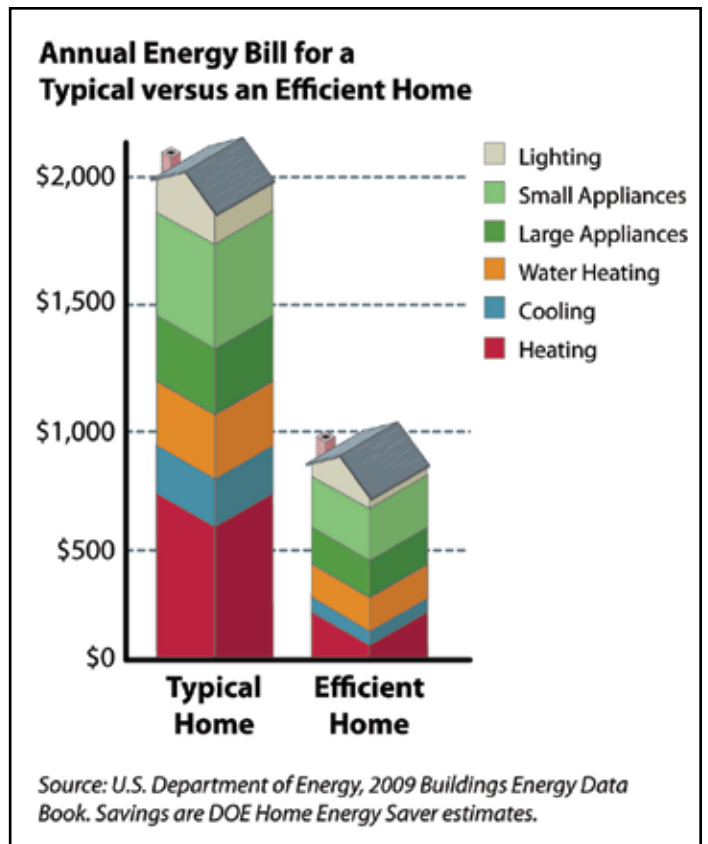
businesses “energy efficient.” The obvious steps for the homeowner may include lighting, thermostat settings, sealing cracks and ductwork, water heater, A.C., etc. Considering all the homes in town and country, the savings add up.

That brings me to wonder what’s going on in our large metropolitan areas such as New York, Los Angeles, Dallas and others. Often, while watching evening news programs on TV, an interview will show an individual with a big-city backdrop. It’s at night and most of the lights are on in the windows of the sky scrapers. Sure they are all probably fluorescent, but wow, that’s a whole lot of ’em. Are all these rooms being used at 8 p.m.?

I hope my conservation efforts and those of others are not being “cancelled” by the sheer volume of the “big-city.”

It would appear the “great white way” is still “shining thru the night.”

— *John Stewart, Gaylord*



STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-16594

- Midwest Energy Cooperative plans to file a Renewable Energy Plan in compliance with Public Acts 286 and 295 of 2008 and the Michigan Public Service Commission's December 4, 2008, Commission Order in Case No. U-15800 and the February 22, 2011, Commission Order in Case No. U-16594.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, P.O. Box 127, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031, (800) 492-5989 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Midwest Energy Cooperative.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: May 23, 2011, at 9:00 a.m. This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Dennis W. Mack

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

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

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider Midwest Energy Cooperative's (Midwest) application for a Renewable Energy Plan (REP) to be filed by May 12, 2011, which will seek approval of its REP in accordance with 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 and the December 4, 2008, and February 22, 2011, Commission Orders in Cases Numbers U-15800 and U-16594, respectively.

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

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by May 19, 2011. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Midwest's attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

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

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

A copy of Midwest's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets, and at the office of Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, Cassopolis, MI. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 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.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

April 22, 2011

It's Time to Look in the Mirror on Energy Issues

With the tragic events and loss related to the tsunami and Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant continuing to unfold in Japan, it is clearly time that we have more, and particularly nonpartisan discussions about national energy policy.

At this point, it would clearly be easy to turn away from an energy future that involves nuclear power. However, we cannot move this country forward without nuclear being a part of our generation mix. The fact of the matter is that nuclear already generates nearly 20 percent of the power supply in this country (and a sizable portion in Michigan).

The Fukushima Daiichi nuclear incident has focused new attention on the future of nuclear power in this country—as it should. However, we cannot ignore the fact that nuclear power has served this country well for over 30 years and needs to continue. And, safety needs to continue to be the highest priority. We need to pause, reassess and ensure that public safety and dependability are overriding concerns, especially with nuclear and the far more serious safety challenges it involves. There are a number of high-quality nuclear power research initiatives that are ongoing in both this country and throughout the world.

In Michigan, Detroit Edison is exploring the potential for constructing a new nuclear reactor at its current Fermi

site near Monroe. Further, Wolverine Power Cooperative is part of a national consortium of utilities that is exploring small, modular nuclear reactors—like the type that power our country's nuclear submarine fleet.

These are important and exciting developments for Michigan and must continue if we intend to meet our state's energy needs.

What is often lost in the debate is the fact that a significant portion of this country's old, coal-fired generation plants will likely be forced to shut down as a result of new, environmental laws at the federal level. Many of these plants are old and dirty, and should be shut down.

Again, the more significant question is, "How do we replace that generation?" Under any scenario, nuclear must be an option. Renewable energy and energy efficiency are also important elements in our generation "tool box." However, at this point they remain very small-scale when compared to our energy needs—particularly with any meaningful economic recovery.

Currently, there are about 100 nuclear power plants operating in this country, and more than one-half of them are over 30 years old. Like our coal fleet, many of them are nearing the end of their original

federal operating licenses. To date, 62 of those plants have received operating license extensions and 20 more have pending applications. We will need every one of these plants to meet our country's growing energy needs and demand.

As electric cooperatives, we are proud to be leaders in renewable energy, energy efficiency and the exploration of small, modular

nuclear reactors. However, we must be careful that the unfortunate events in Japan do not place Michigan and our country in a situation of halting nuclear power as a viable generation source. We need nuclear and we will also need additional new, state-of-the-art fossil fuel plants if we have any hope of meeting our future state, regional and national energy needs.

We need a diverse mix of fuel sources. A scenario where our country only builds natural gas-fired generation, wind, solar and other types of renewables will not get us to the finish line. That would be a dangerous overreaction on our part to the tragic events unfolding in Japan. Further, it is simply not being honest with ourselves when we look in the mirror.

Craig Borr is the president and CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. His email is cborr@countrylines.com



Let's Barbecue!

Once bitten by the BBQ bug, it's hard to let go.

The love Americans have for all things barbecue is embracing another, and her name is competition.

As highly competitive people that love to cook, the Hance family knows it's pull. It all started five years ago when Josh, an information systems technician at Midwest Energy Cooperative in Cassopolis, entered a small "backyard chef" contest.

"I did it for something to do and thought I could cook pretty good," he recalls. "But the whole day turned out to be a disaster. I scored embarrassingly low in all categories that I entered; but I had been bitten by the barbecue bug." Returning the next year with a team, including his dad, Bob (Midwest's CEO), mom Mary, and wife Jenn, they took first place in the beef and pork categories, with grand champion honors that year and the following. "At this point, I started looking for additional contests, figuring we had a real gift and we should take our talents on the road," Josh smiles.

That's when Josh discovered the largest society of barbecue enthusiasts in the world, the Kansas City Barbeque Society (KCBS). The KCBS judges and promotes barbecue as "America's cuisine" with over 4,000 teams competing in about 300 annual contests.

"Getting involved competitively happened mostly on a whim," Bob explains. "Somehow

Josh dropped the suggestion that 'we ought to do this,' we did, and the competitive fire was started."

"[To say] that we showed up to our first [KCBS] event ill-prepared is an understatement," Josh says, "I will never forget it for as long as I live." Watching two large trailer smokers pull next to his three small Brinkmann stand smokers on a blazing-hot afternoon, he realized his team had come from being a big deal at the county fair to a little fish in a very big pond.

But then, something happened.

"As I was fighting furiously with an E-Z Up Canopy...our new neighbors-for-the-weekend came over and lent a generous hand with setting up the remainder of our site," Josh recalls. (He hasn't seen the Black Pig BBQ team since, but hopes to someday repay the favor.) Other teams came by with advice, encouragement and offers to share a meal, and he soon felt surrounded by friends.

That day, his team also found that their own smokers worked great, but needed a lot of attention to maintain the temperature and were too small for all the meat. So, they began watching other teams, asking questions, and looking at manufactured smokers.

Realizing that most smokers have the same basic principles and propane-tank shape, they tracked down an old decommissioned tank. They talked over their needs with Josh's uncle, Steve Powles, and by the following spring he had built them a large trailer smoker.



Photos - Roger Beetcher/Leavenworth Photographics

Smoking at a maximum 225 degrees makes the fat melt slowly and the meat simply fall apart. The KCBS contest fees can run \$200-\$250, plus the meat and travel costs.

About their team name, "Sweet Racks & Smokin' Butts," Bob explains, "We wanted something that was funny and memorable. These have also been our two best categories, so it fits us well."

Like any relationship, barbecue teams put in lots of hard work and often arrive between 9 and 11 a.m. on the first day and don't leave (or sleep) until 5 p.m. the next day. Preparing the meat can take four to five hours, and the pork shoulders and beef briskets smoke for about 12 hours at a maximum 225 degrees.

"It's really a love-hate thing," Bob explains, "it is at the same time exhausting and exhilarating, monotonous and energizing, disappointing and rewarding. It is some of the best friendly competition that I've been exposed to."

Besides good friends, the biggest reward a champion receives is bragging rights until the next one. "But prizes make it a little sweeter," Josh says. Purses can range from \$4,000 to \$100,000 for the Sam's Club National BBQ Tour's National Championship. For most events, however, the average grand champion walks away with \$1,500 to \$2,500.

But the friendly competition that arises within the "barbecue family" are almost as coveted as the prize money itself. "We met the 'Aww Hell' [team] at our first competition," Josh says. As the two teams met at more contests, friendly wagers followed, and they now have their own little traveling trophy. "We compete at the same locations whenever we can," he adds.

Josh's final tip is, "Aprons are a must, because BBQ ain't BBQ if it ain't messy!"

A Few Smokin' Events

Smokin' On the Water

Liberty, IN, April 30-May 1

Sam's Club BBQ Series

Traverse City, June 10-11

Taste of Grand Rapids State BBQ Championship

Grand Rapids, July 22-23

Silver Lake Apple & BBQ Festival

Silver Lake, Sept 9-10

Kansas City Barbeque Society:

kcbs.us or 1-800-963-5227

► Bob (L-R), Mary, Josh and Jenn Hance are the "Sweet Racks & Smokin' Butts" BBQ team with their original (small) smoker and trailer model. "It's incredibly fun and exhausting and worth experiencing at least once," Josh says.

Crazy Grill Contest Winners

It's a tie!

The judges wouldn't back down, so we had to name two winners.

GRILLS GONE WILD



#1a Donald Korson of Gowen and a couple of his buddies made this 1979 Buick Riviera into a roaster. The trunk is fire-proofed and they keep it parked when roasting. It requires electricity for the “spicket” to go ‘round, and they roast pigs, small beef, prime rib, pork loin and chicken. It has been a big hit at hundreds of parties and celebrations over the years!



#1b

Buzz Possehn of Saranac built this towable Jeep grill by replacing the original axle with a straight one. He enters it in parades and displays it at the Bad Azz Truck Expo to promote the Ionia Free Fair every year.



Honorable Mentions...



Jimmy (left) and Jim Scollin of Petoskey dare to claim their grill, named the “Chariot of Fire,” is the best charcoal grill in northern Michigan.



Paul Wilson (from left) built this “hot rod” grill and, with co-owners Rick Shaffer and Vic Cerchiori, they use it for pig and chicken roasts at their man-cave near Walkerville. (Note the grilling book in Vic’s hand.)



Bob Greenlund’s custom grill, affectionately known as “Uncle Don,” was made by his son-in-law and grandson. The unit is complete with a keg tank for heating water during the grilling process and runs to the attached sink. Bob lives in Rapid River and Uncle Don is present at every family function.

'REEP' the Perks of Renewable Energy!

The residential energy efficient property (REEP) tax credit slashes 30 percent of the cost of alternative energy-producing systems, including geothermal heating-and-cooling systems, solar energy systems and small wind turbines.

There is no lifetime cap for this tax credit, it expires in 2016, and covers equipment and professional installation.

Consumers who buy a geothermal system for a home will get a 30 percent credit with no cap as long as the system qualifies for the high-efficiency Energy Star® designation.

Energy-efficient equipment always gives the most bang for the buck when old furnaces, air conditioners or heat pumps need replacement. The tax credit makes geothermal an option worth serious consideration.

Without the tax credit or other incentive, a geothermal system for a 2,000-square-foot home typically starts around \$15,000 — well above a conventional high-efficiency heating-and-cooling system averaging about \$8,000.

Geothermal Savings, Payback

A geothermal system can save hundreds of dollars a year in electricity. Without the tax credit, it could take 10 to 14 years to recover up-front costs—longer than homeowners usually stay in a house.

But consumers can cut the payback time in half thanks to the 30 percent tax credit. If other incentives are available, the payback time is even less. A growing number of electric co-ops are exploring or already offering incentives for geothermal installation.

Heating and cooling are the largest household energy expenses, typically accounting for more than one-half of energy used. Geothermal systems quietly provide reduced-cost space conditioning and can be equipped to supply nearly-free hot water.

As the most energy-efficient heating and cooling systems available, geothermal harnesses the sun's renewable energy by using the earth as a heat exchanger. Geothermal systems go by several names, including "GeoExchange," geothermal heat pumps, and ground-source heat pumps. Visit geoexchange.org or call 888-255-4436 for more information.

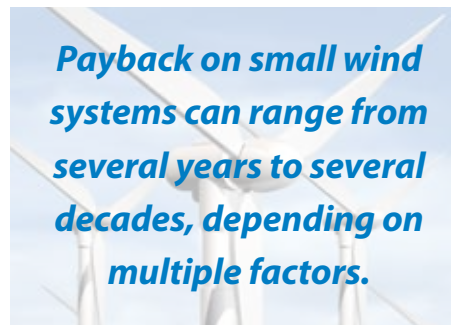
Solar Water Heaters and Panels

Solar water heaters, solar panels or photovoltaic systems (solar cells that capture sunshine

and convert it directly into electricity) also qualify for the 30-percent tax credit.

The solar device must provide hot water or energy for a dwelling. Solar water heaters used to heat pools or hot tubs cannot qualify.

Solar water heaters are one of the most popular renewable energy technologies because of bang for the buck and relatively simple setup. They can save anywhere from \$400



to \$1,000 per year in water heating costs, which usually account for about 15 percent of a household's total annual energy needs.

A solar water heater supplying one-half or more of domestic hot water starts at about \$1,500 without the tax credit. Payback can be as short as five or six years. The reduction in energy bills realized over the unit's 15-20 year life means solar water heaters equal or better the long-term cost of conventional water heaters.

What's more, solar power produces no emissions. Eight tons of carbon dioxide—almost double that of a gasoline fueled car—are produced in generating enough coal-fired electricity to power the water heater for a four-person household.

Solar panels are devices that convert sunlight into electricity. The electricity is direct current (DC), not household alternating current (AC), and needs to be converted. The panels are made in various sizes and rated by the amount of electricity they produce per hour, measured in watts.

Solar panels are usually mounted on the roof of a home and need to face the sun (south) with at least six hours of sunlight (even under fog or cloud cover) daily. Panels are wired together to increase the amount of power produced. For example, five 200-watt panels generate 1,000 watts, or 1 kilowatt of maximum power.

Most systems feed into the electric grid and require an interconnection agreement

with the local electric co-op.

Solar panels supply free power, and the initial installation costs are gradually dropping. The federal tax credit, plus other incentives, makes the solar option more appealing to consumers. On average, solar panels return two to four times their cost in saved electricity bills.

The Cooperative Research Network (CRN) says the payback period for a solar panel system can range from fewer than 10 to over 20 years, depending on the system cost, available rebates and incentives, amount of electricity produced, and the retail price of electricity in your community. Your co-op can also provide a capital cost recovery analysis worksheet that you can use to figure the annual operating cost of your system. In addition, an online calculator you can use to figure the payback time can be found at solar-estimate.org.

Payback can be shorter in states with particularly good incentives, says an organization called One Block Off the Grid, which offers group-purchase programs to help people gain an extra discount through bulk purchase of solar panels. Visit 1bog.org or call 877-444-4002 for information.

Wind Power for the Home

Wind power is feasible in many areas, with professionally installed home grid-tied systems typically costing up to \$20,000 without the tax credit. As with solar panels, the payback period for wind power can vary widely according to installation costs and incentives. According to CRN, the payback period for a small wind system can range from several years to several decades, depending on the system cost and average annual wind speed at the hub height—the distance from the ground to the center of the turbine rotor. Some experts say the average speed is more critical to the payback period than the install costs.

Not all areas have enough wind to generate electricity. Wind turbines require an average of at least 6.5-mph wind speed to generate electricity. Visit windpoweringamerica.gov/wind_maps.asp for a wind speed map to help determine if your area might be suitable for harvesting wind power.

For a federal tax credit application and eligibility information, visit energystar.gov and click on "tax credits for energy efficiency." Also visit your state's energy office website.

How to 'Go Green' in the Kitchen

Making a kitchen 'green' doesn't have to equal a super-extravagant remodeling job. An earth-friendly strategy can work wonders without breaking the household budget.

An eco-friendly kitchen also means a healthier one, and eliminating or reducing invisible and odorless toxins in cabinets and countertops are giant steps forward.

A green kitchen can be an affordable and rewarding project. Re-using and renewing your kitchen cabinets delivers a fresh new appearance without adding remodeling waste to the local landfill.

Better yet, refreshing a kitchen the green way can dramatically improve indoor air quality. Indoor air can average two to five times more pollution than outdoor air, according to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

Most kitchen cabinets are made of particleboard. This material is made with urea formaldehyde resin—a known carcinogen—which can emit the toxin for the life of the cabinet. Worse, whenever formaldehyde is exposed to heat, the gas becomes more concentrated and toxic when released. Appliances such as ovens and dishwashers give off heat when they're in use near particleboard cabinets.

A cost-effective remedy is to make the particleboard airtight by applying a sealant to all surfaces of the cabinet. It's best to handle this project outdoors, if possible, or during warmer months with the windows open so the kitchen can be ventilated. Removing doors, handles and hinges is a must, and offers the opportunity to update the hardware for a fresh, new look.

Water-based polyurethane sealants are fairly nontoxic and render clear finishes, and can be applied to the particleboard in multiple coats, then primed and painted.

Paints and sealants emit chemicals called volatile organic compounds (VOCs), even years after they dry.

The VOCs in paints and sealants allow for durability and easy application, but the fumes can be harmful and are classified as greenhouse gases. However, fumes from today's paint contain fewer cancer-causing chemicals such as benzene, formaldehyde and methylene-chloride than they did in the 1990s. Measured in grams per liter (g/l), the VOC content of conventional paint

has since dropped from almost 1,000 g/l to 250 g/l today, thanks to federal regulations.

The good news is that some paints pose far fewer hazards than others, and all are safer than 20 years ago.

Even better, most major manufacturers now offer low-VOC paints that emit less than one-fifth as many harmful gases. They compare well with the pricing and performance of conventional paint. Low-VOC paint has a VOC content of less than 50 g/l, and zero-VOC paint contains five or fewer g/l. A paint's material is listed under the physical data or chemical properties section and is often available on paint manufacturer or retailer websites.

Buy only the amount of paint needed for the job, and store any leftover paint properly for future use. If paint cannot be re-used in the next few years before its quality degrades, it should be donated for re-use or taken to a hazardous waste consolidation facility.

For new wooden cabinets, look for units that are certified by the Forest Stewardship Council for responsible forest management practices. Another option is bamboo. Its fast-growing properties make it one of today's most popular and sustainable choices for kitchen cabinets.

Safe and sustainable resources also abound for new countertops. Products like granite are unsustainable. Laminates can't be recycled and emit formaldehyde or other VOCs. Green choices include recyclable stainless steel, concrete and many other commercially available eco-friendly surface materials.

Another advantage of concrete counters over marble or granite is that it can be completely customizable—it can be sculpted, molded and textured. It's a material that a do-it-yourselfer can easily use to create original counters while saving money from instructions found on numerous websites.

Concrete kitchen countertops can be sustainable as long as the aggregate is made from recycled stone, crushed glass or other recycled materials. Counters can even be made from a mixture of cement and recycled



Concrete countertops can be a do-it-yourself project.

newspaper pulp. A concrete counter should be coated with a natural oil-based sealant once it's dry.

A strikingly vast world of sustainable countertop surfaces makes for a challenging selection process. To get started, consider requesting samples of surface materials to test for staining and durability. See for yourself if a sample will hold up as a food preparation surface. Keep it in your kitchen awhile. The sample should be able to handle common ingredients such as catsup, coffee, oil and lemon juice without staining, and tough enough to withstand a sharp knife.

Some brands of renewable, commercially available countertop surfaces include:

- ALKEMI, renewedmaterials.com, made from aluminum milling scrap.
- Avonite, avonitesurfaces.com, recycled collection made from certified post-industrial scrap, equal to a recycled content value of 20 percent.
- Bioglass, coveringsetc.com, made of 100-percent recycled glass.
- EcoTop, kliptech.com/ecotop.html, made of recycled paper and renewable bamboo.
- EnviroGlas, enviroglasproducts.com, made of post-consumer and industrial glass.
- IceStone, icestone.biz, made of 100-percent recycled glass in a cement matrix.
- Lithistone, lithistone.net, made from natural mineral binder, sand, stone, recycled material, and organic mineral pigments.
- Richlite, richlite.com, made of recycled paper and sustainable forest products.
- ShetkaStone, ShetkaStone.com, made of recycled paper.
- Trinity Glass Products, made of recycled glass and low-carbon cement, trinityglass-products.com.
- Vetrazzo, vetrazzo.com, made with recycled glass with cement, additives and pigments.

Driveway Revolution

Electrification of America's automobile fleet is being hailed as a great step toward reducing pollution and curbing our nation's dependence on foreign oil. All-electric vehicle choices are currently limited to the Chevrolet Volt, the Nissan Leaf, and a growing number of specialty manufacturers or retrofit kits. Other auto makers, though, have electric car offerings in the wings.

Comparing Cars

Not all electric vehicles are alike. The Nissan Leaf, for example, boasts a driving range of roughly 100 miles. Once its 16 kilowatt-hour (kWh) lithium-ion batteries are drained, you better be at your destination and near a 110-volt power outlet for recharging, or have the phone number for roadside assistance handy.

The Chevy Volt offers a gasoline safety net for its pack of 16-kilowatt-hour (kWh) lithium-ion batteries. The car will run on a charge for 40 miles once the batteries are exhausted, and a gas-powered generator produces electricity to keep the car rolling—at least until you run out of gas.

The Volt can also be recharged by plugging it into a traditional 110-volt outlet. This differs from traditional gas-electric hybrid vehicles like the Toyota Prius, where much smaller 1.3-kWh nickel-metal hydride batteries are recharged only by the gas engine and a regenerative braking system (in hybrids, batteries essentially supplement the gas motor). Several electric co-ops are testing plug-in hybrid SUVs and bucket trucks—spin-offs of hybrid technology—that can switch between a gas or diesel engine and 9-kWh to 16-kWh lithium-ion batteries.

All-electric vehicles carry higher price tags than comparable conventional gas-fueled versions—\$10,000 to \$15,000 more, even after federal tax incentives ranging from \$2,500 to \$7,500 (depends on battery capacity) are included. (Learn more about electric vehicle tax breaks, available through Jan. 1, 2012, at irs.gov/pub/irs-drop/n-09-58.pdf). Over time, batteries should become cheaper to build, lowering electric vehicle costs.

As a quick comparison, the 2011 Ford Focus (suggested retail is \$16,640) and the Chevy Volt (\$32,780 after tax credits). Both are four-door sedans, about the same size.

Chevy estimates the average Volt driver will spend \$1.50 daily for electricity. Meanwhile,



Charging stations provide a dedicated 240-volt circuit, similar to that used for electric clothes dryers. Using this type of a station, the all-electric Nissan Leaf can be charged in four hours while the 2011 Chevy Volt, pictured, can be ready to hit the highway in as little as three hours.

the average Focus owner will spend almost \$2.90 on gas daily. At \$3 per gallon for gas, the average Volt driver would save \$550 annually—but would need to rack up that amount for 32 years to equal the difference in sticker price.

However, if gas rises to \$5 per gallon, a Volt driver would save over \$1,200 annually, lowering the payback window to 13 years. Of course, actual savings depends on the number of miles driven and car options.

Charge!

Electric cars can be recharged using a traditional 110-volt outlet found in homes. Called Level 1 charging, this takes at least eight hours to charge a Volt and over 20 hours for a Leaf.

Since those are long standby times, consumers may decide to buy a charging station to speed things along. A charging station enables Level 2 charging by way of a dedicated 240-volt circuit, similar to that used for electric clothes dryers. The “Edmunds Car Buying Guide” (edmunds.com) says Level 2 charging for the all-electric Leaf takes four hours while the Volt can be ready to hit the highway in as little as three hours.

Today's charging standards allow for power delivery of up to 16.8 kilowatts delivered at 240 volts and up to 70 amperes. The Volt's Level 1 charging at 1.4 kilowatts is roughly equivalent to the load of a toaster; its Level 2 charging, estimated at 3.5 kilowatts, is similar

to the load of a heating and air conditioning system. Heavier-duty charging stations, like the ChargePoint® from Coulomb Technologies, draw about 7 kilowatts.

Charging stations must be installed by a licensed technician, and in many areas the work requires review by a local building inspector. Chevy estimates putting in a charging station costs between \$1,200 and \$1,500. But the tab can go much higher if a household's electric system needs upgrading to handle the increased load.

Impact

Studies by the Electric Power Research Institute, a nonprofit research group of electric utilities, including co-ops, show electric vehicles will reduce overall emissions of various air pollutants, even when accounting for the emissions from power plants needed to produce the energy for recharging. In fact, plugging cars in at night when power costs and demand are lowest helps an electric system run more efficiently by trimming line losses. Down the road, some co-ops may offer special rates to encourage electric vehicle owners to recharge during these “off-peak” hours.

Electric vehicles are currently being released on a limited basis. Chevy plans to roll out only 50,000 Volts in this, the first model year. It won't be until 2012, at the earliest, that individuals can buy an all-electric vehicle at a dealership without first getting

Firing Up With 'Real' Michigan Products

on a waiting list.

Whether an electric vehicle fits your life depends on how many miles you drive each day, whether you can afford the cost difference between an electric and gas-burning car, and how many amenities you want.

Only time will tell if the peace and quiet ignition of an electric car will replace the traditional engine's roar.

In Michigan

Michigan is at the forefront of preparing for plug-in electric vehicles (PEVs).

Crystal Mountain Resort (Thompsonville), served by Cherryland Electric Co-op, plans to install two PEV charging stations. CEO Jim MacInnes, who started driving a Chevy Volt in March, says they hope to have the units in by mid-May for guests and resort security staff.

MacInnes believes momentum is starting to build on electric vehicles. "Oil is going to be getting more dear, and the Saudis are already retooling and investing towards renewables and nuclear while we continue spending money on oil." The former power engineer adds, "When we run out, we won't have the money to retool."

WMU and GVSU are working with area economic development groups to install free public charging units. WMU has four in the campus' front lot, and stations are also ready at Meijer stores in Holland and Grand Rapids.

GM, DTE Energy and Consumers Energy are teaming to install over 5,300 home and workplace charging units. GM says it will install 350 for staff, and the Lansing Board of Water and Light plans to add 25 stations in 2011. Over 1,500 Chevy dealers nationwide are also slated to install charging units for customers.

The Michigan Public Service Commission has a unit in front of its building, and a website (pluginmichigan.org/) dedicated to PEVs—what to know before you buy and to ensure a positive experience.

The LG Chem company is building a plant in Holland that is expected to produce PEV batteries by next summer. With 17 Michigan companies that already help to make such batteries, it's expected to create 63,000 jobs in the next decade.

The folks at Murray Products Inc., in Rapid City, are "real" Michiganders.

Not only are their fire-starting products made here, they use only Michigan-made materials and resources.

"On our boxes we even feature 'Made in Michigan,'" says Ken Murray, a former builder who started the company in 2009 with his wife, Mary.

Murray became interested in starting the business after a job offer from a friend who was manufacturing similar products. "It got me thinking about making a fire kit to be used in state parks and campgrounds for recreational fires," he says. Since there's more awareness and concern now about transporting firewood (especially across state lines) because of bugs and things contained in firewood, he wanted to come up with a solution to that problem. After a lot of research, his idea was to manufacture an eco-friendly fire kit.

"We set out to manufacture the best fire starter on the market, using all-natural recycled products to be as earth friendly as possible," explains Ken. Today, they offer three products – fire logs, fire starting cones, and an Eco Fire Kit (for a three-hour fire), and there are plans for more related products in the near future.

The recycled materials used to make the fire starters are free of bugs, bacteria, chemicals and wax, which makes them safe for cooking (mild hardwood flavor) and transport. They can also be used just like cord wood in a fireplace, and Murray believes they burn cleaner and hotter.

The logs and cones are made from natural kiln-dried hardwood, wood shavings and sawdust that is transported in semi trailers, unloaded to a feed hopper, and then processed through a hammer mill to insure a proper mix. Next, it goes through a mechanical "briquetter" that creates 36,000 pounds per-square-inch of compression, which makes heat,



Photo Courtesy—Ken Murray

Mary and Ken Murray started a niche business that makes eco-friendly fire-starting logs and kits for fireplaces, tailgate parties, backyard burners, campfires, and other recreation.

Ken explains. This squeezes out what little wood-sap is left and bonds it all together. Then, the briquettes travel a long cooling line and are cut to length and packaged.

The company's wood shavings come from Alpena, boxes are made in Traverse City (box material from Manistee), and manufacturing happens in Rapid City. Products are sold at the Village Market (Elk Rapids/Rapid City), Ace Hardware (Traverse City, and Ken says they were recently approved for 300 Spartan-affiliated stores.

The company has three employees, but he says, "we have support suppliers that provide up to 20 Michigan jobs."

"Even our box is earth friendly," Ken adds. "We use recycled cardboard, natural glues, and soy ink for print, therefore our box is safe to deposit in landfills." Visit them at murrayproducts.net or call 231-735-5098.

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Look Up for Overhead Power Lines

A tragic farm accident provides valuable safety lessons.

An Illinois farmer, Jim Flach, was operating a crop sprayer in a neighbor's field when one of its arms contacted an overhead power line. In climbing from the cab, Flach was severely burned when he jumped down into the field (creating an electrical path to the ground), and eventually died of his injuries.

Thousands of accidents like this happen every year when large equipment touches overhead power lines. Folks on the ground who touch or even approach energized equipment can also be killed.

Jim Flach's family is working with Safe Electricity's "Teach Learn Care TLC" campaign, sharing the story of their tragic loss in hopes of preventing future accidents. A video of their story can be seen at SafeElectricity.org.

Over 400 electrical fatalities occur every year, and electrocutions on farms are the fourth highest of any job, according to the National Institute of Occupational Health and Safety (NIOSH). Most of the electrical deaths investigated in a NIOSH survey could have been prevented.

"You need to double check, triple check, to see what's above you," cautions Flach's widow, Marilyn. Son Brett adds, "Be conscious of your surroundings. You need to keep your eyes open and beware of overhead lines."

Safe Electricity urges everyone to keep at least 10 feet away from overhead power lines when operating large equipment, and notes that new standards for some construction equipment require a 20-foot clearance.

Combines and grain wagons with extended augers can reach well into the 10-foot radius around a power line. Farm vehicles with wireless communication system antennas can also make contact and energize the vehicle with deadly current. On farmsteads, grain augers often tower over power lines when extended to reach the top of grain bins.

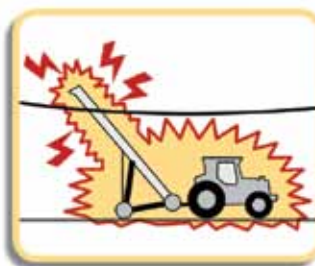
All farm workers should know to stay clear of overhead power lines—as well as what to do if equipment does become

entangled with a line.

"The best action is to stay on the equipment and warn others to stay away until the local electric utility arrives to ensure the line is de-energized," says Bob Aherin, University of Illinois Agriculture Safety Specialist. "Unless you have that assurance, don't get off except if there's fire, which happens only rarely."

In the event of fire, an operator should jump clear from the equipment, without touching the equipment and ground at the same time. Land with feet together, and hop away to avoid deadly current flow.

One of the more frequent mishaps



reported by NIOSH involves electrocutions and electrical burns suffered by individuals around truck beds raised high enough to contact overhead lines. Trucks must be able to unload their contents, and when raised, the top front of the

bed can easily reach overhead power lines.

"Again, we encourage farmers and all operators of large equipment to use a spotter when necessary, take steps to keep equipment away from power lines, and make sure everyone knows how to survive if there is an accident," Hall concludes.

Learn more about electrical safety and see the Flach video at SafeElectricity.org.

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Photo - Michael Koole

Summer's almost here, so let's **Barbecue!!**

Any time is a good time for barbecue. And the variety of sauces and grilling styles is endless. Learn about grilling competition on page 10, and the winners of our "Crazy BBQ Grill" contest are announced on page 11. Thanks to all who sent in recipes! Find hundreds more at countrylines.com.

Slow-Cooker BBQ Pulled Pork

3-4 lb. pork shoulder
salt and pepper
1 can root beer, not diet
1 10 1/2-oz. can French onion soup
1 16-18-oz. bottle BBQ sauce, any flavor
1/4 c. brown sugar
1 T. Worcestershire sauce
1 T. mustard, any flavor

Place root beer, soup, sugar, Worcestershire sauce, mustard and half of the BBQ sauce in a slow-cooker. Season pork with salt and pepper; place in slow cooker. Cook on high for 4-5 hours until tender. Remove meat; shred with a fork and return meat to cooker. Stir in remaining BBQ sauce. Cook on low for 1-2 hours. Serve on bun or bread of choice.

Mary Waterbury, Fenton

Grandma's Barbecue Sauce

2 T. cider vinegar
1/2 t. Worcestershire sauce
1 t. salt
2 T. molasses
1 t. paprika
1/2 t. cayenne pepper
1/2 t. black pepper
1 t. chili powder
3/4 c. ketchup
3/4 c. water

Combine all ingredients in a saucepan. Simmer until flavors are well blended. Use on anything you want to barbecue.

Kathy Spalding, Thompsonville

Spicy Korean Pork BBQ (Daeji Bulgogi)

1 lb. pork tenderloin, trimmed
2 T. brown sugar
2 T. soy sauce
1 1/2 T. chili paste or chili sauce
1 t. minced peeled fresh ginger
1 t. sesame oil
1/2 t. crushed red pepper
3 garlic cloves, minced
cooking spray

Wrap pork in plastic wrap; freeze 1 1/2 hours

or until firm. Remove plastic wrap; cut pork diagonally across grain into 1/16-inch thick slices. Combine pork and all ingredients into a Ziploc® bag. Seal and marinate in refrigerator 1 hour, turning bag occasionally. Place a wire grilling basket on grill rack. Remove pork from bag; discard marinade. Place pork on grilling basket coated with cooking spray. Grill 5 minutes or until desired degree of doneness, turning frequently.

Doreen Lawrence, St. Clair Shores

Mom's BBQ

3 lbs. ground chuck
2 cans Campbell's® light chicken gumbo soup
1 c. ketchup
1/2 c. mustard
1/8 c. brown sugar
1 T. dill pickle juice

Brown ground chuck; drain. Add soup; simmer 15-20 minutes. Blend in ketchup, mustard, brown sugar and pickle juice; simmer 1 hour. Serve with cooked spaghetti noodles or cooked rice.

Karen Richards, Wayland

BBQ Dutch-Oven Pot Roast

BBQ Sauce

1 c. strong black coffee
1 c. Worcestershire sauce
1 c. ketchup
1/2 c. cider vinegar
3 T. chili powder
2 t. salt
2 c. chopped onion
6 garlic cloves, minced
1/4 c. minced hot peppers, Serrano or jalapeño

Pot Roast

3 onions, thickly sliced
2 T. vegetable oil
1 4-5 lb. rolled beef rump, round bone or blade pot roast
1 t. salt
1/4 t. pepper
1-2 c. beer or red wine
1-2 c. BBQ sauce

boiled carrots, turnips & potatoes

Combine all sauce ingredients in a large saucepan; simmer for 30 minutes. For a thicker sauce, simmer another 20 minutes. Purée in blender or food processor. Makes 1 quart sauce. Refrigerate between uses.

To prepare roast, sauté onions in oil in a large Dutch oven until golden; remove and set aside. Season meat with salt and pepper; brown meat on all sides in Dutch oven, adding more oil if needed. Pour 1 cup BBQ sauce and 1 cup beer over meat. Cover tightly and simmer over low heat for 2 hours, adding more BBQ sauce and beer as needed. Add onions; cover and cook 30-60 minutes, until meat is tender. Serve with cooked carrots, turnips and potatoes.

Bonnie Bourn, Constantine

Tasty Sloppy Joes

1 lb. ground beef
1 lg. onion, finely diced
1 gr. pepper, finely diced
1/2 c. finely diced celery
1/8 c. brown sugar
1/2 c. ketchup
2 T. cider vinegar
2 T. lemon juice
1/2 of a 10-oz. can tomato soup
1 T. Worcestershire sauce
1/4 c. water
1 t. horseradish
1 t. prepared mustard

In a saucepan, brown ground beef, onion, green pepper and celery; drain. Stir in remaining ingredients; simmer 1-2 hours, stirring occasionally. Serve on bun of choice.

Virginia Rubingh, Ellsworth

Send in your recipes! You'll receive a kitchen gadget, if published. Send in: **CASSEROLE & POT PIE recipes by May 15**, **EGGPLANT recipes by June 15**, and **FRESH HERB recipes by July 15**. Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email jhansen@countrylines.com.

Each year the Chippewa County Fair, in Kinross, displays a 3,400-pound pumpkin grown by the men at the Kinross Correctional Facility. I was privy to the methods used to obtain such a large pumpkin, having taught horticulture classes there for the past 12 years. I'll share some of these tips with you, but bear in mind that they can be used to grow any type of pumpkin, or other member of the squash family.

Seed Selection

The type of seed you select will, of course, determine the size of your pumpkin. Consider selecting short-season types, such as hybrid bush spirit or autumn gold. These types require about 80 good growing days and reach maturity with minimal tinkering, assuming you have good soil that's rich in organic matter, and plenty of sun.

To try and grow the "big one," try the Atlantic dill or big Max pumpkin. These are the competition-size pumpkins you see in the newspapers and will require more good growing days, often over 100. They will also require some special tinkering on your part.

Starting From Seed

Seeds can be started as early as mid-April. Take the potting mix and moisten it by adding 1 part water to three parts mix before you fill the pots (it's hard to get the mix moist after it's in the pots). Don't get it dripping wet, and firmly pack the mix in the pots.

Plant the seeds about 1/2-inch deep, pointed side down. Place in a warm location that receives direct sunlight and is free of drafts—or preferably, under a fluorescent shop light, suspended about 3 inches above the plants. Keep the mix moist by spraying daily with a fine mist. Covering the pots with a makeshift plastic tent or one of those domes sold in the garden section of a hardware store

Materials Needed

- Three-inch peat pots
- Soil-less seed starting mix
- A type of heat cap or plastic "pup tent"
- Well-rotted compost or livestock manure
- A granular or organic fertilizer
- A "secret potion" (optional) of about a dozen crushed egg shells, 1 cup of powdered milk, one complete vitamin, and several used tea bags.



Growing BIG Pumpkins

...and other squash.

© iStockphoto.com/Linda Kloosterhof

will help to keep the medium moist, which is crucial during the germination stage.

After the seedling emerges and forms true leaves (the ones that don't fall off), provide a light feeding of a high-phosphorous organic or inorganic fertilizer. This will help support a strong root system. Water well at this stage, then don't water again until the medium has nearly dried out, which will also encourage good root development. Prevent the plants from becoming spindly at the seedling stage by providing plenty of light.

If the weather is favorable, plant the seedlings outside in the garden. To encourage rapid growth and protection from possible frost, cover them with a plastic material that allows good air flow. The inmate gardeners constructed little pup tent-like enclosures over the fledgling seedlings, using a clear poly plastic and sticks and twigs tied together. The additional heat and wind protection really spurred growth. Plant one plant per hill, spaced 6 feet apart.

Soil Preparation

The secret to a big, ripe pumpkin or a nice ripe squash—besides getting an early start—is to give them good soil to grow in. Dig a hole about 18 inches deep under where you're going to plant the squash. Fill the hole with well-rotted manure and/or compost. At this time, you could mix in the above potion or a slow-release all-purpose fertilizer, such as Osmocote.

Mound about 4 inches of soil over the fortified planting hole. Place one plant (peat pot and all so you don't disturb the roots)

into the center of the mound. Water the plant well and provide a nice layer of mulch (leaves, grass clippings or straw) around the base of the plant. This will keep the weeds down and conserve moisture.

Pumpkins and squash are heavy feeders, so feed about every two weeks during the summer with an all-purpose fertilizer. Be careful not to apply too much nitrogen, which will result in a lot of vine growth and little fruit.


To grow that really big pumpkin, watch for fruit to form from the female flowers. Select the one that looks most promising, pinch off the others and pinch off any vines that aren't supporting a fruit. Pinch the end of the remaining vine, which will cause growth of the vine to stop and the pumpkin to get larger.

All these tips are legal, so you won't end up in the joint if you try them. Happy gardening!

Neil has a garden blog at northcountrygardening.blogspot.com.


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High-flying Eagles Share Steelheading, Too

Steelhead trout have been making their annual spring spawning runs and northern Michigan's coastal streams get a large share of the big rainbows.

Fresh-run steelheads are met by the arrival of eager anglers, wading or floating these streams in hopes that one of these large trout will notice their lure or bait.

Humans, though, are not the only fishermen keeping watch. High-flying bald eagles are also on the hunt, as eager for a rainbow dinner as any human angler. From their high-soaring positions, eagles can spot a fish, swoop to grab it with their sharp, stabbing talons, and carry it off to their towering nests.

At other times, the eagles may be observed in their aerial courtship, locking talons in flight and spiraling down in an avian dance of love.

As a result, steelheaders are often given these visual treats when they cast their lines.

Michigan came close to losing this American symbol as a number of factors conspired to put the large raptor near extirpation. Before European settlement, bald eagles probably nested in all regions of Michigan, wherever food was available. In the early 1900s, they were described as being "generally distributed," but "nowhere abundant."

A decline through the early and mid-1900s was linked to slow but consistent loss of suitable habitat, available food, and "predator control by humans," a DNRE report noted. "These eagles are so disturbed by the presence of humans near their nest that they may be induced to abandon the nest, or even chicks that have already hatched."

The decline in eagles increased through the 1950s until bald eagle numbers were poised on the brink of extirpation—not just in Michigan, but in the lower 48 states. By 1959, the species was considered, "largely restricted to the northern half of the state."

Causes of this population crash were several other factors impacting the reduced reproductive success of nesting pairs. A major cause was increased use of pesticides with chemicals such as PCB and DDT. These chemicals caused them to delay their breeding until it was too late in the season, or even to not



Bald eagles are mating at this time, and their high-flying courtship is often seen by anglers fishing steelhead in the waters of our region. To catch both, keep your lines tight and your eyes on-high.

breed at all, and eggs were laid with thin shells, causing them to break in the nest by the brooding parent's weight.

Eagle decline peaked in 1967. In that year, studies showed that only 38 percent of the Michigan bald eagle population was able to raise at least a single chick. (Productivity, scientists note, must be at least 70 percent for a bald eagle population to remain stable.) Extirpation was near, but positive changes also arrived to stave off this threat.

By the 1970s, DDT had been banned in the U.S. "Earlier, intensive monitoring of eagles in Michigan had begun in 1961, and while bald eagles had been protected at federal and state levels since 1940 and 1954, respectively, they gained greater protection under the Endangered Species Act in 1973 and the Michigan endangered species act in 1974," the report stated.

Reproductive success began to improve until 1975, when the 70 percent productivity mark was reached, although it soon dropped again. The population remained at around 86 nesting pairs through the 1970s.

A big change began in 1981 as the population began to rebound at a faster pace. In 1999, eagle surveyors found 343 nests that

produced 321 young. The productivity was calculated as 96 percent (young per nests with known outcomes).

Some problems do still exist. Eagles nesting along the Great Lakes coasts have higher contaminant levels in their blood than inland nesting pairs.

The image of the bald eagle has long held great significance for our country (though Founding Father Benjamin Franklin had a low opinion of the eagle as a national symbol. He nominated the wild turkey.)

Thanks to stewardship efforts to protect and manage this magnificent raptor, the bald eagle still remains a part of the living history of the United States of America, and a symbol of Michigan's outdoors wilds.

Now, as courting eagles perform their aerial flirting, the best way to observe this annual show of high-flying romance is simple...

Go steelheading—and keep your eyes on the sky when you do.

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



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Ventilation Cuts Cooling Costs

Properly ventilating your home can reduce the need to use air conditioning.

Air conditioning can account for a significant proportion of a family's utility bills even in some so-called "cool" regions of the country. Not every region has below-zero temperatures dur-

ing winter, but most areas easily reach above 90 degrees for many days during the summer. There are also gaps around doors and windows which, even though sealed with weatherstripping and caulk, allow in some hot, humid outdoor air.

Because you can't stop all the energy gain at the windows and doors, you might as well make maximum use of ventilation through them. This can be cross-ventilation from window to window on the same floor or through-ventilation from a window to an upper vent. The air coming in will be warm and perhaps humid, but it will make you feel cooler as it flows over your skin.

The wind blowing over your house creates higher pressure on the upwind side and lower pressure on the downwind side. Open your windows completely on the downwind side. Open them only half-way or less on the upwind side. This combination may reduce the total air flow somewhat, but it increases the speed of the air coming in. In the summer, the higher speed of the breeze over your skin creates more cooling effect. If you have casement windows, crank them out at just a partial angle to catch more breezes.

For through-ventilation, open windows on the upwind side of your house. This also works reasonably well on a calm day. Lift the attic access opening cover, often in a bedroom closet ceiling, and rotate it over the opening to create gaps. The less-dense warm air will naturally exhaust out the opening. Don't totally remove the cover because that would allow a direct route down for the radiant heat from the roof into the room. If a room has a vaulted ceiling, consider installing a venting skylight (velux.com).

If security is not an issue, open your doors and allow air in through a screen door. For added security, drill a hole in the floor slightly inside the primary door, and directly over a joist. Slip a short steel rod in the hole so the primary door can be opened

only a couple of inches.

If you do not like the appearance of screen doors or cannot afford to install them, consider a retractable screen (dreamscreens.com). This is a spring-loaded screen that pulls horizontally across the door to the magnetic strip on the other side. The vertical housing that holds the screen is only a couple of inches wide so it is barely noticeable. The spring holds the screening taut over the door.

Adding awnings is a good way to reduce heat coming in through windows. The proper size of the awning depends upon the latitude angle of your area and its orientation to the sun. An awning contractor can help you determine the proper size.

Installing an awning over a door also helps reduce heat gain in several ways. First, the awning blocks the sun's direct rays from heating the door or shining in an open screened door. Secondly, the sun's heat on the outside of an insulated composite door may cause it to bow. When this happens, the weatherstripping may not seal well when you are using air conditioning.

If your windows are exposed to the sun, install SunScreen (phifer.com) sun-control window screening. This is often made from strong polymers and has a dense weave to block more than half of the sun's heat. You can still see through the screening.

If you have venetian blinds, rotate the slats so they slope to the outdoors from bottom to top. As the air between the window and blind slats gets hot, it tends to flow upward. With the slats rotated properly, this hot air tends to stay between the window and the slats. During the winter, reverse the slat angle so the cold air stays against the window.

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

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



Photo - Phifer

SunScreen® solar control screening can block more than half of the heat coming in through windows.

ing winter, but most areas easily reach above 90 degrees for many days during the summer.

No matter how much heat you can block from your windows and doors and how effective the ventilation is in a house without air conditioning, an air-conditioned house with a reasonable humidity level will be more comfortable. With proper ventilation, you will have to use your air-conditioning very little to stay reasonably comfortable during hot, humid summers.

Direct and indirect heat coming in windows and doors does increase the temperature inside your house significantly. Even the most energy-efficient windows and doors have an insulation R-value much less than the typical

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The Big Green Box

They're big. They're often green. They generally sit on concrete, often within housing developments. Some folks don't like these "electrical boxes" (a common nickname for pad-mount transformers) and try to hide them with bushes, fences or flower beds. But stay clear: even small additions around pad-mount transformers can create hazards.

To improve the aesthetics of new neighborhoods, developers often put in underground power lines. While this eliminates utility poles and overhead wires, it requires installing pad-mounted transformers in some front yards. Unfortunately, some homeowners that are concerned about curb appeal attempt to screen pad-mount transformers from view—creating an unsafe situation for all concerned, including lineworkers.

Landscaping represents an investment of time and money, however, landscaping around electrical equipment interferes with our ability to deliver reliable power.

It is recommended to leave at least 10 feet of clear space in front of pad-mount trans-

formers. Lineworkers repair units while they are energized so homeowners don't experience an interruption in service. To ensure safety, they use an 8-foot fiberglass "hot stick" that requires about 10 feet of "elbow room" in

Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is restricted.

front of the access panel. [Routine maintenance on the units is generally performed at least once a year.]

In some cases, consumers may leave plenty of space in front of the transformer, but grow vegetation on the other three sides. This may invite other problems. Pad-mounted transformers surrounded by vegetation or

a structure may overheat and cause service interruptions when the air circulation around them is restricted. Allow at least 3 to 4 feet of space on both sides and behind the transformer.

You should also be aware that plantings along rights-of-way—strips of land owned by a member on which the co-op places poles, wires and other equipment such as pad-mount transformers—could be damaged by co-op vehicles.

Occasionally, there may be a need to repair a transformer, and eventually they must be upgraded and replaced. To perform this work, line trucks must be driven into the right-of-way and the transformer lifted out. Although workers try to minimize the impact, plants may be damaged if they're in the way.

Call Before You Dig!

Because underground service continues from the transformer to your home, you should never dig anywhere in your yard without first calling 811 to find out where cables are buried.

Transformers need to be left alone

NEVER let anything grow closer than 10 feet from a pad-mount transformer. (The access panel is marked by a handle, lock and sticker on the front.)

NEVER enclose a pad-mount transformer with fencing, shrubs, or anything else with less than a 10-foot-wide gate or opening.

NEVER allow children to play near pad-mount transformers.

NEVER pour waste oils, chemicals, or other liquids on or near a pad-mount transformer. These liquids can seep into the ground and damage underground cables.



Never let anything grow closer than 10 feet from the access panel of your home's pad-mount transformer. How do you know where the access panel is located? Look for the handle, lock, and sticker. This distance keeps roots away and air flowing around your home's unit.

Midwest in the Community

Amazing Race

More than 500 southwest Michigan and northern Indiana students participated in the Third Annual Five Star Amazing Race on Feb. 12. Twelve buses moved students from event to event as they competed in challenges, earning points in the effort to win the title of Amazing Race Champion.

Volunteers from Team Midwest were on hand at Ferrettie/Baugo Creek Park in Osceola, IN, to help with the snowball and sledding events. Five Star is a nonprofit leadership group designed to motivate students and help them feel connected in school and stick with their education.



Meghan Tarver (left), customer care supervisor, and Vicki Polmateer, customer care representative, retrieve the tubes and return them to the top of the sledding hill.



Nicole Barfell (rear), a Midwest Energy community development specialist, partners with one of the student participants on the sledding hill.



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Chances are that second refrigerator or freezer running in your garage or basement is also running up your electric bill. That's because it can use up to three times as much energy as newer models, adding up to \$150 a year on your electric bill. But now there's an easy solution: we'll pick up and recycle your older appliance for free and you'll pick up \$30 in cold cash! So, do something good for yourself and for the environment by lowering your energy use.

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Rebates and programs are available to Michigan residents only and subject to change and availability; restrictions may apply. Refrigerators or freezers must be in working condition and must be between 10 and 30 cubic feet using inside measurements. The Energy Optimization program contracts with JACO Environmental, an appliance recycler, to pick up and recycle the appliances. Customers of the partner utilities must own the appliances. Limit two appliances per address. A check will be mailed within 4-6 weeks after appliance collection. Additional restrictions apply.

ANIMALS

SURI ALPACAS – Show-quality yearlings, bred females and fiber males for sale or lease of various color. Alpacas have wonderful personalities, very intelligent. Our alpacas are cared for personally by their owners with daily interaction. Boarding available. Alpacas of Cross Trails, Riga, MI. sfisher6030@aol.com or 419-472-8224.

CARS & TRUCKS

LOW MILEAGE ENGINES – Big savings. Price includes delivery and 1-year parts warranty. Mileage verified. Call today, 901-266-9996. lowmileageengines.com

HEARTH & HOME

COTTAGE/CABIN REPAIRS – Remodels, licensed builder, insured, western Michigan. Punch Construction, 616-366-7091.

MISCELLANEOUS

BECOME AN ORDAINED MINISTER – Correspondence study. Founded in 1988. Free information. Ministers for Christ Outreach, 7549 West Cactus Rd. #104-207, Peoria, AZ 85381. ordination.org

FREE BOOKS/DVDs – Soon the “Mark of the Beast” will be enforced as church and state unite. Let the Bible reveal. The Bible Says, POB 99, Lenoir City, TN 37771. 888-211-1715. thebiblesaystruth@yahoo.com

FOR SALE, NEW A-MAIZE-ING – Heat furnace, 165,000 Btus, 14 bushel storage bin and augers included. Will sell for \$3,600. 231-549-2599.

MORE STORIES FROM PINE GROVE – Book 2. Children’s book, real stories, \$8 each includes shipping. Send check or money order to Juanita Katzke, N3315 4th Lane, Oxford, WI 53952.

OUTDOORS

SAWMILL FOR SALE – \$4,995. New portable band saw, saws 36-inch x 16 feet logs. 231-288-0066.

REAL ESTATE

GRAYLING ADULT FOSTER CARE – Home for sale. Six private rooms. 231-649-6842.

HOUSE + 40 ACRES – Mecosta County, \$120,000. 586-677-1914.

LUDINGTON MOTEL – 8 renovated rooms/office. Tourist route from beaches, car ferry, Lake Michigan, seasonal, great numbers. Century 21 Bayshore Real Estate, Michelle, 231-845-0363, ext. 224. mich@t-one.net

FOR SALE, 200 FEET FRONTAGE – Morley Pond, near damn, good fishing. 313-386-0924.

FOR SALE, LAKE HOUSE – In White Pigeon, MI. 4-bedroom, 3-bath, 2-car garage. Built in 1993 on private lake. 269-483-7147.

49 ORGANIC ACRES – 3 miles west of Traverse City, MI. M-72 frontage, 2-roads, house, farm buildings, appraised 2005, \$730,000, asking \$500,000. 517-663-5013.

U.P. HUNTING CAMP – For sale by owner. 345 wooded acres, Schoolcraft County, 80 miles west of Mackinac Bridge, 18x24 ft. cabin and barn, 1/4 mile frontage on 150 acre private lake. Hunting, deer, bear, grouse, snowshoe hare, geese, ducks. Trapping, muskrat, mink, beaver, otter, bobcat. 300 acres in reduced property tax program. Property borders state land and groomed snowmobile trail. Improved roads and gates, 5 food plots, one elevated blind, property borders county road. \$295,000. Call 989-731-4750.

WHITE CLOUD, 20 ACRES – With cabin, well and septic, surrounded on 3 sides by federal/state land. 317-341-0395.

TRAVERSE CITY HOME – Is located on Silver Lake’s desirable Brakel Point Drive (581). 3-bedroom, 2-bath, 1,768 sq. ft., set on a wooded lot. Priced as it sits nearly completed at \$135,000. 269-208-7655.

COTTAGE ON BEAUTIFUL SILVER LAKE – In Traverse City, 51 feet of private beach with waterfront deck. Year-round 700 sq.-ft. furnished home set under soft white pines, 2-bedroom, 1-bath, fireplace, front screened porch, single car garage and carport. Includes dock, raft, outside furniture and more. Just 6 miles from downtown Traverse City, \$259,000. Contact Ron at 269-208-7655 or rosbacksales@qtm.net

NESTLED IN A QUIET COVE SETTING – With 100 feet of private beach. You’ll discover this lake front home and 2-story upper guest house to be your true turn-key answer to year-round family lake living. Conveniently located just 6 miles from downtown Traverse City on Silver Lake, 600 acre all-sports lake. Cottage has 2 bedrooms, 1 bath and deck. Garage/recreation room and upper guest house has 1 bedroom, 1 bath, kitchenette and screened porch. Both structures have central air and natural gas heat. Entire property is professionally landscaped; curb-appealing brick courtyard, multiple-level decking, architectural block walls and underground sprinklers, \$399,000. Call Ron at 269-208-7655 or rosbacksales@qtm.net

APPROXIMATELY 1/2 ACRE – Lot on St. Joseph River in subdivision south of Three Rivers, MI, \$45,000. Call 269-279-5838.

ONAWAY AREA LEASE – S.E. Cheboygan County, 100 acres, Black River frontage. Lease now for turkey, bow and gun seasons. Pay taxes. 248-217-5217.

VACATIONS

LAKEFRONT RENTAL – Spacious cottage sleeps 12. Delton/Hastings area. Long Lake, Cloverdale, great swimming and fishing. Weekly \$700. Deposit required. 269-342-4047.

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SOUTH HAVEN WEEKLY RENTAL – Spacious home sleeps 16. Family friendly, shared private beach access. Weekly \$2,200. Deposit required. 269-342-4047.

3-BEDROOM BREVORT LAKEFRONT – Vacation home, 20 minutes north of Bridge. 316-721-3420, Linda.L.farquhar@gmail.com. lakefrontvacationrental.com

WALLOON LAKE COTTAGE – Available June 2011, \$895/week. 50 feet from lake with boat dock, swimming, on scenic road. 231-347-2772. Sanback@sbcglobal.net

VACATION IN MUNISING, MI – Beautiful cottage on lake, swimming and fishing. Bring toothbrush, available month of August. 906-387-3344.

WANTED

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

WANTING TO LEASE LAND – For 2011 bow season. Responsible and ethical bow hunter. Please call 989-506-1635. Prefer Montcalm, Ionia, or west Gratiot counties.

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Midwest Energy CEO to Serve On Technology Board

Robert Hance, president/CEO of Midwest Energy Cooperative, was recently elected to the board of directors of the National Rural Telecommunications Cooperative (NRTC).



Robert Hance

NRTC represents the advanced telecommunications and information technology interests of more than 1,500 rural utilities and affiliates in 48 states. Founded in 1986, NRTC provides products and services developed specifically to meet the needs of rural utilities and their customers, such as high-speed internet access via satellite, full service internet access and support, advanced metering technology, wireless technologies, power quality products, long distance programs, mobile phone service, Internet Protocol backbone services, direct broadcast satellite service with DIRECTV, and programming distribution rights for video providers.

Hance is eager to be a new voice represent-

ing the needs of millions of unserved and underserved Americans who lack access to high-speed solutions.

"I have been a tireless advocate for high-speed internet and other telecommunications solutions for rural America. During my 37-year electric co-op career, I have seen many issues touch the lives of our members in rural America, and no

issue has been more pervasive and frustrating than the lack of quality, affordable high-speed internet access.

"It's time to shape a new landscape as it relates to the availability of high-speed solutions across our country, and to bridge the technology gap that exists by virtue of geography. It's unacceptable to me that in 2011, millions of Americans still lack access to what has become the mainstay of our communications infrastructure."

The NRTC Board of Directors is comprised of 16 members, 10 of which represent

electric co-ops and four that represent telecommunications cooperatives. The remaining two seats are reserved for representation from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation, the two national organizations involved in founding NRTC.

Hance started his electric cooperative career in 1974 as the facilities mapping coordinator for O&A Electric Cooperative in Newaygo, MI, where he went on to serve as general manager from 1987 to 1996. He co-managed O&A and Oceana Electric Cooperative in Hart from 1995 to 1996 as the two systems considered merging. The successful merger resulted in the formation of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, at which Hance served as president/COO from 1997 to 1998. In 1998, he co-directed a three-way merger between Great Lakes, Top O' Michigan and Western Michigan electric cooperatives, and in 1999 was named executive vice president/COO of the 120,000-member Great Lakes Energy.

Hance was named president/CEO of Midwest Energy Cooperative in March 2002.

Co-op Preferred Contractors

Choosing a qualified and reputable heating and cooling contractor can be difficult, so we compiled a list of Midwest Energy Cooperative preferred HVAC contractors. We researched, interviewed and checked references on a regional pool of contractors and included on our final list only those we feel confident will provide the level of service you have come to know and expect from your cooperative.

Please feel free to contact any of these contractors with confidence if you are interested in more information about their services.

American Performance Heating & Cooling

47317 Destiny Ave.,
Paw Paw, Michigan 49079
877-865-88014 or 269-720-0803
performancegeothermal.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Bartholomew Heating & Cooling, Inc.

3025 Emerald Drive
Kalamazoo, MI 49001
269-381-9045
TotalComfortPros.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal; home performance contractor.

Bel-Aire Heating & Air Conditioning

781 Lenox Rd.
Portage, MI 49024
888-Bel-Aire (235-2473)
belaire.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Comfort One Heating & Cooling

200 5th St.
Michigan Center, MI 49254
517-764-1500
or 7250 West U.S. Hwy. 223
Adrian, MI 49221
517-263-3040

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Crystal Valley Comfort

800 S. CR 37
Middlebury, IN 46540
574-825-2611
crystalvalleycomfort.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Haven Heating & Air Conditioning, Inc.

10420 M-140, Suite 12
South Haven, MI 49090
269-637-1400
havenheating.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

HIS Servant Heating & Cooling, Inc.

14738 Packard Road
Hudson, MI 49247
888-789-9339 or 517-286-6929
hisservantheatingandcooling.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems.

List continues on page 29

Shoemaker Heating & Plumbing

5310 U.S. Hwy. 223
Palmyra, MI 49268
517-263-9940
yourbryantman.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal and generators.

Service First LLC

5605 Bent Oak Hwy.
Adrian, MI 49221
517-263-9194

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Sun Services Inc.

26 Longmeadow Lane
Niles, MI 49120
269-684-3898
sunservices.us

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

The Furnace Guy Heating & Cooling

6053 S. 4th Street
Kalamazoo, MI 49009
269-544-0904 or 269-273-5241
thefurnaceguyinc.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Van Kal Heating and Cooling

647 N. State Street
Gobles, MI 49055
269-628-4407
vankalheatingandcooling.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

WaterFurnace Michiana

636 North St. Joseph Ave.
Berrien Springs, MI 49103
269-473-5667
waterfurnace.com

Sales and service of geothermal.

Whitcher Plumbing & Heating

1500 W. Maumee Street
Adrian, MI 49221
517-265-1389
whitcherplumbing.com

Sales and service of all types of heating and cooling systems, including geothermal.

Have You Started Saving Yet?

New businesses have joined the Co-op Connections family.

Midwest Energy customers are already raving about the savings they've achieved by using the new Co-op Connections® discount card that was mailed to all members in late March. One



early user saw savings of \$167 on a weekend car rental from Hertz, while another shaved \$25 off the

cost of a prescription at a local pharmacy. Have you started saving yet?

The program is simple and free to use. Log-on to TeamMidwest.com and click on the Co-op Connections card image. That will direct you to a database of thousands of national, regional and local discounts that were established by other member-owned electric co-ops.

Midwest staff are working with businesses across our service territory to develop local deals for your benefit. We will publish those in *Country Lines* as they become available, and also promote new deals on our website. Check back often. If you are a business owner that would like to be part of this program, please contact us at pr@teammidwest.com and a team member will contact you.

This month, we're proud to welcome the following businesses to our Co-op Connections family. Just show your card when you visit any of them, and the stated offer will be honored.

Clipper Creations Pet Salon

109 North Fulton St., Cassopolis, MI
269-445-3432

A salon for your canine and feline friends, with services that include nail trimming, bathing (medicated and regular), hair cuts (including special hand-scissored trims), flea dips, ear cleaning, and de-shedding treatments. *10 percent off all grooming.*

Cranky Hanks

24992 Marcellus Hwy, Dowagiac, MI
269-462-9272

An old-fashioned general store with grocery options, movie rentals, live bait & tackle, beer and gifts. *10 percent off all fishing tackle.*

Discover Peters Travel

57225 Gards Prairie Rd., Cassopolis, MI
269-445-2536
discoverpeterstravel.com

Your full-service travel agency offering great rates on flights, hotels, cruises, all-inclusive vacations, car rentals, sporting events and more!

Various discounts, including upgrades and on-board credits.

Farm House Bakery & Restaurant

59573 White Temple Rd., Vandalia, MI
269-476-9668
farmhousebakeryandrestaurant.com

A family-owned and operated restaurant and caterer with a retail section that includes baked items, gifts and children's toys. Watch for special events throughout the summer!

10 percent off dining and retail purchases.

Lipstick Jungle Spa

404 E. Main St., Niles, MI
269-683-7500
lipstickjunglespa.com

A full-service spa offering a wide variety of services including facials, massages, nail care and hair removal (sugar) services.

10 percent off any spa service (not valid with any other offers, promotions, or soirées).

Squeeze

404 E. Main St., Niles, MI, 269-788-2930

A real fruit and veggie juice bar using no added sugars or preservatives. All food items are raw, vegan and most are gluten free.

50 cents off any smoothie or food items.

Village Floral LLC

150 South Broadway, Cassopolis, MI
269-445-2393
villagefloralcassopolis.com

A floral gift shop carrying fresh flowers for all occasions. Established in 1986, they have a large line of gift options ranging from Yankee candles with over 60 different fragrances to Ty Plush and Willow Tree Angels.

25 percent off any regular-priced cash and carry purchase (no special orders and no deliveries).

Two Jocks and a Widow

The morning of July 4, 1967, was cold in Ironwood. A sheet of fragile ice skinned puddles in the streets. (The high in Chicago that day was only 64 degrees.)

I remember because it was the day I entered the bigger world. I had to catch an early bus to Minneapolis, where I would pass through the Air Force induction center before catching my first-ever plane to San Antonio, TX, for basic training. Just out of college, I opted for Air Force officer training rather than a two-year stint as an Army draftee. Barbara, who was kind enough to marry me the following summer, saw me off. The rest of my family was camping.

The bus stopped in Duluth, MN, where an elderly woman became my seat-mate. (Now I think: She was only about as old as I am now.) We had a fascinating discussion about Vietnam, college, and her home and family. Mostly, she talked and I listened.

(What did I have to offer at 23?) Following the death of her husband, she had recently learned to drive a car, and then, as if to say “nothing is stopping me now,” learned how to fly a plane. She was learning to paint. She was full of life and excited about her possibilities. Her joy was infectious.

Any joy she imparted to me was quickly dampened by the dark and seedy hotel where the Air Force put me up in downtown Minneapolis. Noisy city traffic and a sputtering neon sign made sure I wouldn't sleep all night.

The next day, after passing a physical exam and being sworn in, several recruits flew to Dallas, where we were to change planes for San Antonio. It was late night and the terminal was empty. In a cavernous open space, one other recruit and I walked to our next gate. Our path intersected with that of the only other person, a powerful

man who seemed to glide over the floor.

We stopped there, alone in the middle of that vast terminal, and said hello to Muhammad Ali, the most recognizable person in the world. He was a skilled boxer, bigger than his sport, controversial and brash. Here he was, alone, without the entourage he surely would have today.

That April, at the height of his power as a boxer, he was stripped of his heavyweight titles for refusing induction into the U. S.

*Our path intersected
with that of the only other
person, a powerful man
who seemed to glide
over the floor.*

military because of his religious beliefs. He was found guilty on draft evasion charges and his boxing license was suspended. He was not imprisoned, but did not fight again for nearly four years while his appeal worked its way up to the U. S. Supreme Court.

When we met him, he was in Dallas to attend a hearing in federal court on his appeal. And here we were, on our way to boot camp.

We asked him for an autograph.

Because I didn't have anything else to write on, he signed the back of my induction papers. He was kind and gracious, displaying none of the braggadocio and swagger of his public persona.

When we got to Lackland Air Force Base in the wee morning hours morning, I turned in my induction papers. I didn't realize until much later they were

the copies bearing Ali's autograph. So Muhammed Ali's signature is on military induction papers somewhere in the vast files of a military warehouse.

Later that day, I met Bill Bradley, the former Princeton basketball star who was drafted by the New York Knicks and had just returned from England, where he was a Rhodes Scholar. He was given a commission in the Air Force Reserves so he could fulfill his military obligation and play pro ball at the same time. Bradley was smart, rich, and one of the best basketball players in the world. The rest of us were secretly gratified that he was lousy at marching.

These two athletes didn't serve two or four years, and weren't remotely in danger of being injured or killed like so many young men their age. They went on to bigger things. After the U. S. Supreme Court unanimously reversed Ali's conviction in 1971, he went on to regain the championship and became revered over most of the world. Bradley later became a U. S. Senator from New Jersey and sought the Democratic nomination for president.

We have all experienced moments that put us in contact with people who are, have been, or will be famous—or infamous. These chance encounters enhance our conversations, create memories, and link us forever to events greater than ourselves.

But they don't touch our lives as deeply as regular people like the woman from Duluth, who found joy in the adventure of new things. She's the one I'd want to meet again.

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



Share your chance encounters with famous or infamous people you've met or almost met. Send your story, in 100 words or less, to mbuda@countrylines.com.



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(231) 796-3717

Caro

All-Temp Heating
(989) 673-5557

Charlevoix

Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 547-1035

Cheboygan

Jim's Handyman
(231) 627-7533

Carsonville

Certified Temperature Innovations
(810) 300-7748

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

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(989) 732-8099

Grand Rapids

Montgomery Htg & Clg
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Harbor Springs

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(231) 526-6859

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Home Experts
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E M Sergeant
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Lapeer

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D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

Webberville

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(800) 377-2272



waterfurnace.com
(800) GEO-SAVE





MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TeamMidwest.com

CONNECT WITH MIDWEST



Social Media

Midwest Energy has launched a new website, making connecting easier than ever! Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn and Flickr to stay up to date with the latest happenings at Midwest Energy.

Live Chat

Have a question for Midwest Energy? Our new site allows for instant communication using Live Chat. All your questions, needs or concerns can be answered online by chatting with one of our representatives during scheduled hours.

Upcoming Events

Find out what's going on in the community and at Midwest with our new event calendar. Submit an event or search our calendar for specific activities to take part in.

TeamMidwest.com