

A Service of **Midwest Energy Cooperative**

November/December 2011

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



**Walking
On Webs**

*Iverson's
Snowshoes*

4 Your Co-op Joins
Wolverine Power

5 Family Fun
At The Zoo

8 United Way
Day Of Action



It's never been easier thanks to the **30% RENEWABLE ENERGY TAX CREDIT**

Thanks to the Economic Recovery Act, there's now a **30% "renewable energy" tax credit** for homeowners who install a qualifying **WaterFurnace geothermal comfort system**. WaterFurnace geothermal units use the **clean, renewable energy** found in your own backyard to save up to 70% on heating, cooling, and hot water. They **don't burn expensive fossil fuels**, they **reduce our dependence on foreign oil** and also happen to be **great for the environment**. Call your local dealer and discover for yourself the benefits that only WaterFurnace can provide.

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

Bad Axe
B & D Heating
(989) 269-5280

Berrien Springs
WaterFurnace Michiana
(269) 473-5667

Big Rapids
Stratz Heating & Cooling
(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

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

Gaylord
Family Htg & Clg
(989) 732-8099

Grand Rapids
Montgomery Htg & Clg
(616) 459-0261

Hart
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Harbor Springs
Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 526-6859

Ionia
Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

Kalamazoo
E M Sergeant
(800) 530-1363

Lapeer
Porter & Heckman
(810) 664-8576

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

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

Muskegon
Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(800) 922-3045

Petoskey
Ballard's and Great Lakes
Plumbing & Heating
(231) 347-3900

Palms
Lakeshore Improvements
(989) 864-3833

Traverse City
Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000

D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

Webberville
Applegate Home Comfort
(800) 377-2272



waterfurnace.com
(800) GEO-SAVE



Editor
Gail Knudtson

Associate Editor
Doug Snitgen

Design Editor
Cindy Zuker

Publisher
Craig Borr

Michigan Country Lines, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Okemos, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Subscriptions are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Cloverland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors. Subscriptions are \$6 per year.

Postmaster: send address changes to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

Letters to the editor should be sent to the same address. Phone 517-351-6322. **Email:** knudtson@countrylines.com.

Association officers are **Brian Burns**, PIE&G, chairman; **Ken Swope**, Midwest Energy, 1st vice chairman; **Tony Anderson**, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and **Steve Boeckman**, Great Lakes Energy, past chairman. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

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

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

Display ad representatives:
Michigan-Kissman Consulting
517-244-1844
National Country Market
512-441-5200

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



Michigan COUNTRY LINES



Photo - Dakota Electric Assn.

12



Photo - Tom Vanich

13



Photo - Liz Burt

17

DEPARTMENTS

6 Readers' Pages

Letters, fuel cells, mystery photo

18 Home Cooking

Veal and lamb

24 Wolverine Power*

Innovative co-op marks decade of service

Nancy Tanner

26 Marketplace

Classifieds from readers

COLUMNS

9 Comment

Co-ops offer good jobs

Gail Knudtson

14 Gardening

Make a holiday centerpiece

Neil Moran

16 Family

Positive ways to deal with anger

Linda Wacyk

22 House & Home

The best thermostat setting for winter

James Dulle

30 Ramblings

Things we learned on our trip

Mike Buda

FEATURES

10 Cover Story

Walking on webs – Iverson's snowshoes

Don Ingle

12 Our Energy

Careers with electric co-ops

Magen Howard

13 Model train hobby is still enjoyed by many

Nick Edson

17 Michigan-Made

– Mackinac mittens
– Gemstone jewelry

Gail Knudtson

20 Home heating assistance programs

YOUR CO-OP

Pages specific to your electric cooperative:
1, 4-5, 8, 25, 28-29, 32

*Not in all editions

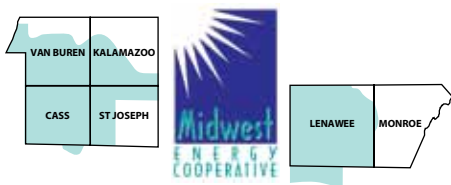
On the Cover*

Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, near Shingleton, shows samples of their handcrafted "webbies."

Photo – Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com

Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com





PRESIDENT & CEO
Robert Hance

CASSOPOLIS OFFICE
P.O. Box 127 (901 E. State Street)
Cassopolis, MI 49031-0127
M-F, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.
Drive-up window: M-F, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

TELEPHONE
269-445-1000 or 800-492-5989
Fax: 269-445-3792

PAW PAW OFFICE
59825 S. LaGrave
Paw Paw, MI 49079
M-F, 8 a.m. – 1 p.m. and 1:30 – 4:30 p.m.

ADRIAN OFFICE
1610 E. Maumee St.
Adrian, MI 49221
M-F, 8 a.m. – 5 p.m.

TELEPHONE
517-263-1808 or 800-492-5989

INTERNET TeamMidwest.com

E-MAIL info@teammidwest.com

EDITOR
Patty Nowlin

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Clarence (Topper) Barth *Chairman*
Three Rivers

Kenneth Swope *Vice Chairman*
Adrian

Colyne Sorsby *Secretary*
Cassopolis

John Green *Treasurer*
Dowagiac

Ron Armstrong, Lawton

Jerry Campbell, Decatur

James W. Dickerson, Bloomington

Harry Gentz, Blissfield

Ben Russell, Constantine

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

New Power Supplier Announced: Wolverine Power Cooperative

We have literally spent several years as a management staff and board of directors navigating the best path for power supply for the future of our family of co-op members. We engaged some of the best and brightest minds in the country; energy consultants who specialize in providing data, analysis and opinion about markets and forecasts. We invited possible power supply partners to the table and evaluated the plans offered by their teams of experts. We immersed ourselves in the world of power supply—researching, studying and debating the pros and cons of the myriad of options in front of us.

The process was exciting, as we were shaping the future of your cooperative. At the same time, it was overwhelming, exhausting and downright frustrating. At the end of the day, we simply had to step away from what became a consuming, complicated mass of data and ask ourselves, “What makes sense for our family of members?”

At their Sept. 27, 2011, meeting, your board of directors voted to enter into a long-term power supply agreement with Cadillac-based Wolverine Power Cooperative, effective Jan. 1, 2012. This was a landmark decision, and I applaud the board for the years of diligent work that led to a decision I firmly believe will best serve our members.

The reality is that kilowatts are kilowatts. There isn't a particular brand that is better than another. There are many ways to produce kilowatts, from affordable but controversial coal-based generation to expensive but more environmentally-friendly renewable generation. And, most of the major industry players have already diversified their production portfolios in efforts to meet increasingly stringent state and national renewable energy requirements.

So, this decision was less about the product and more about the partner. You're not going to see a difference in your power supply beginning Jan. 1. Lights won't be brighter and food won't cook faster. The commodity itself will remain unchanged as it relates to the value it provides in your home or business. What

is changing, however, is our confidence in a power supplier that we firmly believe will make better decisions on your behalf.

Let's start with a quick refresher on how our system works. Midwest does not generate electricity; we are a distribution cooperative. We enter into long-term agreements that provide for an uninterrupted supply of power that, for the most part, is not purchased on the volatile wholesale market. That power is delivered over a national transmission system to our substations, where we move it over our distribution lines to your home or business. The pieces to this complicated system

are reflected on the various lines of your bill, and over 60 percent of what we collect from you monthly is returned to the power supply partner.

We have been served by an Indianapolis-based power supplier for more than 25 years. It was a somewhat rocky relationship from the start, but the long-term nature of our contracts kept us in the marriage. In recent years we have been increasingly unhappy with decisions made by this partner, specifically related to the purchase of power supply assets that were not in the best interests of consumers at the end of the lines. As we approached the end of our long-term contracts with this partner, we realized it was time to evaluate all our options, and began the long and arduous process that resulted in our decision to work with Wolverine.

Again, you won't experience any difference in the commodity, but there are significant differences that will ultimately impact you. Wolverine is a fairly small player in the power supply market, but has a strong commitment to their co-op partners and the users at the end of the line, and an exemplary track record of solid, well-planned power supply purchases that make them less dependent on the whims of the volatile energy markets. Power supply is never an exact science, but the well-conceived and executed approach of our new partner should result in more stability on your electric bill.

Please understand I'm not suggesting that your bill will decrease as a result of this



Robert Hance
President/CEO



Family Fun at the ZOO

*Thanks to
all who
joined us!*

Threats of rain couldn't keep the Midwest family of members away from our Customer Appreciation Day events. The rain held off and Mother Nature provided us with beautiful weather for our 2011 festivities, and a roaring good time was had by all.

On Sept. 11, more than 3,500 member families from across our service territory joined us for the day at Binder Park Zoo in Battle Creek. Two weeks later nearly 2,000 joined us at the Toledo Zoo. Young and old alike came out for a picnic lunch followed by an afternoon enjoying the sights and sounds of two of our region's best family venues, creating memories that won't soon be forgotten!

"Over and over again our members expressed heartfelt thanks for our efforts, along with surprise that their electric utility would provide this type of opportunity," said Bob Hance, Midwest Energy Cooperative president/CEO. "The reality is that we are more than just an electric utility; we are locally-owned by our members and operated by people who live and work in that same community. Events like this give us a chance to recognize and celebrate the unique relationship that defines the electric cooperative, and to interact together as members of an extended family and not just co-op staff and customers."

To view more photos from the 2011 zoo events, click on our Facebook icon on our homepage at TeamMidwest.com.

▶ **New Power Supplier**, from page 4

move. I've repeated for nearly 10 years now that power supply prices are going to continue to climb as a result of our usage habits, climate change regulation, and the need for new generation. What we do anticipate, however, is that Wolverine will make better decisions about purchases and asset development, and is better positioned to forecast power supply prices.

That said, beginning in January you will see an increase in the power cost adjustment on your bill. While the final figures are not available yet, it may be as high as 6 percent, which translates to an increase of about \$7 monthly for our average residential user. This has nothing at all to do with the change to a new power supply partner, but everything to do with the reason behind it.

This has not been an easy or quick decision, but we weren't going to jump in until

we could confidently stand in front of our members and say that we made the best long-term deal for you. Thanks to diligent and courageous leadership from your board, we're now there.

Holiday Closings

Midwest Energy offices will be closed on the following:

Thanksgiving – Thursday and Friday, Nov. 24-25

Christmas – Friday, Dec. 23 and Monday, Dec. 26

New Year's – Monday, Jan. 2

*From our families to yours,
happy holidays!*

**Give a
Gift of
Energy**



Looking for a unique gift for that person who has everything? Why not present them with a Gift of Energy from Midwest Energy Cooperative? You can pay all or part of someone's electric or propane bill as a special way to recognize any gift-giving occasion. Just call the cooperative at 800-492-5989 or stop in to any of our district offices and we'll apply your payment to their account and provide you with a gift certificate to present as a token of your thoughtful gesture.



Road Trippin'

I read with interest your "Road Trippin'" article (Mike Buda, Ramblings/Sept.) in *Country Lines*. My husband Mike and I just got back from a motorcycle trip through the same territory. I am amazed you are going to do it in three weeks, it took us nearly seven.

One tip, there is a great bakery breakfast place on main street in Custer, SD, on the north side of the street. Big, huge sticky buns/cinnamon buns and good breakfast. If you and your wife are over 62 then at the first national park, get a senior pass for \$10 and then all national parks are forever free. But not parking at Mt. Rushmore!!

Have a great time and there will be plenty of smaller parks, etc., to catch you on the way.

— Ivy Richmond, Baldwin

You asked for road trip suggestions in your September

column, and I have one. Since you said you are going to Mt. Rushmore and Yellowstone, might I suggest Devil's Tower National Monument, WY, which is between those other two? You might recall that it was featured in the movie "Close Encounters of the Third Kind." It's an amazing thing to see, and it's right on your way. Not too crowded, as well. You can even climb it if you're so inclined. No pun intended.

May I also tell you how much I enjoy your columns in *Country Lines*? It's the first place I turn to when I get the magazine. May you never fully retire and keep those monthly columns coming. You have a gift.

I am very much looking forward to your "Great American Road Trip" column.

— Tim Stockdale, Harbor Springs

Editor's Note: See page 30.

Just finished your great article in *Michigan Country Lines*. My wife and I were in Utah the latter part of April and we found that the Arches National Park just north of Moab, UT, is a "MUST SEE"—easy drive and beautiful scenery. Moab

is about a half-hour south of I-70. While in Moab there is a very nice place called "Peace Tree Juice Cafe" and is located at 20 S. Main St. Phone is (435) 259-0101. Good atmosphere and great wait-staff. Reminds me of some of the great eateries in Ann Arbor.

Either way, have a great trip and be safe!

— Bill & Mary Lampe, Morenci

Three years ago our family stayed with relatives in Santa Clara, CA. We rented a vehicle and drove to Yosemite. In brief, when you come out of the south end of Yosemite and plan to stay in Fresno, it is a way longer drive (due to the mountains—not flat, like Michigan!) than you ever anticipated—and there is no place for gas or food for a very long way! Let's just say mom, dad, and the three kids were all tired, hungry and crabby by the time we got to Fresno! Yosemite itself, AMAZING!

From Fresno, we made our way to Salinas—via King City—and we saw some amazing farming! You will have a new respect for every green pepper, celery stalk and bunch of broccoli in the future! You will see things in the distance that look like a bunch of squares and as it comes into view realize that it is large, square bales stacked longer than you can imagine. Not 40 calf huts like a dairy farmer in Michigan, but thousands! Or a feedlot that goes on for miles! You should really check out that area, as we found it very fascinating! (We are farmers in the E.U.P.!)

— Joanne Galloway

Thanks for the offer to "ride along" on your CA sojourn!! It was in 1948 that I made the trip with my parents. Looking at all those gadgets you're taking is like comparing our trip to going by covered

wagon. What a difference 63 years makes. I spent my army time at Fort Ord which is no longer an operating military base. It was a short ride to Monterey and Carmel, and I suggest both for "must" stops as you head down the coast. The other "must" should be the Giant Redwoods in Sequoia National Park.

Spent a lot of time on the beach at Carmel and remember a house to the south that looked like the bow of a boat jutting from the shore. Folks said it was a Frank Lloyd Wright design.

As with those gadgets you're taking.....lots of change!

— Tom Hanna

(former manager of Top O'Michigan, before it became Great Lakes Energy)

Your plans are mighty ambitious—and you left out the Grand Canyon! Unless you are a wine aficionado, I'd leave out the wine country and plan on the Grand Canyon. I've done versions of this trip about a dozen times in recent years, in a motorhome. I did, in fact, visit the Grand Canyon—for about the 12th time—five years ago, and hiked to Phantom Ranch on a three-day camping trip (at age 78). Southern Utah is the most beautiful part of the lower 48, and a "must see." But you have six national parks there to visit.

Oh, and I've done the bike thing—Seattle to Bar Harbor, ME—at age 60! Enjoy!

— Herbert Mayer, Rapid City

Hunting the Timberdoodle (woodcock)

Regarding your article about woodcocks (Don Ingle, Sept.), "The 'Quirky' Timberdoodle," the author (a hunter) states that hunting these inoffensive animals is not the main reason for the decline in their numbers. Even if that is true, why

MYSTERY PHOTO

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo below by **Dec. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from your electric cooperative.

Please note that we do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone!

Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com, or send by mail to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Road, Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the January 2012 issue.

The September contest winner is Marlene Purdy of Caledonia, who correctly identified "Devil's Kitchen" rock formation on the west side of Mackinac Island.



Sept. photo

Do you know where this is? ►



does he advocate the continuation of hunting them when he admits that their numbers are falling? Wouldn't it be wise scientific management to refrain from hunting them at all rather than just reducing the number killed? Does the author really care about protecting them or just keeping enough alive to keep hunting them the following year? Just asking.

P.S. How about publishing articles about the great outdoors written by an unbiased person?

— Susan DeGroff

Don Ingle responds: *Studies by the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, as well as state DNR studies using scientific sampling show that hunting has no overall effect on woodcock populations—they would be basically the same whether they were hunted or not.*

The major reason for the decline remains loss of habitat in the northern breeding range. Human land use practices, developmental removal of habitat, or failing to interrupt natural forest succession that overtakes the younger (shade) intolerant forest stages remain the major reasons for the woodcock's decline. Yet, when a clear-cut to maintain suitable habitat is performed, there are often more letters of complaint written than this writer's on woodcock hunting.

Managing suitable habitat is costly, and most monies available to agencies who perform this work is derived from hunters through license sales and taxes on their hunting gear. Without these funds, more than woodcock would be endangered since good woodcock habitat also serves many other species, including non-game that use the same stages of early forest succession.

Hunters pay to help preserve the habitats for many species of wildlife.

Eating Cheap

Nice job (Lisa Marie Metzler, "Eating on the Cheap"/Oct.) and thanks! I got some good ideas, especially the whole grains and bananas frozen together, and dicing fresh and freezing. I CRAVE fruit in the winter and it is so much more expensive and not always fresh.

— Sharon, Traverse City

Thank you so much for these quick, short and simple realistic tips. I feel nourished just reading about it! Looking forward to healthier shopping and more balanced, nutritional eating habits with my family this week, and more. Please keep the tips coming. I'll be looking for more articles from you!

— Tina Schaub, Traverse City

Great ideas...healthy eating has always been more expensive. I like the idea of shopping the outer aisle of the store. I take a lap around the store before I shop—its exercise and you can check out the sales.

— Laura, Traverse City

Correction (Sept. issue) — Cole Smith is the only soldier mentioned in the "Where Soldiers Come From" story not affected by TBI (traumatic brain injury), and film director Heather Courtney is not an NPR reporter, as noted from an online film review. Visit wheresoldierscomefrom.com to see updated viewing dates.

Could Fuel Cells Be The Future?

Most homes, vehicles and businesses are powered using electricity or a fossil fuel such as natural gas, gasoline, diesel, propane or fuel oil. Now, a new option is beginning to emerge: fuel cells.

Electric cooperatives have a long history of exploring the potential of fuel cell technology. Through the Arlington, VA-based Cooperative Research Network (CRN), co-ops have been investigating different types of fuel cells for more than a decade. While the technology is evolving, the cost is still hefty. Studies recently conducted by CRN at seven co-ops sites and military bases around the country found that while fuel cells (using polymer electrolyte membrane technology) designed for residential use do work, they carry a huge price tag—producing electricity for a whopping 85 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). Comparatively, the average price of electricity in the U.S. is 11.5 cents per kWh.

A fuel cell works like a battery that is constantly charged by putting a fuel into its negative terminal. It creates a chemical reaction, most often involving hydrogen forming with oxygen, but another common fuel is natural gas. One of the main byproducts of the chemical reaction is water, making the process generally pollution-free. Normally, fuel cells generate only a small amount of electricity and must be combined into larger stacks to produce enough power for homes, cars and workplaces.

Currently, five main types of fuel cells exist: polymer electrolyte membrane (PEM), alkaline, phosphoric acid, molten carbonate, and solid oxide. Each uses a different electrolyte and comes with advantages and disadvantages.

One solid oxide-based fuel cell, called the "Bloom Box," received a significant amount of media attention early in 2010. The device burst onto the scene with endorsements by luminaries like as Gen. Colin Powell, then-California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg. The product was even featured on "60 Minutes" and has been installed at major internet-based firms such as Google and eBay.

Analysis of the Bloom Box shows that those costs can be lowered—the unit can generate electricity for 8 cents to 10 cents per kWh, but only with hefty federal and state renewable energy subsidies tossed in. And, the Bloom Box can't maintain consistent output day-in and day-out for years like a typical baseload power plant. In fact, a 100-kilowatt solid oxide fuel cell like the Bloom Box, running on natural gas at a 48 percent efficiency rate, carries a unit price of about \$7,000 to \$8,000 per kilowatt—about the same as a nuclear power plant.

To be successful over the long term, fuel cell efficiency will need to increase from the 40 percent to 60 percent typically found. And given pressures on federal and state budgets, fuel cells will need to operate economically without relying on government incentives to stay competitive with more traditional generation sources.

Electric cooperatives continue to explore new and innovative options to reduce costs and provide reliable energy choices. If fuel cells come of age, co-ops will be at the forefront of educating members on the advantages and disadvantages of the technology.

— Brian Sloboda, Cooperative Research Network

Tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product. Email czuker@meca.coop or send to: Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to share why you like it, or a unique story to go with it.



Midwest in the Community

United Way Day of Action

The Midwest Energy and Midwest Propane teams recently adopted a project to build an 8 x 12-foot storage shed and complete the painting of raised flower boxes for Daybreak Adult Services as part of the 2011 Lenawee United Way Day of Action.

More than 300 people worked on 34 projects across Lenawee County as part of this organized community service event that kicked off the 2011 United Way campaign.

1) Employees Stacy Campbell, Greg Pickles and Kirk Sander kicked off efforts in the morning with some foundational work on the shed. **2)** Greg Karmol and Mark Kangas stepped in later for some finishing touches. **3)** Meanwhile, Cathy Teeter added fresh coats of paint to the raised flower boxes.



Three Board Seats Up for Election in 2012

One of the seven guiding principles of cooperatives is democratic member control. Individuals who get electric service from Midwest Energy Cooperative are more than customers; they are owners who have a voice and are encouraged to take an active role in the organization.

Midwest Energy is governed by a nine-member board of directors, which are elected to serve three-year terms. Each director is elected by and represents members living in his or her district. Board positions are important roles that are not taken lightly as they make critical decisions on behalf of their fellow member-owners.

Three seats on the board of directors will be up for election next year. Members interested in serving on the board should contact the cooperative to get a petition for nomination.



Ron Armstrong
District 3



Clarence Barth
District 4



Ken Swope
District 8

A member getting the signatures of 30 or more members on the petition will be placed on the ballot. To be placed on the ballot for one of the three terms ending in April 2012, a member must complete the petition and a biography and return them to the Cassopolis office by 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 3, 2012. Ballots will then be mailed to the district members on Jan. 25, 2012. All board members must reside in the district they represent.

Districts 3, 4 and 8 are those open for elec-

tion. District 3 is currently represented by Ron Armstrong of Lawton. The district includes Almena, Antwerp, Portage, Prairie Ronde, Oshtemo and Texas townships.

Clarence Barth of Three Rivers is the current director in District 4, which includes Brady, Fabius, Flowerfield, Leonidas, Lockport, Mendon, Newberg, Park, Schoolcraft and Wakeshma townships.

District 8 is represented by Ken Swope of Adrian. District 8 includes Adrian, Cambridge, Franklin, Raisin, Ridgeway, Rollin, Rome, Tecumseh and Woodstock townships, as well as northern portions of Blissfield, Deerfield, Dover, Hudson, Madison and Palmyra townships.

For more information about serving on the board of directors, please call the cooperative at 800-492-5989.

Is a Job With an Electric Co-op in Your Future?

It may be a biased opinion, but electric co-ops are great places to work for and with. And at a time when retirements are rising, it's a good time to talk about the advantages of working for them.

Co-ops exist to serve their members not only with safe, affordable and reliable electric power, but with community support and programs that help you save energy and money, and therefore make a difference in people's lives.

Even as nonprofit, consumer-owned businesses, co-ops generally offer competitive salaries and benefits in a time when many companies are scaling back. And, they offer a stable work environment by hiring within their communities and promoting within. Many employees start at a co-op and stay there throughout their careers.

While you may hear more about lineworkers, it takes many more employees and departments to run a co-op (see related story, "Careers on the LINE," p. 12). Staff members include everyone from accountants, technicians and engineers to public relations professionals who cultivate relationships with local, state and national opinion leaders and keep them updated on issues important to co-ops and the communities they serve.

And, if you've ever wondered how electric co-ops compare to other businesses in terms of employment, the latest statistics from the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) provide some insights.

The average electric co-op has 48 employees, with 17 serving as lineworkers, nine as administrative and clerical, six handling engineering and operations, and five employed as meter readers and/or equipment operators. A typical co-op also has two each of finance and accounting, member services and marketing, purchasing and inventory, and administration/

office services professionals—including human resources and district branch managers; and usually retain one communicator and one IT person.

Michigan has nine co-ops that distribute electricity to homes and businesses, one that generates and transmits electricity, and one power supply marketing cooperative. Additionally, the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), is a service organization that provides safety training, research, assistance and support on legislative issues affecting co-op members, and publishes *Country Lines* for the co-ops. Together, we employ a total of about 782 people, but provide electricity to the homes and businesses of more than 600,000 people in rural areas covering one-half of the state.

Nationally, over 55,000 individuals work at electric distribution co-ops, and that number swells to over 70,000 when you factor in the workforce at generation and transmission cooperatives, statewide associations like MECA, and service affiliates. There are over 900 consumer-owned, not-for-profit electric co-ops nationwide.

So, electric co-ops continue to shine as some of the best places to work in a community, and I strongly encourage young people to scout career opportunities within the co-op family. Working for electric co-ops is a pleasure, and they are looking out for you by recruiting the best and brightest employees to serve you.



- 1 Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association
- 2 Cherryland Electric Cooperative
- 3 Cloverland Electric Cooperative
- 4 Great Lakes Energy Cooperative
- 5 HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative
- 6 Midwest Energy Cooperative
- 7 Ontonagon Co. Rural Electrification Assn.
- 8 Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op
- 9 Thumb Electric Cooperative
- ★ Wolverine Power Cooperative
- ★ Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative
- ★ Michigan Electric Cooperative Association

Gail Knudtson is editor of Country Lines for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. Her email is gknudtson@meca.coop





Photo - Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore/National Park Service

When you see people on snowshoes this winter, their “webbies” may have been made by Iverson’s.

A Web-footed Walk Through Winter

Up North, where winters are long and snows get deep, some people develop “webbed feet.” “Webbed” as in webbing, the rawhide lacing on a pair of snowshoes.

This invention of woodland Indians made it possible to travel atop winter’s deep snow instead of floundering through it.

When early French fur traders, missionaries and couriers saw snowshoes, they realized their value in opening up northern forests for trapping, trading and establishing alliances with the tribes.

The British, snug in their coastal towns, tended to view snowshoes as amusing toys and hence, were late in establishing their own native alliances. Because of that, the French and their tribal allies almost won the French and Indian War. Had it not been for a final British victory near Quebec City, we might be speaking French today. A look at Michigan’s many French place names shows how close it came.

A snowshoe’s value is especially appreciated by those who work in winter woods—foresters, loggers, biologists, surveyors and others who must venture away from roads.

Others discovered the recreational use of snowshoes, from hunting to hiking. Upper Peninsula-made Iverson snowshoes have become the standard.

Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, Inc., acquired the company in 2008. The office is located on the site of his family’s sawmill in Shingleton (near Munising and Alger Delta Electric Co-op’s service area). With a staff of six to seven local workers, the company creates snowshoes from Michigan white ash, a hardwood that is bent by using steam and made into a variety of styles.

“We make nine styles of snowshoes, from the small bear paw style up to the long Alaskan (56-inches) and Tundra (72-inches),” Graves said. “The ‘Michigan’ snowshoe is the most popular.”

Once the snowshoe is shaped, it is laced with rawhide or materials such as neoprene or nylon (rawhide is the most preferred) and this webbing is the base support for staying on top of the snow. They also leave their telltale webbed tracks.

Iversons’ snowshoes are made to last. “That’s the trouble,” Graves laughs, “They just don’t wear out!” Still, the company turns out 2,000 new pairs annually.



Originally, the company was started by the late Clarence Iverson about 1954, when he began building snowshoes for state workers. Besides quality snowshoes, they also create fish nets and furniture from the same ash hardwood and rawhide lacing. Their cabin- or lodge-style furniture and wall hangings are very popular with those who enjoy the “Up North” theme for a vacation home or getaway cabin.

“Our snowshoes and cabin furniture are available by mail order—or direct sales at our Shingleton factory,” Graves adds. “Additionally, we have our products available at many sports shops, including PCS Sports. L.L. Bean will have Iverson snowshoes in their product offerings in their 2012 Centennial catalog.” Find more about the Iverson line and how they’re made at iversonsnowshoes.com (or 906-452-6370).

After acquiring snowshoes, you’ll have one French word to learn: “Mal d’raquette,” (“the ills of the racquet”), since a webbed snowshoe resembles a tennis racket. The “ills” are some inner thigh muscles that will let you know that, like any new exercise, there will be some soreness and twinges to overcome—best done by doing more snowshoeing.

Once you have snowshoes, where do you go to use them? Most anywhere there’s snow, but for beginners, it’s a good idea to use a developed path, and near to Iverson’s factory, at Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, National Park Service officer Gregg Bruff recommends several places to leave web-footed tracks.

“Right near the Munising office is Winterfest Trail, offering a half-mile walk,” Bruff suggests. “The visitor needs only follow the blue triangular markers to make the trek.”

“Experienced snowshoers wanting to add winter backpack camping to their snowshoe adventure will find trails to backcountry camping sites in the Chappel area, and Beaver Lake.”

Statewide, there are many state forest pathways that are suited to snowshoes. Other places to use them may be a local park, golf course, and any area with snow and no restrictions on access.

When you see people on snowshoes this winter, many of their “webbies” may bear the imprint of the Iverson Snowshoe Company. Iverson’s figured out early-on that if you are going to get a lot of snow, you might as well use it to have some fun. Little wonder folks have been making tracks to Iverson’s for over 50 years.



Top: Bob Graves, owner of Iversons Furniture and Snowshoes, says Michigan white ash, full grain rawhides, and pure copper hardware are behind the longevity of their products, which can get passed between generations. They handcraft 11 snowshoe models in different sizes, all of which are available in kits for do-it-yourselfers, and they will custom-build for any specialized use.

Below, from left: Iverson's employee Russ Smith works at making snowshoe bindings by hand. Julie Holmes laces a snowshoe with rawhide webbing, which is the base support for staying on top of the snow. Rocking chairs, swings, love seats and tables are some of the furniture crafted by the company, and they also offer some home decorations, such as clocks, wall hangings, magazine racks, and ornaments.



Photos - Shawn Malone/Lake Superior Photo

Careers on the LINE

Cooperatives offer exciting and stable job opportunities.

In a bright spot for the nation's economy, electric co-ops are recruiting and retaining talented people for jobs of all kinds.

Some of the hiring is in response to retirements—estimates show nearly 10 percent of lineworkers and 18 percent of engineers and operations staff will retire over the next five years, says Russell Turner, principal, human capital issues, for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA).

The Center for Energy Workforce Development (CEWD), a nonprofit Washington, D.C., group that studies labor shortages in the power industry, predicts that 46 percent of existing skilled technicians and 51 percent of engineers in the electric and natural gas utilities may need to be replaced by 2015 because of retirement or attrition.

Other electric co-op workforce sectors are also impacted by turnover. Indiana co-ops have discovered that 61 percent of their CEOs and nearly one-half of all those in administration, marketing and member relations leadership roles are eligible to retire over the next five to eight years.

The scenario is different in Michigan, which has great demographics and a younger-than-normal workforce, Turner says. Only 14.3 percent of Michigan electric co-op CEOs are eligible for retirement in the next five years, and of the overall 784 employees for which data is available, only 75 (9.6 percent) are eligible in five years. The largest categories eligible over the same period are equipment operators (17.2 percent) and engineering (14.8 percent) employees.

It Takes a Village

While lineworkers are generally the most visible employees, it takes many more to effectively run a co-op. Distribution co-ops—those that directly serve you—employ over 55,000 people. If you include power supply co-ops and various support groups, like the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), electric co-ops have over 70,000 folks on their payrolls.

Electric co-ops employ a median of 48 workers, NRECA notes, with lineworkers as the largest single group (17, on average), followed by administrative and clerical, and engineering and operations. The typical co-op also has one IT professional and one communicator.

Co-ops also need accountants, clerks, communications and marketing professionals, member and energy services employees to handle co-op member needs and concerns, and staking technicians and engineers to plot where new lines will be built. Purchasing workers track equipment inventory to keep the lights on, and negotiate contracts, and information technology (IT) professionals keep telecommunications and computer networks running smoothly.



Missy Robson (R) advises a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op member on how to save energy and money.

Women in a Male Workforce

Before becoming a customer service supervisor at HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative in Portland, Missy Robson served 10 years as a key accounts manager and was one of a handful of Michigan women trained to do energy audits. In this male-dominated field, she felt the need to be more prepared than most coming into the job.

"At the time, my first order of business was cultivating relationships," Robson recalls. "When I pulled up to the home to do the job, and they saw me—a little 5-foot-2 blond—getting out of the car, I knew some guys were gonna go, 'What the heck?!' But I took pride that I could alleviate their concerns right away."

Nationally, about 10 percent of electric co-op CEOs and energy auditors are female, but less than 1 percent of lineworkers are. "I wish I would see more women in this type of position," she adds. "I encourage them to think about it because it's a challenging job, but it's also very rewarding when you have succeeded in helping members with energy-saving techniques."

Great Lakes Energy is another Michigan co-op with females in traditionally male jobs, including two member field reps (perform meter exchanges and service disconnects), one field design tech, an AMI (automated metering infrastructure) manager, an engineering analyst, and one electrical technician.

The Future of Electric Co-ops

According to CEWD, electric co-ops fare better than other types of electric utilities when it comes to an aging workforce. Roughly 36 percent of nonprofit, consumer-owned electric co-op lineworkers are under age 37, versus just 30 percent for profit-driven investor-owned utilities (IOUs).

Still, co-ops are investing in their future workforce. Many partner with community colleges to create special lineworker training programs. Alpena Community College, for one, offers several scholarships for their lineworker training program sponsored by co-ops including Great Lakes Energy, Homeworks Tri-County Electric, Thumb Electric, and MECA. Local co-ops also assist by donating supplies and materials to ACC for use in training students.

Alpena began offering line-worker training in 1990 at the request of local utility companies and co-ops. Students get climbing training, learn electrical theory, safety, construction techniques and rigging, and can get their Michigan commercial driver's license in a one-year program. Another option is a two-year associate's degree, including general education and advanced electrical classes such as poly-phase metering and fiber optics.

Why Work at a Co-op?

"Electric co-ops continue to be some of the best places to work," Turner stresses. "Salaries and benefits remain competitive in a time when other firms are scaling back. We're very good corporate citizens."

To learn about job openings, visit your local co-op's website, or search TouchstoneEnergy.jobs for national opportunities.

Love Those Trains!

This long-time American hobby is still enjoyed by many. **Nick Edson**

Ray Graham walks the walk. Actually, he rides the ride. The 72-year-old retired Elk Rapids teacher and coach is one of thousands of Michigan residents whose hobby is model railroads.

Graham, who also has a builder's background, has a locomotive for a mailbox. He and his wife Peggy take vacations across the country on Amtrak trains.

"I just enjoy trains immensely," he explains. "I have since I grew up in Saginaw in the early 1950s. I had a couple of friends who had model train layouts on 4-foot by 8-foot sheets of plywood. I was fascinated by them."

But raising a family, teaching and coaching during the school year, and building houses in the summer used up all of Graham's time. When he retired in 1993, he had time to step back and reflect on what hobbies he would pursue.

The choice was easy.

"I was watching QVC one day and they had an inexpensive model railroad set for about \$100," he adds. "The cars were made of plastic and the engine of metal."

Once they arrived at his house, the torch was lit. The first track he built was a 5 x 9 sheet of plywood in a downstairs room.

"Since then, I've knocked out the wall to the adjoining room downstairs and expanded into two rooms," he says. "The layout features all four seasons of the year, with over 1,000 feet of track, 40 locomotives and eight sets of controls. I have diesel locomotives and steam locomotives. It's quite a setup."

And a labor of love for Graham, who enjoys the full scope of his model railroad hobby—planning the layout, working on the track, doing the wiring, painting the scenery, and building the life-like details, such as trees, buildings and even hot air balloons.



Above: Model train buff Ray Graham has been "workin' on the railroad" since buying his first set in 1999. He and his wife regularly host school kids to see the three-season display, which fans the whole lower level of their home. The trains go through mountain tunnels, up into Canada's snow-covered terrain, to the Soo Locks (with an awesome freighter replica), and city stations nationwide. Chicago has a lighted underground passenger station. **Left:** A beautiful Hiawatha locomotive with orange trim pulls several passenger cars through a wooded area.

Photos: Tom Vranich

Then there's the choice of trains—from longtime favorite Lionel® to the first line of model trains—Märklin™, which was launched in 1891 in Germany. Märklin introduced locomotives, tracks and accessories to match. Once the model train industry took off, it went worldwide. By the early 1900s, kids in the U.S. were waking up to new train sets on Christmas morning.

And when those kids grew into adulthood, they didn't forget their early trains. Soon, those adults helped turn model railroading into a lifelong hobby.

A turning point in the model railroad hobby was World War II. Of the leading toy train players, only the U.S. avoided major physical damage in the war and its economy was in good shape, too. So, not surprisingly, the U.S. went forward with model train production much sooner than Europe.

Model railroading blossomed in the U.S. Toy trains were a major item during the 1950s, when Graham was growing up in Saginaw. In the 1960s, their popularity declined and manufacturers struggled to survive.

The survivors adopted various strategies, but agreed on two main themes: 1) that a key

part of the market was adults, and 2) that the cost of production had to be addressed.

Manufacturers responded with larger-scale trains of different gauges. They marketed the enjoyment of home-based model railroading which sped across the U.S. and Europe. Today in Michigan, there are dozens of model railroad clubs that meet regularly.

"Model railroading can be enjoyed by everyone—from 4-year-olds to 84-year-olds," Graham says. "My biggest enjoyment is having school groups over to my house. I enjoy watching the faces of the kids light up when they watch the model railroad in action."

Graham estimates he spends eight to 10 hours a week on his hobby in the winter, and less during the summer.

"We've taken some great vacations all across the country by Amtrak train," he adds. "It's a beautiful way to see our country."

And when they return home from vacation, he gets back to his model railroading hobby.

"I don't know how much extra electricity I use," he says. "But I know it doesn't cost very much. I just enjoy this so much as a hobby because the model trains are so realistic. It's unbelievable."



Make Your Own Holiday Centerpiece

With the rutabagas and onions safely stored under the house, and several jars of tomatoes in the pantry, my thoughts naturally turn to doing something related to plants. The best activity I can think of after the gardening season is over is to start working on holiday centerpieces. My heated greenhouse works well for this because the mess is contained, and I can still feel close to my gardening.

Holiday centerpieces are easy to make, provide a fresh aroma of cedar and pine around a holiday table, and they also make great gifts. Every centerpiece I've ever given away garnered some "oohs" and "aahs" and appreciation from the recipient. Below is a list of what you'll need to get started.

The evergreen pieces can be obtained by selectively pruning cedar and pine trees in your yard, or you can sometimes catch a neighbor doing hedge work and get the greenery you need that way.

Cedar is the best choice for centerpieces, but of course this is also

a personal choice. Cedar works well because there are no messy needles and they stay fresh longer indoors. Balsam is a good second choice, as it's easy to work with and will fill in a centerpiece rather quickly. A mix of green foliage (white pine, balsam and cedar) also makes an attractive centerpiece and is probably best for a special occasion where it won't be staying inside for an extended period of time.

The foliage will stay fresh indefinitely in a cold garage or outdoors. Decorative shrubs, such as arborvitae, don't take too kindly to a late fall pruning, so you may wish to get your greenery from a cedar tree or other plant from the wild, if you have access.

Cones, of course, can be collected from the trees or purchased with the other supplies at a craft store.

A nice selection of bowls and containers (often with the foam inside) can also be purchased at a large department store or florist shop.

Enjoy your centerpiece!

Steps to making a centerpiece:

- Clip pieces of greenery to about 6 or 7 inches in length.
- Take the foam oasis (dry at this point) and insert it into the bowl. You will probably have to cut the foam to fit into the bowl (giving you one extra piece for your next centerpiece).
- Carefully work a taper or other thin candle about 2.5 inches into the center of the dry oasis. Pull the candle back out and insert a little glob of the hot glue into the hole and push the candle immediately back into the warm glue. (Be careful not to let your skin touch the hot tip of the glue gun.)
- Begin inserting the short branches of greenery into the oasis, starting carefully from the bottom to avoid splitting the foam.
- Insert the branches all around the oasis until it looks pretty full.
- Begin your next row of greenery, pretty much covering the lower branches.
- Continue with the previous step until you've got a full-looking centerpiece.
- Take short pieces of greenery and insert into the top until the foam is completely covered.
- With the hot glue gun in one hand and a cone in the other, put a dab of glue on each cone, then simply press it into the foliage. Use as many cones as you want, but four groups of three pine cones works well.
- Put a dab of glue on the tips of the berry stems and insert them in between the cones.
- Use the craft snow any way you want to mimic snow on the cones or foliage.



What you need to make your centerpiece:

- Fresh cedar, pine, spruce or balsam fir
- A florist bowl
- Floral foam oasis
- Sharp scissors
- Glue gun and glue sticks
- A candle of your choice (a taper or candle no more than 2 inches in diameter works best)
- 12 red pine cones (white spruce also works)
- Artificial red berries (or sprigs of holly and berries)
- "Snow in a can" craft spray



Losing Your Cool?

Families can learn positive ways to deal with anger.

One of the surprises we parents and grandparents face is a child's startling capacity to irritate us. Who would expect someone so precious and beloved to evoke feelings of frustration, anger, and—in some cases—rage?

Even the most patient parents confess to sometimes losing their tempers and yelling at their children. One study published in *The Journal of Marriage and Family* found that 88 percent of nearly 1,000 families interviewed admitted to shouting, yelling or screaming at their children in the previous year. This is bad news, considering another study showed that constant yelling and other forms of emotional abuse was a more significant predictor of mental illness than sexual or physical abuse.

On the flip side, from the very start children also seem prone to frustration and anger. That's not so surprising when you consider that anger, by at least one definition, is distress brought about by feelings of helplessness or powerlessness.

Anger doesn't have to be destructive. It's an emotion we all have, and for good reason. Anger helps us defend ourselves and our loved ones, and it can motivate positive change. Anger becomes a negative force only when we use it to hurt ourselves or another person. And unresolved anger can lead to resentment and bitterness that damages relationships, health and future success and happiness.

Parents play a key role in helping children

learn to manage powerful emotions, such as anger. Instead of placating, ignoring, or punishing angry outbursts, experts at EffectiveParenting.org encourage families to have a plan to deal with anger.

Family Plan for Managing Anger

Understand the purpose of anger. Teach children that anger is good for identifying problems, but not good for solving them. It's a natural emotion that reveals that something is wrong. It might be something inside us, such as an unrealistic expectation or demand. Or it might be something outside of us, but we need help addressing it in a positive way.

Identify early warning signs of anger. Children (and even some adults) act out before they realize they are angry. Identifying early warning signs helps children become more aware of their feelings and helps them gain control over their responses. Learn to recognize the cues that signal frustration and anger: Body tension, clenched teeth, unkind words or tone of voice, pouting, eye rolling, and more. Once you know signs, help your child notice them also. They can't learn to manage anger if they can't recognize or name it.

Step back. Teach your child to take a break from a difficult situation, and get alone to rethink, calm down, and figure out what to do next. The size of the break depends on the intensity of the emotion. Frustration might take only a deep breath. A child who is enraged probably needs to leave the room to settle down.

Choose a better response. Too many adults make the mistake of pointing out what's wrong about our children's anger without suggesting healthy alternatives. There are three positive choices: talk about it, ask for help, or slow down and persevere. Take time to teach your children these skills and practice them.

Never try to reason with a child who is enraged. When children can no longer think rationally, their anger is now controlling them. The child who is enraged has lost control. Whether it's a two-year-old temper tantrum or a 14-year-old ranting and raving, don't get sucked into dialog. It only escalates the problem. Talking



Photo - © iStockphoto.com/Mark Bowden

about it is important, but wait until after the child has settled down.

Be proactive. Model, discuss, read and teach your children about anger. Children learn by watching the adults around them, so it is important for parents to learn to control their own anger. Plus, according to the experts at Act Against Violence, children need to hear some basic messages as they grow up:

- It's okay to be angry.
- There are "okay" ways and "not okay" ways to show your anger.
- It's not okay to hurt people or pets or to break things when you are angry.
- It's okay to tell someone that you are angry.
- There are ways to calm yourself when you are angry.

Get help when anger seems to be out of control. Sometimes a third party can suggest ways your family can deal with anger in a more helpful way. Plus, children can begin to develop bitterness and resentment in their lives and may need professional help to deal with it. Children do not grow out of bitterness, they grow into it.

RETHINK

when you're angry:

- R**ecognize what makes you angry.
- E**mpathize with the other person's feelings.
- T**hink of positive things about the situation.
- H**ear what the other person is saying to you.
- I**nclude "I" messages to tell how you feel.
- N**otice what happens to your body.
- K**eep your attention on the present situation.

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



Teachers Find Recycling Fun

Three Mackinac Island teachers are making recycling fun, profitable and fashionable by making mittens from wool sweaters.

Their Mackinac Mittens business started by accident in 2009, when Karen Allen, Laura Eiseler and Liz Burt saw a lady wearing a pair of mismatched mittens and loved them so much they all wanted a pair.

Liz, being the crafty one, said, “We can make those!” Luckily, Karen had all her daughter’s old clothes in the attic, Laura had fleece pajamas destined for Goodwill, and Liz inherited her grandmother’s button box.

After “felting” the sweaters (shrinking to bind the wool more tightly) they borrowed a pattern book and held a mitten-making party.

“There were eight of us that evening, and we all went home with a new pair of mittens,” Liz recalls. “They looked awful—like great big oven mitts, and the three of us agreed we could do better.” So, Liz altered the pattern over and over until they had their own.

After a second attempt, they were thrilled. “We all went home sporting our new ‘Mackinac Mittens,’ she says.

That’s when the “orders” also started coming in...every few days one of the women was

asked at the Post Office or bank, “Do you think you could make a pair for my grandmother?”

Next, an Island shop-owner offered to sell them in his store. “We were really surprised and flattered—we just wanted cute mittens, and here a store owner wanted to sell them!” Liz says. The owner asked for 60 pairs, but soon needed more, and another shop was interested, so it was hard for the women to keep up. They have since sold over 1,500 pairs and added hats, scarves and pins.

They also get wool from thrift shops, eBay, and friends in other cities, and labored last winter to build a supply of their creations.

“Mackinac Mittens is exactly what our logo says,” Liz adds: “3 Island teachers + 1 long, cold winter = Mackinac Mittens.”

They would love to make purses too, but time is scarce, as each mitten is made on the Island by Karen, Laura or Liz. “Making a pair of mittens is like solving a giant puzzle,” Liz



Photo - Diana Dupre

Karen Allen, Laura Eiseler and Liz Burt show their one-of-a-kind mittens. Mackinac Island is serviced by Cloverland Electric Co-op, and you can find the mittens at The Jaunting Cart and Little Luxuries of Mackinac; The Mole Hole in Sault Ste. Marie (800-709-1679); Grosse Ile Historical Society Holiday Gift Boutique (info@gihistory.org or 734-675-1250); or at mackinacmittens.com. Island shops are open mid-May through October, but some have other weekend and holiday dates.

says. “It’s all about finding sweaters that ‘go’ together.” Plus, each mitten takes between 1½ and 2½ hours to make, is machine-sewn to a fleece lining, and then hand-finished.

The result is a nice, thick fabric that is warm enough to get through even a Mackinac Island winter.

Rockhounds Make ‘Michigan Gemstone’ Jewelry

Don Reed is a lifelong rockhound who gladly admits his collection is becoming “out of hand.” With his wife Bonnie, he acquires stones worldwide by digging, bartering, buying old collections, and going to rock shows.

Using his collected pieces and skills honed by studying gem-cutting, silversmithing and wire wrapping, he creates jewelry from non-traditional gemstones. Many are from Michigan, like the Lake Superior agate, and Petoskey stones (state stone) found on the Keweenaw Peninsula. “We find most of our Petoskey stones in private gravel pits, dirt roads (in washouts), road cuts, or old rock piles,” Bonnie shares.

From a rough rock, Don cuts and forms a slab into an appealing shape with diamond saws, grinders and polishers. “It is an exciting and time-consuming process to go from finding the stone to cutting it, then wire-wrapping and/or beading it,” she says.

“...I can look at a stone, sometimes when



Photo - Boldt Photography

it is still a rock, and visualize how it should be cut and what it will look like when it is done,” Don adds. He matches and wraps the stone with fine wire, and may add precious gemstones. He also makes custom jewelry for people who find their own stones.

The Reeds, Great Lakes Energy Co-op members from South Boardman, also enjoy combining their work—she makes beaded



Top: A Lake Superior tube agate crafted into a pendant. **Bottom:** A set made from turquoise and Petoskey stones.



necklaces, earrings to match his pieces, and manages their business, Snob Appeal Jewelry.

For folks interested in rockhounding, Don says, “First, look down once in a while!” since

many are found in unexpected places; “pick up what you think is pretty”; and “join a rock club.” He also hosts a rockhound blog.

Find a blog link and more of their artistry at snobappealjewelry.com (231-369-2294), art shows, Copper World in Calumet, and Nature Connection in Elk Rapids.

See page 6 to tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product.





Lamb & Veal Recipes

If you've never cooked lamb before, chops may be the place to start. Properly grilled, they will melt in your mouth. And, you'll find veal is compatible with a variety of seasonings. Or try any of these wonderful recipes from our readers, just in time for the holidays. Always find hundreds of recipes at countrylines.com.

Veal With Wine & Herbs

1½ lbs. veal cutlets
2 T. flour
¾ t. garlic salt or powder
¼ t. basil
3 T. oil

¾ c. rosé wine
⅓ c. sour cream
⅓ c. grated parmesan cheese
 Bone cutlets and cut into serving-size pieces. Coat them with a mixture of flour, garlic salt and basil. Brown on both sides in oil; add wine. Cover and cook on low 40 minutes, or until tender. Mix sour cream and cheese; spoon onto meat. Cook 5 to 10 minutes more. Remove meat to platter. Stir pan juices to blend, pour over meat. Makes 4 to 6 servings.

Emmajean Bowerman, Lake Isabella

Lamb Shanks

2 lbs. lamb shanks
1 c. orange juice
2 medium onions, sliced
2 large Anaheim peppers, sliced
1 clove garlic, minced
½ t. nutmeg
salt and pepper to taste

Brown lamb shanks in olive oil over medium-high heat. Add onions, garlic, nutmeg, salt

and pepper, if desired; cover and simmer for about 2 hours. Add peppers and cook an additional 15 minutes. Green beans or snow peas may be substituted for peppers.

Edith Warling Heezen, Fowler

Butterflied Leg of Lamb

1 6-7-lb. leg of lamb, butterflied
1 c. dry red wine
¾ c. beef broth
3 T. orange marmalade
2 T. red wine vinegar
1 T. minced dried onion
1 T. dried marjoram
1 T. dried rosemary
1 large bay leaf, crumbled
1 t. seasoned salt
¼ t. powdered ginger
1 clove garlic, crushed

Place lamb in a shallow roasting pan, fat-side down. Combine remaining ingredients in a 2-quart saucepan and simmer uncovered 20 minutes. Pour the hot mixture over the lamb and marinate at room temperature for 6 to 8 hours, turning frequently.

Barbeque method: Place meat over medium-hot coals fat-side up for 30 to 45 minutes, turning several times and being careful not to pierce meat. Periodically brush with marinade while cooking.

Oven method: Preheat oven to 425°. Place meat, fat-side up, under broiler approximately 4 inches from heat. Broil 10 minutes per side. Transfer meat to preheated oven for 15 minutes.

Carve meat on a slight diagonal in fairly thin slices. Serve with wild rice mix.

Cleo Elve, Montague

Lamb Pizza

1 pkg. crescent rolls
1 lb. ground lamb
¼ t. garlic powder
1 8-oz. pkg. cream cheese
½ c. mayonnaise
¼ c. margarine
1⅓ pkg. dry Hidden Valley Ranch® dressing mix
4 ozs. shredded cheese, your choice
assorted fresh vegetables, chopped or sliced,
(i.e., carrots, green onions, broccoli,
cauliflower)

Lightly grease a pizza or jelly roll pan. Unroll crescent rolls and press to cover pan, forming a slight ridge around edges. Prick with a fork (to prevent bubbling up). Bake as directed, until slightly browned. Meanwhile, brown the ground lamb with garlic powder until done. Drain and cool. Cream the cream cheese and mayonnaise until smooth; add dry dressing mix. Mix well. Add cooled ground lamb and mix well. Spread over crust; top with vegetables and then shredded cheese. Cover and refrigerate until set. Cut into squares or slices and serve.

Debbie Vineyard, Morley, GLE

Lamb & Eggplant Casserole

1 large eggplant, about 1½ lbs.
¼ c. olive oil
½ c. coarsely chopped onion
1 t. finely minced garlic
1½ lbs. ground lamb
½-1 t. cinnamon
1 bay leaf
1 dried hot red pepper, crumbled
4 c. canned tomatoes with tomato paste
(28-oz. can)
salt and pepper
1 c. fine, soft bread crumbs
½ c. grated Parmesan or Gruyere cheese

➤ **Send in your recipes!** If published, you'll receive a kitchen gadget. Send in: **UNDER \$10 MEALS recipes by Nov. 10** and **SLOW COOKER recipes by Dec. 10**. Mail to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

If eggplant is not young and tender, peel it; otherwise, leave skin intact and just trim ends. Cut eggplant lengthwise into 1-inch thick slices. Cut slices into strips 1-inch wide. Cut strips into 1-inch cubes. You should have about 6 cups. Heat oil in a flame-proof casserole; add onion and garlic. Cook, stirring constantly until onion is wilted. Add lamb, breaking up any lumps. Stir in eggplant; cook, stirring often for about 5 minutes. Stir in cinnamon, bay leaf, hot pepper, tomatoes, salt and pepper; cook, stirring occasionally about 5 minutes. Transfer mixture to a casserole or baking dish. Combine bread crumbs and cheese; sprinkle over casserole. Bake at 425° for 15 minutes.

Douglas Cameron, Spruce

Chop Suey

1 lb. veal, cubed
1½ lbs. pork, cubed
2-3 T. oil
3 medium onions, sliced
4 stalks celery, chunked
1 15-oz. can bean sprouts, drained
1 8-oz. can sliced mushrooms, or use fresh
1/4-1/2 jar brown gravy sauce or bead molasses
1/2 c. water or beef broth
Brown meat in oil; gradually add brown

sauce/molasses and simmer 20 minutes. Add water or broth and bring back to a simmer; add onions and celery and cook 15 minutes; add bean sprouts and mushrooms. Cook until vegetables are tender. Serve over cooked rice or noodles.

Carole Sutton, Stockbridge

Drunken Lamb Shanks

8 lamb shanks
1 c. strong coffee
1 c. bourbon
1 envelope dry onion soup mix
1 large cooking bag
Place all ingredients in the cooking bag in a shallow baking dish. Punch holes on top of bag. Cook at 225° for 4 hours. Remove and enjoy.

Beverly Crosthwaite, Southfield

Veal Marsala

1 lb. veal, sliced thin for scallopini
1/4 c. all-purpose flour
1/2 t. seasoned salt
1/2 c. butter
2 T. olive oil
3/4-1 lb. fresh mushrooms, quartered or sliced
1/3 c. marsala wine
In a shallow dish, combine the flour and

seasoned salt. Dredge veal slices in mixture and let rest 15 minutes on a wire rack. In a large skillet over medium-high heat, melt butter with olive oil. Cook veal on both sides until light, golden brown. Add mushrooms; cover and reduce heat to low and cook 10 minutes. Pour in wine and simmer 5 minutes more until veal is tender and sauce is hot. Serve immediately.

Sheila Ashcroft, Millersburg

Three-Meat Meatloaf

1 lb. ground beef
1/2 lb. ground veal
1/2 lb. sausage
1 c. cracker crumbs
1 onion, chopped
2 eggs, beaten
1 t. salt
1/2 t. pepper
Topping:
1/2 c. ketchup
1 t. dry mustard
2/3 c. brown sugar
1/2 t. nutmeg
Combine all meatloaf ingredients and shape into loaf; place in shallow baking pan. Combine topping ingredients and spread over top of loaf. Bake at 350° for 1 hour.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

Healthy Holiday Eating

By Jennifer Nelson, M.S., R.D. and Katherine Zeratsky, R.D.

Are dreams of sugarplums dancing in your head? What about other decadent holiday favorites? You know the ones that are loaded with sugar, salt and fat—cheese platters, bacon-wrapped appetizers, creamy eggnogs, spiked punches, cookies and rich desserts.

It can be a challenging time of year to make healthy choices. But healthy holiday eating is possible. Here are some tips for making favorite recipes healthier:

▶ **Cut the sweetness.** When making pumpkin pie or eggnog, reduce the amount of sugar by half and enhance “sweetness” by adding a bit more vanilla, nutmeg or cinnamon. If recipes call for sugary toppings like frosting, jams and syrup, use fresh fruit instead.

▶ **Shake the salt out.** You can reduce salt by half in most recipes, too. Also go easy on salty condiments, such as pickles, catsup, mustard and soy sauce. Instead offer cucumber slices and fresh tomato or fruit salsas. Or, try lower-sodium versions of mustard and soy sauce. In recipes, substitute fresh herbs and flavored vinegars for salt.

▶ **Trim the fat.** In baked goods you can cut the fat by about half and replace it with unsweetened applesauce, prune puree or mashed banana. Instead of full-fat condensed milk, use condensed skim in pumpkin pie and eggnog. For gravy, heat fat-free, low-sodium broth (or drippings with the fat removed); mix flour into cold skim milk and pour slowly into broth, stir until thickened and season to your liking.

Do you have suggestions for healthy hors d'oeuvres, sides and entrees? Share your ideas with friends and family.

Copyright: 2011 Mayo Foundation for Medical Education and Research. All rights reserved.

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2011–2012 Season

Be Winter Wise

The Michigan Public Service Commission and the state's regulated gas and electric companies, including rural electric co-ops, are encouraging senior citizens, low income, and unemployed utility customers to **"Be Winter Wise"** if faced with high bills they cannot pay this winter. "Winter Wise" customers will be protected against loss of their utility service. Following are the provisions of home weatherization and house heating assistance programs, and special provisions for customers with medical emergencies.

Program: Winter Protection Plan

Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2011–2012

# in Household	150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income
1	\$16,335
2	22,065
3	27,795
4	33,525
5	39,255
6	44,985
7	50,715
8	56,445

Add \$5,730 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants in the plan must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

The **Winter Protection Plan** protects eligible senior and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–Mar. 31). You may enroll between Nov. 1 and March 31. If you are an eligible low-income customer, your utility service will remain on from Nov. 1 through Mar. 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, **and**
- make equal monthly payments of 1/12 of any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (Mar. 31), from April 1 through Oct. 31, you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill. **Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months.** You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- you are age 65 or older,
- you receive Department of Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- you receive Food Stamps,
- you receive Medicaid, or
- your household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart (see chart at left).

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the Winter Protection Plan are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut-off between Nov. 1 and March 31. However, seniors are encouraged to pay whatever they can during the winter so they will not have large, unmanageable bills when the protection ends.

Program: Home Heating Credit

Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
1	\$11,986	4	24,587
2	16,186	5	28,815
3	20,387	6	33,014

Add \$4,200 for each additional member.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the 2011 tax year if you:

- meet the income guidelines listed at left,
- you own or rent the home in Michigan where you maintain a permanent residence, or
- you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided, or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (800-367-6263, or michigan.gov/treasury). The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **before Sept. 30, 2012**.

Program: Earned Income Credit

Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept.,
Internal Revenue Service
Michigan Dept. of Treasury

The **Earned Income Credit (EIC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EIC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EIC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year 2011 equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. See the 2011 MI tax booklet for additional information.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program

Contact: Local Michigan Department of
Human Services (DHS)

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): You do not have to be a client of the DHS to apply. This program is available year-round, subject to the availability of funds, to assist low-income households that have a heat or electric shut-off notice or a need for deliverable fuel. However, if you receive a DHS cash grant, you may vendor part of that grant towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 800-292-5650.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization

Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (see income guidelines above) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulating. Contact your local Community Action Agency for more information.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection

Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for more information.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty

Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You will still be required to pay, but your utility company will help you set up a payment plan. Contact your utility service provider.

U.S. GOV'T GOLD

U.S. GOLD COINS AUTHORIZED FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The U.S. Money Reserve Vault Facility today announces the final release of U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins previously held in The West Point Depository/U.S. Mint. For a limited time, U.S. citizens will have the opportunity to purchase these \$5 Gov't Issued Gold Coins for the incredible "at-cost" price of only \$201.19 per coin. An amazing price because these U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins are completely free of dealer markup. That's correct, our cost. This may be your final opportunity to buy U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins "at-cost." The Gold market, which recently skyrocketed past \$1,900/oz., is predicted by experts to have the explosive upside potential of reaching up to \$5,000/oz. in the future. Please be advised: our U.S. Gov't Gold inventory will be priced at \$201.19 per coin for 30 days only. These coins may sell-out. Call Today! The U.S. Money Reserve will release these U.S. Gov't Issued Gold Coins "at-cost" on a first-come, first-serve basis. Orders that are not immediately received or reserved with the order center could be subject to cancellation and your checks returned uncashed. Good luck. We hope that everyone will have a chance to purchase this special U.S. Gov't Issued Gold "at-cost." Order immediately before our vault sells out completely! Special arrangements can be made for Gold purchases over \$50,000.



U.S. Gov't Issued American Eagle Gold Coins

Coins enlarged to show detail.



AUTHORIZED BY CONGRESS: PUBLIC LAW 99-185

By Executive Order of Congress Public Law 99-185, Americans can now buy new Government Issued Gold. Congressionally authorized United States Gold Coins provide American citizens with a way to add physical Gold to their portfolios. Gold American Eagles are made from solid Gold mined here in America, minted at the U.S. Mint at West Point, and produced with a U.S. Dollar denomination... making them Legal Tender United States Gold Coins. They are highly liquid, easily transportable, and, unlike paper assets, American Gold Eagles have a tangible

value you can feel each time you hold your own Gold. Though no one, including the U.S. Money Reserve, can guarantee a Gold Coin's future value will go up or down, numerous experts are predicting Gold to reach \$5,000/oz. Now is the time to consider converting part of your paper assets into Gold. The U.S. Money Reserve has a limited supply and urges you to make your vault reservations immediately. Call a Sr. Gold Specialist at 1-877-730-0321 to start your Gold collection and begin protecting your wealth today. If you've been waiting to move your money into Gold, the time is now.



DO NOT DELAY - LIMITED SUPPLIES AVAILABLE!

GOV'T ISSUED GOLD COIN

ONLY **\$201¹⁹** EACH

TELEPHONE ORDERS WILL BE ACCEPTED ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVE BASIS ACCORDING TO TIME AND DATE OF ORDER.

DISTRIBUTOR OF GOVERNMENT GOLD. NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE U.S. GOVERNMENT. DUE TO MARKET FLUCTUATIONS, AT-COST PRICES ARE VALID FOR A MAXIMUM OF 30 DAYS FROM AD PUBLICATION DATE.

SHIPPING & INSURANCE \$31.00 - \$36.00

VAULT CODE: MCL2-20119

Call Toll Free 7 Days a Week:

1-877-730-0321

MASTERCARD • VISA • AMEX • DISCOVER • CHECK

SPECIAL AT-COST OFFER IS STRICTLY LIMITED TO ONLY ONE LIFE-TIME PURCHASE OF 10 AT-COST COINS (REGARDLESS OF PRICE PAID) PER HOUSEHOLD, PLUS SHIPPING AND INSURANCE OF UP TO \$36.

**U.S. MONEY
RESERVE**

Distributor of Government Issued Gold. Not Affiliated With the U.S. Government.



Source: Touchstone Energy

How Low Can You Go?

Setting your thermostat back in the winter can save energy and money, but the key is finding the temperature at which you and your family are comfortable. And, selecting the proper temperatures throughout the day and night can be a bit confusing. You want to balance comfort with energy—and dollar—savings. It is surprising how comfortable you can be at a lower indoor temperature once you become accustomed to it. Thereafter, you find yourself uncomfortable at higher indoor temperatures that used to seem normal.

It actually does save energy overall if you lower the temperature setting on your central furnace or heat pump thermostat. The actual amount of dollar savings depend primarily upon how low you set the thermostat, how long you have it set back, and, to a lesser degree, your climate.

There are also other advantages to lowering the thermostat setting during winter. If your house temperature is lower, it requires less moisture indoors to keep the air at a given relative humidity level. The fact that your furnace or heat pump runs less at a lower indoor temperature means the equipment will last longer and need fewer repairs.

If you look at setback savings charts, don't be confused by the fact that the percentage savings are actually higher in milder climates than in colder climates. This is because the total amount of energy used to keep a house comfortably warm in a cold climate is much greater than in warm climates. This makes the base number larger in cold climates, so the percentage savings are less even though

the dollar savings are greater.

It is a common myth that it takes as much energy to reheat a house, in the morning for example, as was saved during the temperature setback period overnight. The amount of heat a house loses through its walls, ceilings and floors is directly proportional to the difference between the indoor and the outdoor temperatures. Air leakage into and out of your house also increases with larger temperature differences.

When the indoor temperature is set lower, the indoor-to-outdoor temperature difference is smaller, so less heat is lost from your house. During the summer, the same is true in reverse. If less heat is lost from your house, your furnace has to use less gas, oil or electricity to create the heat to replace it. The amount of heat used to reheat the house, therefore, is less than the amount saved over the temperature setback period.

The only time a temperature setback may not be wise is if you have a heat pump with backup electric resistance heat and an old thermostat. When it is time to reheat the house and you set the thermostat higher again, the expensive backup electric resistance heater may come on. For a long eight-hour setback, you will probably still save overall, but not for just a short setback of a couple of hours.

If you have a heat pump, install a special setback thermostat, designed for heat pumps. These thermostats have electronic circuitry to keep the backup resistance heating elements off after the setback period. My own heat pump thermostat works this way, and

it also allows me to block out the resistance heating when the outdoor temperature is above a certain temperature. I have mine set at 20 degrees.

There is not a “best” thermostat setting for all homes and climates. The lower you set it, the greater the overall savings will be. The amount of savings per degree for each nighttime eight-hour setback period ranges from 1 percent to 3 percent. Because many people are also gone during the daytime, the temperature can be set lower for about 16 hours per day. Unless there are some health problems in your family, 62 degrees is comfortable if you are wearing long sleeves or a sweater.

In moderate climates, let your comfort dictate how low you initially set the furnace or heat pump thermostat. As you get used to the lower temperatures and wear a sweater, you will be able to gradually lower it more. In colder climates, excessive window condensation often limits how low the indoor temperature can be set. In order to set the temperature lower, you will have to reduce the indoor humidity level.

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.



Giving Efficiency

By Kelly Trapnell

With the holiday rush starting earlier and earlier every year, get a jump-start on your shopping wish list with some great “green” gifts. Using the tips below, you can have everything wrapped up before the ho, ho, ho turns into go, go, go!

Why give efficiency?

Green giving is thoughtful on many levels. The person receiving the gift has a new gadget to use that keeps long-term electric costs low year-round.

“Choosing a green gift can be easy,” says Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network (CRN). “Be aware of energy use. Look for any mention of energy ratings on large appliances and TVs, or select “unplugged” gifts—think solar, reusable and recyclable. Even something as small as the packaging and wrapping can make a difference.”

Look for items with lightweight packaging. And, think about wrapping your gift in something like a fabric bag that can be reused, or even accessories such as a scarf, fabric belt or hair ribbons to tie things up.

Green Gift Ideas

For Decorators: *LED Christmas lights* (\$15–\$35) These energy-efficient lights are becoming easier to find and afford. They save on high holiday electric bills and stay cool to the touch. For a festive, complete package, wrap them in a decorative stocking.

For Gardeners: *Solar garden lights* (\$15–\$50) Available in endless colors, styles and sizes, solar garden lights can be a lovely addition to your favorite green thumb’s garden. To up the green quotient, wrap in a burlap bag.

For Cooks: *Toaster oven* (\$60–\$140)

Especially great for the empty nester or those only cooking for one or two, toaster ovens are a good choice to save energy as an alternative to heating a large standard oven.

For Movie Buffs or Sports Fans:

ENERGY STAR-rated TV (price based on size) Televisions are getting bigger and better. But before you give something that uses as much electricity as a refrigerator, look for the ENERGY STAR® label. It will offer the smallest impact on your electric bills possible.

For Techies: *Smart strip* (\$20–\$40)

This new cutting-edge technology is great for plugging in electronic gadgets. Not your average power strip, smart strips sport designated outlets that make it easy to power down certain devices to save energy while not affecting others plugged into the same strip.

Solar cell phone charger (\$55–\$100+) Help unplug energy-sucking chargers from the wall; solar chargers can be placed in a window to charge a cell phone or other devices such as a GPS unit or even MP3 players anywhere the sun shines, even in a car on-the-go!

There are many options when you start looking for green gifts. Get creative (see “Make Your Own Holiday Centerpiece,” p. 14), and remember that what you give impacts future electric bills, so give the green light for energy-smart gifts this year!

Kelly Trapnell writes on safety and energy efficiency issues for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.



Give an energy-smart gift like LED Christmas lights this year.



Another energy-smart gift is a toaster oven (set inside an oven for comparison), since it requires less energy to heat than a standard oven.



Think “green” by wrapping gifts with reusable or recyclable wrap, such as a newspaper sports page and twine.



Innovative Co-op Marks Decade of Service to Members

Wolverine Power Cooperative and its members saw an opportunity 10 years ago—an opportunity to introduce

Michigan companies served by investor-owned utilities to the cooperative way of doing business. A new state law passed in June 2000 allowed large consumers of electricity, such as general manufacturing facilities, to choose their electric providers.

Wolverine Power Cooperative launched Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative (WPMC) to compete in the new electric choice market—to seek out and provide electricity to commercial and industrial loads in the state not served by electric co-ops.

“Approving WPMC as a fifth member of Wolverine Power Cooperative was a significant step for the four existing members of Wolverine Power Cooperative,” says Kimberly Molitor, president and chief executive officer of WPMC. “Fortunately, as we had anticipated, we found the business community receptive to the benefits of co-op membership and the potential savings WPMC could offer.”

Wolverine Power Marketing

Cooperative follows the same practices electric cooperatives have used for more than 70 years. The co-op is a not-for-profit company—profits it makes are returned to the membership. Additionally, the WPMC board of directors is comprised of co-op members.

Each member receives a vote in director elections and may nominate a candidate to serve on the board, which meets regularly.

One of the first companies to enter an electric sales agreement with WPMC was St. Marys Cement in Charlevoix. WPMC began serving the plant in February 2002.

“Participating in the Michigan Electric Customer Choice Program has been very positive for St. Marys Cement,” says Dirk Cox, the plant’s operations manager. “Entering into a partnership with WPMC has proven to be a win-win situation for both companies. The working relationship is second to none, and we look forward to

the partnership continuing for many years.”

“St. Marys Cement’s commitment to WPMC was key to our early success. We appreciate the solid, steady relationship we’ve had with St. Marys over the years and remain dedicated to providing economic benefit to them and our entire membership,” Molitor says.

Today, WPMC serves 23 members, all of which are leaders in their respective areas of business and education and located in the Lower Peninsula. Members include large industrial facilities, such as St. Marys Cement, as well as universities and hotel properties.

“It’s important to point out that not only have members of WPMC realized savings over the last 10 years, but Wolverine Power Cooperative’s entire membership has benefitted from the growth and economies of scale WPMC has created,” Molitor explains.



Photo: St. Marys Cement in Charlevoix has been a member of Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative for nearly 10 years, receiving service from the co-op under Michigan’s Electric Customer Choice Program.

Use LED Lights to Save Energy On Holiday Lighting

For many of us, Christmas light displays are as much a part of the holiday “tradition” as exchanging gifts and singing “Silent Night.” We go to great lengths to adorn our trees, mantels and rooflines with colorful lights that help define the spirit of the season. However, in lighting our way through the season, we are also using extra energy that can make for a surprise “gift” on that January electric bill.

One of the best ways to save energy without dimming holiday cheer is switching to light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights. LEDs emit a bright, vibrant light and use significantly less energy than conventional lights. They are also longer-lasting and stay cooler than traditional bulbs because they don't have a filament. The brilliance of their color makes LED lights suitable for both indoor and outdoor use.

The primary disadvantage of LED lights is the up-front cost. Decorative LEDs still cost

significantly more than traditional lighting, depending on the vendor. But over time, the higher investment pays off through the longer life of the bulbs and the reduced energy usage.

Using our Kill-A-Watt® meter energy monitoring device, we evaluated a 50-bulb strand of traditional mini lights (20.4 watts) and a 50-bulb strand of LED mini lights (2.4 watts). Operating one strand of traditional lights for 180 hours over the holiday season (six hours a day for 30 days) would add about 40 cents to your bill, while operating the LED strand for the same amount of time would add less than 9 cents to your bill.

For outdoor decorating, many of us use C7 size strands of bulbs. One strand of 25 traditional C7 lights (125 watts) costs about \$2.48 for 180 hours, while a strand of LED C7 lights (2.4 watts) costs less than 5 cents



for the same amount of time.

Keep in mind that these numbers represent just one strand of lights. While most of us don't go to the extent of the Griswold family in the popular “Christmas Vacation” movie, it is very common to use numerous strands of lights in decorating schemes. Not to mention the popular inflatables and other electronic displays. Everything you plug in will add to your usage and impact your bill, but you can manage that by paying attention to the wattage and making more energy efficient choices.

Check Out What's New Online michigan-energy.org

Updated Website!

- New Look
- New Features
- Improved Navigation

Online Ordering

- Reduce phantom electricity use by ordering an energy efficient Smart Power Strip online.

Simplified Online Audit

- The Energy Optimization Program is pleased to offer Energy Depot®, a set of online tools that will allow you to complete your home energy audit in a quicker, easier format. Energy Depot is a one-stop-shop for energy efficiency education and information.

Join Us on Facebook!

- Like our page to get the latest news, updates, events and promotions.

www.facebook.com/EnergyOptimization

Must be cooperative member to be eligible for these programs. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.

ENERGY OPTIMIZATION
michigan-energy.org
877.296.4319

3474 Alaiedon Parkway; Suite 600
Okemos, MI 48864



Learn about our programs at michigan-energy.org • Questions? 877.296.4319

Michigan COUNTRY LINES

Reach
over 270,000+
households!



Classified ad rates:

▲ **\$1.50 per word or symbol (\$15 min.) for co-op members running nonbusiness ads**

▲ **\$3 per word or symbol (\$30 min.) for co-op members running business, agent or broker ads; and all ads for non-co-op members**

Each initial, group of figures, phone number, abbreviation, e-mail address and website address counts as one word. Hyphenated and slashed words count as two or more words. Ads are subject to editor's approval and editing and are only accepted as space permits. For member rate, attach your mailing label.

Send your printed or typed ad and check or money order made payable to MECA (*advance payment required*) by **15th of month prior to publication** to: *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864, or email classifieds@countrylines.com.

We no longer accept DIRECT credit card payments for classified ads, but you can use a credit or debit card to place your order online using PayPal at countrylines.com/classifieds.

Call 517-351-6322, ext. 208, for more information. **No classifieds accepted by telephone.** Ads will be posted on countrylines.com for no extra charge until the next issue of the magazine is published.

BUSINESS OPPORTUNITIES

PIANO TUNING PAYS – Learn with American Tuning School home-study course. Tools included. 800-497-9793.

CARS & TRUCKS

FOR SALE: 1941 CHEVY COUPE – Off frame, complete. B.O. 269-375-4341.

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

MISCELLANEOUS

HAND-CARVED – Rustic wood switch plates. 602-314-5700. RusticSwitchplateStudios.com.

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

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

OUTDOORS

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

REAL ESTATE

DRUMMOND ISLAND – "Trailer-ready" 60 x 180 lot above Maxton Bay, includes easement. New well, new pump, electric, septic, 2 sheds, stone drive. \$31,900, LC available. 734-260-0732.

A UNIQUE SHANGRI-LA – Private and gated. Year-round hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, canoeing awaits you on your doorstep. Two-bedroom with all the modern conveniences and a sauna. A river runs through property. 71.52 acres, borders federal land, central U.P. \$375,000. 906-474-9534.

GRAYLING ADULT FOSTER CARE HOME – Six private rooms. 231-649-6842.

CENTRAL U.P. DELTA COUNTY – 39+ prime acres with year-round cabin. Well, shower, electric, phone, wood stove. Adjacent state land, excellent deer, grouse, turkey and bear hunting. Trout streams nearby, main road access. \$149,900. Appointment only, broker/owner, 248-879-6534.

100 ACRES – 1 mile south, 3 miles west of Hesperia, MI. Farm land, gravel and woods. Enough gravel to pay 10 times what it's worth. House, barn and 4 outbuildings, underground shelter. \$300,000. 231-854-1503.

VACATION

KIAWAH ISLAND, SO. CAROLINA – One-bedroom condo very near ocean. Bike trails, beach, golf, fishing. Rated a #1 resort island in North America. Weekly/monthly rentals. Winter rates \$550/week or \$1,000/month. 989-725-7794 or fredherring57@yahoo.com

REACH OVER 270,000 households in *Country Lines*!

WANTED

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

BUYING GUN RELOADING EQUIPMENT – Gun smithing, gun parts and related items. 517-623-0416.

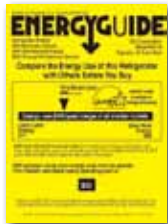
Statement of Ownership, Management and Circulation (required by U.S.C. 3685)

1. Publication Title: *Michigan Country Lines*. 2. Publication No.: 591-710. 3. Filing date: 10/1/11. 4. Issue frequency: monthly, except August and December. 5. No. of issues published annually: 10. Annual subscription price: \$6. Complete mailing address of known office of publication: Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 8. Complete mailing address of headquarters or general business office of publisher: 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 9. Full names and complete mailing address of publisher, editor, and associate editor: Craig Borr, Gail A. Knudtson, Douglas Snitgen, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 10. Owner: Michigan Electric Cooperative Assoc., 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 11. Known bondholders, mortgagees, and other security holders owning or holding 1 percent or more of total amount of bonds, mortgages, or other securities: None. 12. Tax status: Has not been changed. 14. Issue date for circulation data below: Oct. 2011 15. Extent and nature of circulation:

	Avg # of copies each issue during preceding 12 mo.	Actual # of copies of single issues pub. nearest to filing date
A) Total No. of copies	210,923	185,807
B) 1) Paid and requested circulation	207,807	183,232
C) Total paid and requested circulation	207,807	183,232
D) 1) Free distribution by mail	616	690
4) Free distribution outside mail	2,500	1,885
E) Total free distribution	3,116	3,829
F) Total distribution	210,923	185,807
G) Copies not distributed	0	0
H) Total	210,923	185,807
I) Percent paid and/or requested circ.	98.5%	98.6%
16. Publication of statement of ownership: November 2011		
17. Signature and title of editor: Gail Knudtson		

Energy Tip

When buying a new appliance, check the black and yellow EnergyGuide label.



This label provides an estimate of the product's energy consumption and efficiency. It also shows the highest and lowest energy efficiency estimates of similar models. Most

major appliances—such as refrigerators, dishwashers, and clothes dryers—are required to have these labels.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

Order your 2012 wall calendar today!



Only \$7.50 each

Order 3 or more,
only \$6.00 each

Flat \$5 shipping
regardless of qty!

- Made in Michigan
- Standard & custom designs available
- Great gift ideas for the home or office
- Promotional calendars our specialty
- 10.875" x 8.375" (closed), 10.875" x 16.75" (open)



635 N. Park St., Boyne City, MI 49712

877.432.7539

www.farleycalendars.com/2012

HEATMOR

STAINLESS
STEEL
OUTDOOR
FURNACES

NEW 2011 DESIGN



RESIDENTIAL UP TO
10,000SQ FT.
COMMERCIAL UP TO
25,000SQ FT.

EPA CERTIFIED MODELS
WOOD, COAL, CORN,
PELLET, & WASTE OIL
OPTIONS

HEAT MULTIPLE BUILDINGS,
POOLS, HOT TUBS,
HOT WATER TANKS,
& GREENHOUSES



OUTBACK HEATING, INC.

Eastern U.S. Distributor

800-743-5883

www.outbackheatinginc.com

FUTURE STEEL BUILDINGS

Do-It-Yourself Steel Buildings

Ideal For:

- Recreational Use
- Boat Storage
- Bunkie
- Equipment Storage
- Garage/Shop
- PWC/Snowmobile

- 30-year perforation warranty
- Full technical support from start to finish
- Fully customized to meet your needs
- Factory-direct savings

Call Toll Free Today for a **FREE!** INFORMATION PACKAGE

Our building consultants are ready to take your call

1-800-668-5111

Ask for ext. 91

10 Showcase Homes Wanted! 10 DESIGNER METAL ROOFS!

IF THIS IS YOUR HOUSE...
OWN THIS METAL ROOF FOR LESS THAN

\$175
PER MONTH

FINANCING AVAILABLE!

LET US PROVE WHY AMERICAN METAL ROOFS IS YOUR BEST OPTION

See our Photo Gallery and Apply Online at

www.AmericanMetalRoofs.com

Visit the American Metal Roofs Showrooms at

6140 Taylor Dr, Flint, MI 48507 and 1875 Lansing Rd, Charlotte, MI 48813



American Metal Roofs



For the latest News
become a Fan at
[www.facebook.com/
AmericanMetalRoofs/](http://www.facebook.com/AmericanMetalRoofs/)

MI Contractor License #2102158513

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-16886

- Midwest Energy Cooperative proposes to use a power supply cost recovery factor of \$0.02931 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) to compute its member-customers' bills for the 12-month period ending December 31, 2012, if the Michigan Public Service Commission approves its request.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, 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: December 6, 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 Mark E. Cummins

LOCATION: Michigan Public Service Commission, 6545 Mercantile Way, Suite 7, Lansing, Michigan
The Mercantile Way building sustained flood damage and remains closed until further notice. Please consult the Michigan Public Service Commission website at: michigan.gov/mpsc for updates on hearing locations or call 517.241.6060.

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 the September 30, 2011 application of Midwest Energy Cooperative (Midwest) to implement a power supply cost recovery (PSCR) plan and PSCR factor of \$0.02931 per kWh to compute its member-customers' bills for the 12-month period January 1, 2012 through December 31, 2012. Midwest's requested PSCR factor reflects a \$0.05226 per kWh allowance for cost of power supply included in base rates.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscdockets. 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: mpscdockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscdockets@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 November 29, 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, 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/mpscdockets, 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.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

October 11, 2011



*Too many bills and
not enough time?*

Pay Your Bills the Easy Way!

Easy Ways to Pay and **E-Bill** take the hassle out of paying your electric and/or propane bills.

● **Easy Ways to Pay** offers two convenient autopay options: bank draft and credit card. To enroll, simply complete the personal information section below, then select your preferred autopay program and complete only that section. Return the completed form with your next payment.

● **E-Bill** allows you to view and pay your bill(s) electronically. You receive your monthly bill by email, and it is paid through one of our convenient autopay programs. To sign up for E-bill, please complete the personal information section, then select your preferred autopay program and complete only that section, then check the E-Bill box.

You may also sign up online at **TeamMidwest.com**, or by calling our Customer Care Department at 1-800-492-5989.

Personal Information: (please print)

Name _____ Phone _____

Service Address _____

E-mail _____

Signature _____ Date _____

Service sign-up Please check which Midwest service(s) you would like to pay through the **Easy Ways to Pay** program, and include the appropriate account number(s). BPL Service is not currently available in all areas.

Please enroll the following services/accounts into the **Easy Ways to Pay** autopay program:

☐ Electric _____ Account Number _____
☐ Propane _____ Account Number _____
☐ BPL _____ Account Number _____

Payment Selection Please select *either* bank draft or credit card and complete only that section.

☐ **Automatic Bank Draft Option:** I authorize Midwest Energy Cooperative to make withdrawals as indicated on my monthly bill. I understand I will receive a bill showing the payment amount to be made by "Bank Draft" before each payment is due. I understand that adjustments to correct errors are authorized. This authorization will remain in effect until written notice of termination is received by Midwest Energy.

Name of Banking Institution _____ Account type: ☐ Checking ☐ Savings

Routing number _____ Account number _____

☐ **Automatic Credit Card Option:**

I authorize Midwest to charge payment of my account to my (circle one): **VISA MASTERCARD DISCOVER**

Credit Card Account Number _____ Expiration Date _____

Name on Credit Card _____

I understand that I will receive a copy of my electric bill monthly and that the balance due shown on my bill will be charged to my authorized credit card on or before the due date shown. I agree to notify Midwest immediately if I wish to change the credit card used, or if any information, such as the expiration date, on the authorized card changes. I also agree that charges to correct errors are authorized. This authorization will remain in effect until written notice of termination is received by Midwest Energy.

E-Bill ☐ Yes! I would like to sign up for **E-Bill**.

I have provided my e-mail address and completed my preferred autopay option above.

Things We Wouldn't Know If We Hadn't Taken This Trip

Our trip 'out West' was a relaxing adventure, even if that sounds like an oxymoron. We saw a grand spread of country, and got a sense of the spectacular beauty we had only witnessed secondhand in movies, TV, books and other people's slide shows. We were tourists in our own country.

Of course, we couldn't see everything, but we saw much that we wanted to see in what I'd call a 'drive-by' vacation. We covered 6,478 miles over 20 states in 22 days. It was the longest trip we've ever taken together. We also learned a few things about our country and ourselves.

It's easier to sleep on a long trip if you stay in the same room every night. You can do that if you bring your room with you (think RV) or camp. Or, you can plan to stay in one of several hotel chains that blanket the country. All the hotels and motels in a given chain are not identical, but they are similar, and we found that similarity breeds contentment. Still, we're puzzled by the half-size pillows at a Holiday Inn in Little Rock. Why?

All the trees and mountains in South Dakota are on the western end, which makes you wonder why the state doesn't tip up on the eastern side.

Beautiful Custer State Park, near Mt. Rushmore, is a mini Yellowstone, minus the geysers.

It's not necessary to eat your way across America. We thought we'd gain weight on this trip because we'd constantly snack

during all the sitting, but each of us lost a few pounds. Of course, food poisoning helps you lose weight, as it did in Cody, WY, where we dined on spaghetti and meatballs apparently left out too long or undercooked.

The grandest pleasure was Yosemite National Park, our goal. It is breathtaking. Watching the Tigers beat the Yankees on TV in a lounge in Yosemite, with the granite cliffs looming outside the window wall, was a special moment.

The eastern pass to Yosemite was closed because of snow when we intended to drive it; we found that out at the California Agricultural Border Station, where personnel confiscated our grown-in-California-but-sold-in Michigan blueberries. We had to backtrack and then take an open road around the Park to the western entrance, an extra 200 miles. But it was a beautiful drive, with the mountains covered in fresh snow.

There is another valley like Yosemite buried under water just a few miles away. It supplies water to 4.2 million people in and around San Francisco. It makes me sad to think about it. No wonder John Muir, the champion of Yosemite and the national park system, is said to have died of a broken heart after he lost the fight to save the Hetch Hetchy Valley.

You can't find baseball on the radio like you used to. Trying to pick up the Tigers' pennant-chase games in the middle of New Mexico was impossible. Even satellite

radio didn't carry all the games. We had to call our sons for updates. Ernie Harwell would be sad.

It is true that electric cooperatives serve the prettiest country in America, and some of the loneliest.

There are gas traps on our highways. High-priced gas stations prey on travelers who don't know there is a normal gas station, where gas costs almost a dollar less, a few miles down the road.

There's another Michigan scattered around the country. If you gathered all the people who have left, you could duplicate the state. You can spot them by their Michigan sports team logo clothing.

If you find yourself without the clothes you need when the temperature changes, you can find cheap, suitable clothes at a Goodwill store. We were reminded by a couple from California who found themselves freezing when the temperatures in Yosemite National Park dove into the 30s.

Except for a few patches, the roads get a '10' from us. It's amazing how fast you can travel around this vast country, even if trucks seem to outnumber cars in some places.

Truckers decorate their big rigs and have secret competitions in the middle of nowhere to determine who has the prettiest trucks. You see them going down the highway at night, lit up like a county fair.

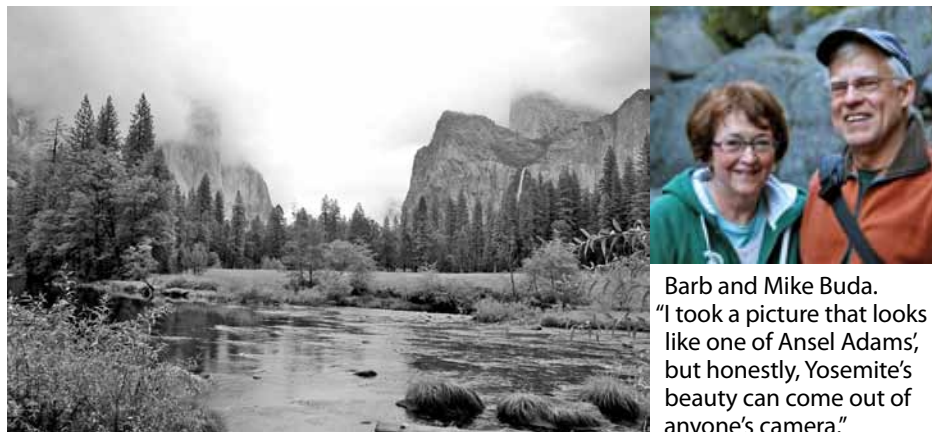
Yellowstone is big and grand, but it doesn't have anything over Michigan, which could be a national park all by itself.

iPhone apps are invaluable for traveling, especially for finding good food, cheap gas, and a place to sleep.

Cell phones and Facebook make it easier to stay in touch, but tougher to get away.

The most unexpected pleasure was the simple ham sandwich, homemade lentil soup and coffee at the tiny Say When Casino/Cafe in McDermitt on otherwise empty U.S. 95 on the Nevada/Oregon border. We were starving, which made the food even better.

Was the trip worthwhile? Yes, especially so because of the many tips we got from readers who had done it before. I would do it again tomorrow. But there are other places to visit first, and places we saw on this trip that deserve a longer look.



Barb and Mike Buda.
"I took a picture that looks like one of Ansel Adams', but honestly, Yosemite's beauty can come out of anyone's camera."

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



ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TeamMidwest.com

NEED A LITTLE EXTRA CASH THIS HOLIDAY SEASON?



PROPANE

Over the years, our best source for new customers has always been our current family of happy and loyal customers. You know the value of our superior commitment to customer care, combined with the unique price stability that is the cornerstone of our approach.

And now, we're giving you an extra reason to share the Midwest Propane difference.

\$100 Holiday Cash

For every customer that you successfully refer, we will give you AND the new customer \$100 once the tank is set and service is activated. To refer yourself, just mention our Holiday Cash program and you may also qualify for the \$100 referral fee. New customers must meet eligibility criteria and tanks must be set by Dec. 23, 2011.

800-492-5989

TeamMidwest.com



Midwest Propane is not regulated by the MPSC.