

# Michigan

## COUNTRY LINES

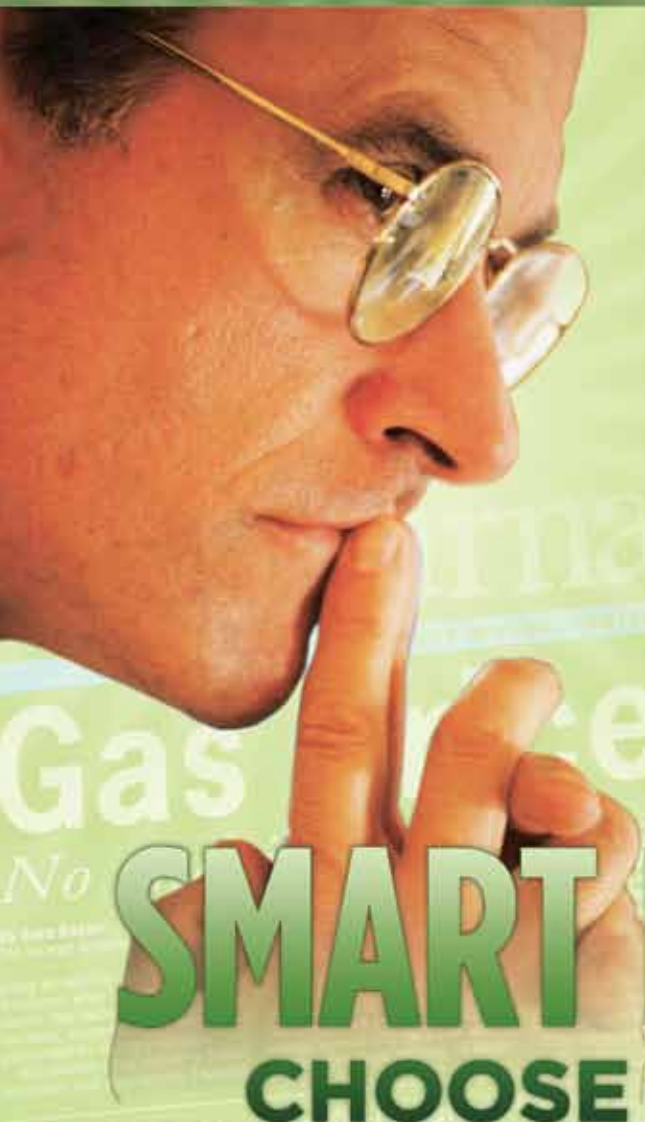
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## YOUR CO-OP

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\*Not in all editions

## On the Cover

We hope you and yours enjoy these recipes as much as our cover kids! Thanks to our readers for taking time to send them in.

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# 2012

## Coloring Contest Winners

Thanks to everyone who entered our coloring contest this year. Congratulations to the following kids who submitted prize-winning entries.



### 4 years and under

#### 1st place

Jeremiah Stewart,  
Custer (above)

#### 2nd place

Stella Estes,  
Irons

#### 3rd place

Shaylynn Harper,  
Hersey



### 5-7 years old

#### 1st place

Patrick Willson,  
East Jordan (above)

#### 2nd place

Kadie Passorelli,  
Zeeland

#### 3rd place

Sydney Hasted,  
Hesperia



### 8-10 years old

#### 1st place

Lauren Guenthardt,  
Manistee (above)

#### 2nd place

Derek Acevedo,  
Hart

#### 3rd place

Emilee Mager,  
Gaylord

Children can also have fun learning about energy-saving ideas by visiting [touchstoneenergykids.com](http://touchstoneenergykids.com).

## Receive *Country Lines* While You're Away

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# A Leader In Containing Expenses

Great Lakes Energy cost increases are below national averages for electric cooperatives.

**G**reat Lakes Energy met its four financial goals (see chart) in 2011, which demonstrates that your electric cooperative remains committed to controlling costs despite rising expenses that challenge everyone's budget today.

"In 2011, we kept the overall increase in operational and maintenance expenses to less than 2.5 percent," explains Bill Scott, vice president and chief financial officer. "We accomplished this goal in spite of hefty increases in fuel for our transportation fleet and many other uncontrollable cost increases."

The goal was to keep the operational and maintenance (O&M) cost increase in 2011 from exceeding the average O&M increase for over 800 electric co-ops nationwide. Great Lakes Energy's increase was well below the 3.91 percent national average increase for other electric co-ops.

Similarly, GLE's increase in administrative and general (A&G) costs last year fell below the 3.72 percent national co-op average increase, which allowed the co-op to reach a second goal.

The O&M expenses are costs necessary to deliver power to members. This includes all line maintenance, member service and support department expenses necessary to efficiently operate Great Lakes Energy. The A&G costs are a subset of O&M costs that are not directly tied to the operation and maintenance of GLE's electrical distribution system. They include administration, accounting, human resources, building and grounds maintenance and other necessary support functions.

Other financial goals met involved:

- retiring patronage capital.
- maintaining a healthy equity ratio.

## Patronage Capital

Patronage capital, also called capital credits, are a key reason why Great Lakes Energy members are more than just customers,

they're the co-op's owners. Members provide revenue to the co-op through the electric rates. When the co-op makes margins (profits), the members are entitled to a share of them. The margins are allocated back to members and when the co-op's financial conditions permit, they are returned to members

cooperative of GLE's size.

Holding down costs is part of everyone's job at your co-op. It starts with the annual budgeting process and culminates with budget approval from the GLE board of directors. The process involves a company-wide effort by all departments to keep expenses down while still maintaining the service and value that members expect.

In 2012, many departments submitted lower budgets than in 2011. The Vegetation Management Department led the way with a \$643,000 reduction in costs to re-clear trees and brush within power line rights-of-way. The department was able to lower costs without sacrificing the reliability and safety that properly managed rights-of-way provide.

"We are constantly looking to improve our processes so we can continue providing excellent service while keeping costs as low as possible," adds Scott.

One newer technology that is helping GLE improve reliability

and contain costs is automated meters. The meters provide immediate outage information (communicated back through the power lines) that often saves GLE repair crews the time and expense of making return trips to outage areas during storms. In many cases, they provide information that enables power to be restored to seasonal homes before the owners are aware of the outage. This has reduced costs by limiting the need to send crews out on weekends and after normal business hours when seasonal residents normally call to report an outage. Even with the benefits automated meters provide, members are still advised to contact the cooperative if they lose power.

Financial goals are just one area that Great Lakes Energy strives to improve. Other annual goals are set in the vital areas of reliability, member satisfaction and safety. The co-op's focus is on the things that are most important to its members. It's part of the cooperative difference.

## 2011 GLE Financial Goals & Results

- ✓ Keep increase in operational and maintenance expenses at or below 3.91 percent, which is the national average increase for all electric cooperatives. (GLE increase was less than 2.5 percent.)
- ✓ Keep increase in administrative and general expenses at or below 3.72 percent, which is the national average increase for all electric cooperatives. (GLE increase was 3.59 percent.)
- ✓ Issue capital credit refunds to Great Lakes Energy members. (Over \$3.92 million returned.)
- ✓ Maintain an equity ratio of at least 34 percent. (2011 year-end ratio was 34.61 percent.)

as a capital credit refund. Capital credits are normally applied to member bills late in the year, and 2011 was the ninth straight year that members received these. Since 2003, GLE has returned \$25.2 million in capital credit refunds to members.

## Equity Ratio

The equity ratio essentially compares the percentage of assets owned by the members to the percentage of assets owned by our lenders. If the ratio is too high (over 50 percent), it may be an indication that co-op rates are too high. If too low (under 20 percent), the co-op may not be able to obtain lower-cost financing and may not be able to retire or pay capital credits to members.

In 2011, GLE's year-end equity ratio was 34.61 percent, which met the goal of maintaining at least a 34 percent ratio. In 2012, the goal will be to maintain at least a 35 percent ratio. Both goals are within the healthy range (between 30 and 40 percent) for an electric

# Renters Have the Power to Save Electricity

If you rent your home, it often seems that you can't do much to control your electric bills. But in reality, there are lots of low- or no-cost tricks that you can put into place to cut down on electricity use.

"Usually leases forbid renters to make alterations to a structure, so your energy-saving solutions have to be simple," says Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager specializing in energy efficiency with the Cooperative Research Network.

## Electronics and Appliances

The notion that regularly powering down your computer will shorten its life is outdated. Nowadays, computers tend to become outdated themselves before frequent shutdowns cause any damage. The U.S. Department of Energy's consumer website, EnergySavers.gov, offers this guideline: If you won't use your

computer for more than 20 minutes, shut off the monitor; if you won't use it for more than two hours, shut the whole thing down.

However, there is a caveat: If your computer takes its time waking up, your own time might be worth more than the electricity you save.

Most electronics feature a glowing light when turned off—that means they're still drawing electricity. A quick fix for this "vampire," or "phantom" load involves plugging various devices into a power strip. Simply flip the switch on the power strip when you won't be using the devices.

While your hands are most likely tied when it comes to the types of major appliances installed, if one needs to be replaced, lobby your landlord to purchase an Energy Star® model. Visit energystar.gov for more information on particular products.



## Weatherizing

A roll of weather stripping and a tube of caulk can also go a long way in saving energy and money. Check for gaps around doors and windows. Can you see daylight? If so, ask your landlord if you can seal the cracks and reduce air flow.

The Air Sealing section on EnergySavers.gov offers tips on the right types of weather stripping and caulk for your residence. While you're talking to your landlord, ask if he or she will pay the cost if you do the labor.

Look to your windows for additional savings. Of course,

you probably can't replace them, but if they're drafty in the winter, try sealing kits you can purchase at any home improvement store. These plastic sheets fit over your window to block drafts. Curtains can also help—close them in the summer to block sunlight, and open them in the winter to let the warmth in.

## Useful Tips

A few more simple tips can help shave your electric bills:

- ▲ When lightbulbs burn out, replace them with compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs). If they have an Energy Star label, these bulbs typically last up to 10 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs and use 75 percent less electricity.

- ▲ Use your vacuum to clean coils in the bottom panel of your refrigerator. Never figured out where those coils are? Visit touchstoneenergy.com to see a how-to video, or search "Together We Save refrigerator coils" on Youtube.com.

- ▲ Similarly, keep your dryer vents clean. Clogged refrigerator coils and dryer vents will cause your appliances to work harder and increase the risk of fire.

- ▲ Don't allow furniture to block air vents, and shut the vents in rooms you don't use.

- ▲ Check the temperature on your water heater. These devices don't need to be set at more than 120 degrees Fahrenheit for daily showers and chores.

—Magen Howard

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## The Pros and Cons of Home Equity Loans

If you own a house, you may be considering taking out a home equity loan or line of credit. But is this *really* a smart move?

The answer depends on your circumstances.

**SIMILARITIES** – With both a home equity loan and a home equity line of credit:

- You'll use your residence as collateral.
- The amount of money you can borrow is based on the current value of your home and the current balance (what you owe) on your mortgage.
- You'll usually pay certain fees (often called “closing costs”) to take out your loan.
- The amount of interest you'll pay is based on how much you've borrowed and your mortgage interest rate.
- You must repay your loan within the time specified in your loan documents or when you sell your home—whichever comes first.

**DIFFERENCES** – You also need to consider this:

- With the loan, you'll receive a single sum of money with a set interest rate on the entire amount, and your payment will be the same every month.
- With the line of credit, you can borrow up to a maximum amount of credit from your bank, but you don't have to borrow the full amount. Usually, interest rates for lines of credit vary—they will change based on your loan documents. And you only pay interest on what you borrow, not the maximum amount you're allowed to borrow. These payments are flexible, similar to a credit card, so you can pay what you want each month as long as you pay the minimum.

**WHEN IT'S SMART** – A home equity loan or line of credit can be a good idea because the amount of interest you pay will often be lower than borrowing against your credit card or using a personal loan. It's also a better idea than borrowing against your retirement account, which can jeopardize your long-term financial security. In addition, the interest you pay when you borrow against your home's equity is generally tax deductible.

**WHEN TO THINK TWICE** – Tapping into your home's equity is *not* always a smart idea. If you believe you may be moving within the next year or two, these loans may not make sense due to closing fees and possible prepayment penalties (the amount of money you must fork over to a lender if you sell your house or pay off your loan before a specified period of time).

If home values in your area are falling, you may want to consider another type of loan. The amount of money that you'll owe on both your mortgage and the home equity loan may exceed your property's value, making it difficult to sell in a “down” real estate market.

**THE BOTTOM LINE** – Both home equity loans and lines of credit can be great financial tools, but use with care. Defaulting on either type can be just as serious as defaulting on your mortgage payment—the danger is that you can lose your home if your lender decides to foreclose.

For guidance on what kind of loan may work best for you, be sure to consult a financial professional or tax advisor. – *Doreen Friel*



Winners of the 2012 Good Neighbor Watch statewide award are (L to R) lineworkers Tom Gurzynski, Tom McLouth and Jeff Christensen, who all work in Great Lakes Energy's Scottville service area.

## Good Neighbors

Great Lakes Energy lineworkers Jeff Christensen, Tom McLouth and Tom Gurzynski are 2012 winners of the Good Neighbor Watch award, which is a statewide program recognizing electric co-op employees who provided emergency assistance during the course of their workday.

The program is sponsored by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA), the statewide service organization for Michigan's electric cooperatives.

While performing maintenance on a transformer at a member's residence, the crew noticed that a basement water pipe had burst. Jeff contacted the member, who was 1,000 miles away on vacation, and was directed to a key for getting inside the home, where the crew shut the valves and pump off. Their quick action saved this co-op member from extensive property loss and damage, and gave him time to summon professional help.

“People like Jeff and companies like yours who are willing to take the time to maintain a sense of community are the main reasons I chose to raise my family in Mason County,” the homeowner wrote in a thank-you letter. “Thanks for all you do, and thanks again to Jeff and the crew.”

The Good Neighbor Watch program also assists local sheriff departments and other law enforcement and helping agencies by using the “eyes and ears” of co-op employees and their special training, such as firstaid, and has proven to be very helpful in many situations. Co-op employees have reported robberies and other suspicious activities, fires, accidents and other emergencies, and even saved lives.

“This is what the Good Neighbor Watch is all about, so we thank these men for their contributions to the health and safety of rural Michigan citizens with an honorary plaque and \$100 each,” says Craig Borr, MECA president/CEO.

Electric cooperatives throughout Michigan are asked each year to submit nominations to their statewide association for the award.

# GLE In the Community



## GLE Members Enjoy First 2012 Member Luncheon

Nearly 35 members attended the first member luncheon meeting of the year for the Reed City service area at the Big Rapids Holiday Inn. Members enjoyed talking with employees and heard presentations on system operations, right-of-way vegetation management, products and services, regulatory topics, and community involvement. Boyne City and Petoskey luncheons were also held in May.

Wayland and Newaygo luncheons will take place in early June, with luncheons for Hart, Scottville, Kalkaska and Waters planned for September. Members are invited by random, so please watch for your invitation in the mail.

The special occasion of GLE's 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary will be commemorated at each luncheon with cakes created by a GLE employee.



## Safety Demos Teach How to "Play it Safe"

Dan Stroven (left) and Wayne Bumstead brought GLE's hotline safety demonstration trailer to Pellston Schools in May. The two retired linemen provide free demonstrations on electrical safety upon request to eligible schools and organizations throughout GLE's service territory from April through October. Requests for the demonstrations can be made to [safety@glenergy.com](mailto:safety@glenergy.com) or ext. 8174.

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# Kinder Kloset Helps Charlevoix County Families

**W**hen economic conditions make it hard for new moms to keep babies in diapers, where can they turn? For Charlevoix County families with newborn to 24-month-old babies, the Kinder Kloset can help.

The Kinder Kloset is an outreach effort by the Lutheran Women's Missionary League of Christ Lutheran Church in Boyne City. Its home is a room inside the church where baby supplies are distributed every second Saturday of the month from 10 a.m. to noon.

As word spread about this opportunity for mothers to pick up free supplies, more people began visiting the Kinder Kloset. While only a few people responded a year ago, Kinder Kloset served 244 babies in the past year and distributed more than 10,000 disposable diapers.

Thanks to a \$1,000 People Fund grant, the Kinder Kloset is able to increase the number of diapers distributed each month. Diapers are the biggest need by far. "I can't tell you how much we appreciate the People Fund grant," says volunteer Brenda Streufert. "Generally, at the end of the month, we're emptied right out of diapers."

The People Fund grant provides a several months' supply of diapers. The Kinder Kloset also offers baby wipes, lotions, shampoo and clothing. In addition, they accept and distribute other donated items such as formula and baby gear.

The program is promoted through flyers distributed to local stores and churches, plus regular advertising in the *Petoskey News-Review*. Streufert describes the work she and other volunteers do for Kinder Kloset as a way to give back to their community. She explains that many people are out of work and face challenges in providing basic needs for their babies. The families Kinder Kloset helps are very appreciative.

Kinder Kloset depends on support from community members, and its services are open to all of Charlevoix County. Aside from the People Fund grant, Kinder Kloset receives regular donations of clothing from Crossroads Resale Shop in East Jordan, Challenge Mountain in Boyne City, and The Food Pantry in Boyne Falls. Kinder Kloset



Volunteer Brenda Streufert holds a blanket that is among the baby supplies provided free by the Kinder Kloset in Boyne City.

holds fundraisers such as spaghetti dinners, calendar sales and Mom-to-Mom/Yard Sales to support their program.

Those who wish to donate or obtain free

baby supplies can visit the Kinder Kloset on the second Saturday of the month or contact Shelly Schickau, church secretary, at 231-582-9301.

**Power In Numbers!** If every Great Lakes Energy member who participates in the People Fund got just one other person to join, it would easily double the amount of money available to help local food pantries, senior citizen centers, youth programs, and more.

The People Fund program works because there is power in numbers. A Great Lakes Energy member's contribution of less than a dollar a month isn't much, but it adds up fast when thousands of members get involved.

Get involved and help the People Fund expand to meet the growing needs of Michigan residents, young and old. It all starts with asking just one person to contact us and we'll do the rest. You can also enroll online by visiting the "Your Community" section on [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com). **Enrolled members have two chances each year to win a \$100 billing credit. Enroll today!**



# Beat the Heat

Keep your home cool and energy bills lower with these savings tips.

A cold glass of lemonade and an air-conditioner can bring relief from summer's heat, but it can also mean higher electric bills. The U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) estimates that 9 percent of Americans' household energy costs are dedicated to cooling, but you don't have to sacrifice comfort and convenience to save on your bill. With some smart planning and a little elbow grease, you can beat the heat—and high bills.



**SEAL AIR LEAKS**

A home that feels cold and drafty in winter becomes hot and stuffy in summer. Taking time to seal air-leakage points around your house will offer cooler temperatures and lower electric bills year-round.

Add caulk and weather stripping around doors and windows, and check where walls meet ceilings and floors. Also check items such as recessed canister lights and air barriers near your insulation—sealing up the cracks and joists in your attic will help your insulation do its job.

Photos - iStockphoto.com

**SEAL DUCTWORK**

Ductwork could be the most important piece of equipment to seal. If it's exposed, you can do this yourself with a paintbrush and mastic, which is sold at any home improvement store. If not, hire a professional HVAC (heating, ventilating and air conditioning) contractor.



Leaky ductwork will make your air-conditioning system work a lot harder than it has to, which drives up your electric bills and wears out HVAC equipment more quickly.

"Ductwork is one of the first places you should look if you're trying to lower your energy costs," stresses Art Thayer, an energy efficiency expert for Michigan's electric co-ops. "Sometimes, ducts aren't even properly joined at all. That wastes a huge amount of energy. Sealing them up goes a long way to improving your home's energy efficiency."



Strategically planted trees can help cut down on your cooling costs in the summer.

Source - Whirlpool Corporation

**LANDSCAPING**

Planting a tree or climbing vine not only adds a little flavor to your home's landscape; it can cool down your house when the sun beats down. Trees in the right spot can decrease your home's energy use by up to 25 percent, according to DOE.

Plant deciduous trees—those that lose their leaves every year—to the south and west of your home, and you'll gain shade in the summer and sunshine in the winter. A 6-foot, 8-inch deciduous tree will begin providing shade the first year, and it only gets cooler after that, reaching your roof line in five to 10 years, notes the DOE.

If you want shade all the time or need to block wind, choose evergreens. But when you're preparing to choose your greenery, keep in mind that trees should never be planted underneath or too close to a power line. Call your electric cooperative to find out how far from lines you should plant, and then check out [ArborDay.org](http://ArborDay.org) to learn about the types of trees that are best for your home's landscape.

**AIR-CONDITIONING UNITS**

Logic would seem to dictate that a larger air-conditioning unit would keep your rooms cooler but the opposite is true. A unit that's too large for the space will operate inefficiently and could even cause mold problems because of humidity. Whether you have a window unit or central air-conditioning, correct sizing is key.

A licensed professional should size your central air-conditioning system using a mathematical code—or, better, an automatic computer program. Units that are incorrectly sized will wear out faster and will not properly cool your home. Bigger isn't always better.

If you're in the market for a new air conditioner, be sure to buy one with an Energy Star® label, which means the product has met specific energy efficiency standards set by the federal government. Room units are about 10 percent more efficient than their non-Energy Star counterparts, while central units are about

## Energy-Saving Appliance Tips

**CLOTHES WASHER** Wash your laundry with cold water whenever possible, using cold water laundry detergents. To save water, try to wash full loads or, if you must wash a partial load, reduce the level of water appropriately.

Water heating accounts for about 90 percent of the energy your machine uses to wash clothes—only 10 percent goes to electricity used by the washer's motor.

Switching to cold water can save the average household more than \$40 annually (with an electric water heater) and more than \$30 annually (with a gas water heater).

Washing full loads can save more than 3,400 gallons of water each year.

**CLOTHES DRYER** Don't overdry your clothes. If your dryer has a moisture sensor that automatically turns the machine off when clothes are done, use it.

One of the easiest ways to increase drying efficiency is to clean the lint trap before each and every load.

It's easy to overdry clothes if one setting is used for various fabrics. Try to dry loads made up of similar fabrics, so the entire load dries as the cycle ends.

**DISHWASHERS** Rinsing dishes can use up to 20 gallons of water before the dishes are loaded. Instead, scrape food off dishes. Energy Star-qualified dishwashers and detergents are designed to do the cleaning so you don't have to.

If dirty dishes sit overnight, use the dishwasher's rinse feature. It uses a fraction of the water needed to hand rinse.

Most dishwashers use about the same amount of energy and water regardless of the number of dishes inside, so run full loads whenever possible. Select the no-heat drying option. It gives good drying results with less energy.

**MICROWAVE** Use a microwave or toaster oven to reheat or cook small portions.

Reduce cooking energy by as much as 80 percent when using a microwave for small portions. This also helps save on summer air-conditioning costs, since less heat is generated when compared to using a stove or oven.

**OVEN RANGE** Use the right sized pot on stove burners. A 6-in. pot on an 8-in. burner wastes more than 40 percent of the burner's heat. Also, cover pots and pans to keep heat in.

Using the right sized pot on stove burners can save about \$36 annually for an electric range, or \$18 for gas.

**REFRIGERATORS** Keep your refrigerator at 35 to 38 degrees F and place it in a cool place away from a heat source such as an oven, a dishwasher, or direct sunlight.

- Allow air circulation behind the fridge.
- Keep the condenser coils clean if it's an older model. Read the user's manual to learn how to safely clean coils. Coil cleaning brushes can be purchased at most hardware stores.
- Make sure seals around the door are airtight. If not, replace them.
- Minimize the amount of time the refrigerator door stays open.

Source: ENERGY STAR

14 percent more efficient.

Once you've determined whether your air conditioner is the correct size or have chosen a new one, start adjusting the settings to maximize efficiency. Use the "auto" function instead of keeping the fan running all the time. Regular maintenance to keep it in good working order is a good idea, as is checking and changing the air filter regularly.

Also, set your thermostat as high as you can while maintaining your comfort level—the smaller the difference between indoor air and the great outdoors, the lower your cooling costs will be. And make sure to rearrange your furniture so that appliances that put out a lot of heat aren't near the thermostat.



Regular maintenance for your air conditioner, including changing the filter, will help it run more efficiently.

Source - NEECA

### PROGRAMMABLE THERMOSTATS

A programmable thermostat can save you big bucks if it fits your lifestyle. "This type of unit will turn your temperature up automatically during times of the day you specify. But if you purchase one, it's important to take the next step and program it—a step many people fail to take.



"A programmable thermostat is an excellent tool to improve your home's energy efficiency, but you have to actually program it, and then you have to leave it alone," says Brian Sloboda, senior program manager for the Cooperative Research Network.

"Fiddling with the settings won't help—but getting the settings to where you're comfortable when you're home and then forgetting about it will really help with energy savings."

Programmable thermostats are best for people who regularly leave their homes (without pets inside) for at least eight hours at a time.

### YOUR ELECTRIC CO-OP IS A RESOURCE

As you work this summer to beat the heat, don't forget about using your local electric cooperative's home energy audit program (see p. 25 in most editions) to help find more savings. You can also visit [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com) to find out how little measures around the house add up to big energy savings.

# Colon: *The Magic Capital*

Coin tricks, card tricks, vanishing eggs, a boy turned into a rabbit, a woman cut in half... This is the stuff of magic, an ancient form of performance art that has dazzled audiences for centuries and is celebrated daily in The Magic Capital of the World: Colon, MI.

It's no illusion that Colon, located halfway between Detroit and Chicago, is known around the globe. With a population just nearing 1,200, it is a magnet for conjurers, escapologists, mentalists and enthusiasts. "Every major magician of the last 75 years has been to that small town," says Jeff Taylor, director of the American Museum of Magic in Marshall, which is less than an hour from Colon. The museum was created by the late automotive writer Robert Lund, who began collecting magic memorabilia as a boy in the 1930s, and is the largest collection of its kind open to the public. "Blackstone is the reason all of that magic ended up in Colon," Taylor explains.

Popular 20<sup>th</sup> century magician Harry Blackstone, with his wife Inez, bought property on Sturgeon Lake in 1926 and each summer when the theaters were closed their troupe headed to the Colon compound to work on its show. At Blackstone's invitation, Australian performer Percy Abbott visited for some fishing and relaxation, and ended up marrying a local woman, Gladys Goodrich. Abbott and Blackstone opened the first magic shop in Colon, but had a falling-out and the Blackstone Magic Company was short-lived.

By early 1934, Abbott launched Abbott Magic Company and found a new business partner in Recil Bordner, who had traveled here from his family's Ohio farm to learn from the magician. That September, Abbott and Bordner hosted the first "Magic Get-Together," attended by 80 magicians. Thousands of magicians, enthusiasts and fans began attending this almost-annual Get-Together (the event was suspended for a few years due to World War II and other issues), that launched Colon's reputation as the Magic Capital.

Abbott Magic Company then grew into the world's largest manufacturer and supplier of magic effects and supplies with stores in Detroit, Chicago, New York and Los Angeles. When Abbott retired in 1959, Bordner bought his half and in 1974, on graduation from Michigan State University, his son Greg Bordner joined the business.

Today, Greg operates Abbott Magic Company and is confident about the future of this performance art. "Magic will never go away, because it's live," he explains. "People want to be entertained." He notes that one of the tricks produced at his shop in Colon was recently used in the TV show "The Big Bang Theory," and kids of all ages are amazed at the 1 p.m. Summer Saturday Magic Shows given at the 100-seat theater inside of the store.

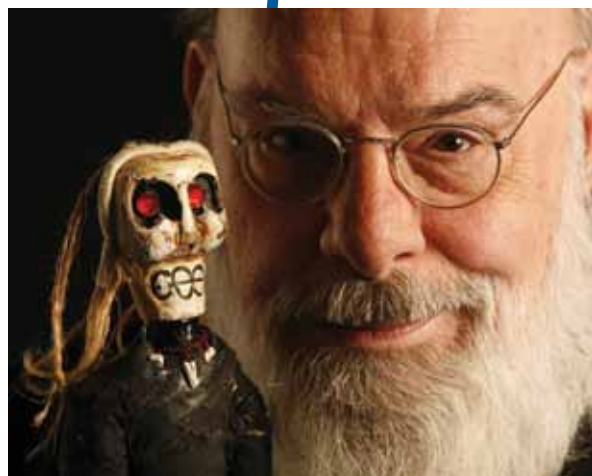
With help from family, friends and magicians across the country, Bordner continues producing "Abbott's Magic Get-Together" each August. The 75th event, Aug. 1-4, features multiple performances, competitions, classes, dealers and demonstrations, and a guided tour of Lakeside Cemetery, where Blackstone and about 24 other magicians and their family members rest.

"There are more magicians buried there than anyplace in the world," says Rick Fisher,

owner of FAB Magic Company, also located in Colon. "It's nice to visit (the cemetery) and pay homage to these folks." Fisher, a magician who bought his first trick at Abbott's when he was six or seven years old, opened his FAB Magic manufacturing company and retail shop nine years ago, after a business career in Indiana. Fisher also hosts magic shows at his shop at noon on summer Saturdays, and produces a "MagiCelebration" concurrent with the Abbott's show, "so there's lots going on in town that week."

During "Magic" week, there's also an arts and crafts show, street performers and fireworks, and the museum has an exhibit about Colon's magical roots.

"We have magic here in Colon," says Fisher. "For someone who loves this art, I can't imagine being anywhere else."



Eugene Burger is one of many performers scheduled for the 75th annual Abbott's Magic Get-Together this August.



Jeff Taylor is director of the American Museum of Magic in Marshall.

## LINKS

Abbott Magic Company  
[abbottmagic.com](http://abbottmagic.com)  
 269-432-3235

Abbott's Magic Get-Together  
[magicgettogether.com](http://magicgettogether.com)

FAB Magic Company  
[fabmagic.com](http://fabmagic.com)  
 269-432-4017

American Museum of Magic  
[americanmuseumofmagic.org](http://americanmuseumofmagic.org)  
 269-781-7570

# Shade-Loving Perennials

**W**hen it comes to perennials for the shady or woodland areas in your yard, there are more choices than you might think.

“Many people have the misconception that few things other than hostas and ferns grow in shade,” says Susan Miller, marketing communications director for Walters Gardens in Zeeland, MI. “The opposite is true!”

*Asconitum* (monkshood) “Blue Lagoon”; *acorus* (sweet flag grass) “Variegatus”; and *actaea* (baneberry) “Misty Blue” are just a few of these “other” shade-lovers. But the nice thing about these, and more listed below, is that unlike many plants featured in gardening magazines and books, you can find them in most local garden centers. If you do have trouble finding any of them, visit [perennialresource.com](http://perennialresource.com) and click on “find a professional” for retailers in your area.

## Shade-loving Perennials

■ **Aquilegia (columbine):** This spring-flowering variety has droopy flowers that come in pink, purple and lavender. Plant at least five in a group to get them noticed in a flower bed or landscape. Columbine will do okay in less than ideal soils, but like all flowers, does best in a loose soil that is rich in organic matter (see growing tips, at right).

■ **Dicentra (bleeding heart):** A crown jewel of the shade garden, this is another early bloomer. It can get fairly large, so it’s good for filling in large spaces, but is a little picky about where it calls home. Once it thrives in a location, don’t move it, or you may be “in the dog house” with your significant other.

■ **Aruncus (goatsbeard):** Here’s another perennial that will fill-in a large, shady location. It likes a rich soil with lots of humus and can grow to 6 feet tall. It blooms best



Hosta 'Autumn Frost'

Walters Gardens, Inc.

where it is exposed to sunlight at least part of the day.

■ **Ligularia:** “Bottle Rocket” is one of the more compact ligularias that features mustard-yellow flowers atop chocolate stems. This compact, deer-resistant variety grows to just over a foot.

■ **Lungwort:** This under-appreciated, weed-discouraging plant is used in the woodland garden as a border plant or to carpet a large area under a tree. It has fragrant, brilliant blue, pink or white flowers and leaves that resemble trout lily, a native species seen often in the northern forest. It likes moist, rich, well-drained soil and will grow from 6 to 24 inches tall. It stands out nicely when mixed among hostas, ferns and brunneras.

■ **Hemerocallis (daylily):** While these are usually seen in sunny locales, they are also good for shady spots. Very adaptable, daylilies will grow just about anywhere under any conditions and come in more colors than found in a box of Crayolas.

## New Hostas Galore!

Walters Gardens breeds many of the perennials that make it to the shelves of Michigan garden centers and other retailers, but this year they’ve introduced a half-dozen new hostas that will carry the Proven Winners® label.

Watch for these new hostas:

■ **“Autumn Frost”** (pictured above): A frosty-blue specimen with a bright yellow margin that lightens to a creamy white in the summer months. It’s medium-sized, spread-

ing to about 24 inches.

■ **“Goodness Gracious”:** This new hosta has large heart-shaped leaves and a wide-spreading habit. The deeply-veined leaves are dark green with a very wide, yellow margin.

■ **“Hudson Bay”:** The wide, bright blue margin and apple-green jetting contrast well with the creamy white center. The flowers are near-white, and it’s also resistant to slugs.

## Shade Plant Requirements

There is no one-size-fits-all on how to grow shade perennials, Miller explains. However, she said most will do well in soil that is moist but not wet, slightly acidic, and fairly rich in organic matter.

## PERENNIAL PLANTING TIPS:

- For best results, plant in the spring or fall.
- Dig a hole twice as deep and wide as the root ball.
- Fill the hole with compost or well-rotted livestock manure.
- Sprinkle in a little slow-release organic or inorganic fertilizer at the time of planting, and water well.
- Space properly and plant at least three in an area for best visual impact.
- To find the growing requirements for specific shade-tolerant perennials, visit [perennialresource.com](http://perennialresource.com) and click on “Perennial Encyclopedia.”

**Suggested reading:** “Perennials for Michigan,” by Nancy Szerlag & Alison Beck



Aquilegia 'Robin' (columbine)



Dicentra 'Valentine' (bleeding heart)



Aruncus 'Misty Lace' (goatsbeard)



Ligularia 'Bottle Rocket'

Ball Horticultural Company

Walters Gardens, Inc.

Walters Gardens, Inc.

Walters Gardens, Inc.

# Water in the Garden: Using Water Features Wisely

By Katie Lamar Jackson

**T**here's nothing like a water feature to enhance our homes and landscapes. Water features are not only beautiful, but can add value to our property, and in fact, in feng shui teachings, water is a symbol of prosperity and money.

As much value as they add, however, using water features wisely is important and downright imperative in areas with limited water resources. If you are thinking of adding water elements to your world, take time to plan them well and find ways to use that water efficiently.

Water features can range from large ponds, flowing streams, pools and fountains to bubbling water-filled containers, and even bird baths. Besides adding beauty, they provide a soothing effect, filter unwanted noise, cool the air, provide recreational opportunities, and



Source - Lynn Betts/Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

draw birds and other wildlife to a landscape.

To find the right water feature for your needs, determine how and where you want to use it and the purpose it will serve. For example, if you simply want to add the serene sound of trickling or bubbling water, it can be as easy as using a small container or indoor fountain in a room or office. But if you want to draw wildlife, enhance an ecosystem, or add an impressive water element or focal point, pools, ponds, waterfalls or fountains may be best.

*Whichever type of water feature you use, be sure to use smart gardening and methods that use water and electricity the most efficiently.*

Next, know your water resources. If you live in an area that gets lots of rain or has wetlands, a stream or boggy spots, a water feature can be used to turn natural sources of moisture into something beautiful and beneficial in the landscape and may even solve

runoff and excess water problems around your property.

If you live in a hot, arid area where moisture is rare, water in the landscape can help cool a home or outdoor seating area and provide much-needed habitat for insects and animals. However, water must be used with care and can be an expensive option. In these cases, look for ways to use alternative sources of nonpotable water.

For those living in a more urban environment with lots of concrete and hardscape, water features can diminish noise pollution and draw nature to an otherwise sterile area, but you may have to invest in manufactured water features such as swimming and reflecting pools, fountains and water-filled containers.

There are ways to have a water feature almost anywhere, however, that are economical and environmentally sound.

One option is to use harvested rainwater. Rain barrels and cisterns can be used to collect water from rooftops, which can then be used to irrigate garden areas or fed into fountains and other water



Source - Jim Archambault/Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA

## Plant Once, Eat for Years: Using Perennial Fruits and Vegetables in the Garden

features. In fact, rain barrels are now available that combine water collection with a water feature, such as a fountain. Another option is to collect condensation from air conditioning units and feed this water into water features.

Rain gardens are another option. These are actually garden areas developed to collect and filter pollutants from water that runs off driveways, lawns and other ground surfaces. They are planted with water-loving plants that can sustain long periods of dry conditions and can be lovely landscape additions.

If you already have a swimming or reflecting pool, its water can be recirculated through fountains and waterfalls to serve double duty.

Tranquil water features provide a still, quiet option that requires no electricity to operate. And, aside from making sure the water does not become a mosquito breeding ground, can be an easy and inexpensive way to add water to your world. For example, sealed pots and urns filled with water, water plants, and fish can be used to decorate patios or inside your home.

The simple birdbath, which can be beautiful and functional for those who love to watch birds in their yards, can also be equipped with misters to draw even more birds.

But how to power these water projects? One option is to use natural gravity to move water, such as placing a water feature on a slope so rainwater or streams move along on their own. Another way to save on electricity is to use solar-powered pumps.

Regardless of the water feature you choose, a degree of time and money will be required to make them truly beautiful and functional. Before you make that investment, spend time exploring the options through books, websites and local gardening groups or stores. You may want to enlist the help of a professional landscape designer, as well. And, make sure to contact your local municipal and water authorities to ensure that you are complying with water and land-use restrictions.

If your project requires digging, call Miss Dig (or dial 811) and ask to have your yard marked for the location of underground utility lines and cables.

Finally, remember that a water feature, no matter how small and shallow, can be a danger to small children and pets, so be sure to secure it as well as possible from such dangers.

**P**lanting a garden is a rite of spring for most gardeners, but it can be expensive and time consuming. Imagine having fruits and vegetables that come back on their own each year.

That can happen in virtually every part of the United States, regardless of the climate, with perennial plants that produce food year after year.

Among these are asparagus, rhubarb, onions, kale and other leafy greens, artichokes, garlic, radicchio and horseradish, to name a few. And then there are fruits such as strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, figs and fruit trees.

The idea of perennial food gardening is nothing new. But it is enjoying a revival as more gardeners have less time (and sometimes less money), and become more aware of the environmental benefits of planting perennial crops.

To make perennial gardening even more appealing, gardeners are rediscovering less traditional, but delicious and healthy crops, such as bamboo shoots; chayote squash, sunchokes and cardoon. And new edible plants are being discovered regularly, so finding crops that work in any area or climate is becoming easier.

Using perennial crops is part of the permaculture system approach to gardening and farming, which uses techniques and practices that combine the best of wildlife gardening, edible landscaping, and native-plant cultivation into one low-maintenance, self-contained and productive ecosystem.

Permaculture was developed and introduced in the 1970s by Australians Bill Mollison and David Holmgren. They and others have since promoted the idea of food production and agricultural systems that work with nature rather than trying to work around it.

Permaculture uses organic gardening, sustainable farming and forestry and other practices to create a growing and living environment that is interconnected. Gardeners can gradually turn their landscapes and gardens into ecosystems that

provide food not only for people, but for the insects and animals in the environment. Many perennial food crops, especially fruit trees and shrubs, can also be beautiful additions to the landscape.

Learning more about perennial food crops is easy. A web search or visit to the local library will produce lots of information. Check out the book "Perennial Vegetables: From Artichoke to Zuiki Taro, A Gardener's Guide to Over 100 Delicious, Easy-to-Grow Edibles," (Chelsea Green) or [perennialvegetables.org](http://perennialvegetables.org) or [perennial-vegetables.blogspot.com](http://perennial-vegetables.blogspot.com).

To learn more, classes about permaculture may be available locally or online, so check these out, as well.



Photos - Scott Bauer/USDA

# Drivers' Training Can Ease Stress, Save Lives

**G**randparenting has reminded me how much energy it takes to raise brand-new human beings. Most days, I've still got what it takes to survive short stints in the trenches. Sleep-depriving newborns? Terrible twos? Feisty fours? Bring 'em on. I'm up to the challenge when called upon to pinch-hit for parents.

There is one stage, however, I'm planning to avoid in the future. When it comes to the nail-biting, mind-numbing, heart-stopping adrenaline rush of coaching a brand new driver, I'll pass.

Michigan's three-stage licensing process for teens starts early—14 years 9 months—and allows our kids to gradually gain exposure to complex driving situations and ease them into driving over an extended period of time. It also tests the nerves of parents.

Phase one involves at least 80—count 'em, 80—hours of riding shotgun with a driver whose age makes him prone to distraction, impulsive decisions and taking risks. In fact, experts say teens routinely underestimate the crash risk in hazardous situations and overestimate their ability to avoid the threats they do identify. Young novice drivers are more likely to speed, tailgate, run red lights, violate traffic signals, make illegal turns, pass dangerously, and fail to yield to pedestrians.

Plus, I know from experience they are prone to jack-rabbit starts, last-minute stops,



Photo - iStockphoto.com

L-O-N-G waits at stop signs and perilous proximity to rural mailboxes. (I won't mention names, but you know who you are.)

Most terrifying of all, teens like to second-guess and argue with the significant adults in their lives. All this makes for 80 hours of—um, stressful—together time.

Thankfully, not everyone shares my aversion to mentoring new drivers. Every day, courageous (and maybe a little crazy) individuals embrace the challenge and willingly climb into cars with our beloved teens. We call them “drivers' training teachers.”

## Drivers' Training Is a Key Tool

According to AAA Michigan, less than half of American teenage drivers receive any formal driver training before getting a license. However, with new techniques and equipment, professional driving instructors can teach teens safe driving skills and prepare them for the related challenges. Programs vary, but with a little research, you can find the most appropriate driving school for your teen.

AAA also offers a brochure to help you

choose a good one at [teendriving.aaa.com/files/file/ChoosingaDrivingSchool.07.pdf](http://teendriving.aaa.com/files/file/ChoosingaDrivingSchool.07.pdf), and suggest parents consider the following:

▶ **Are the school and instructors certified?** Driving schools should be licensed by the state. Ensure that instructors are current on all certifications.

▶ **What is the ratio of students to instructors?** The more personalized attention your young driver receives, the better.

▶ **How many in-car lessons will my child receive?** Beginners learn best with two in-car lessons each week.

▶ **Will interactive educational tools augment the driving lessons?** Consider programs that offer a minimum of 50 hours of supervised, supplemental driving experience during their instruction.

▶ **Where will instructors take my child to practice?** Driving environments should be varied and include residential streets, city traffic, rural roads, highways and limited-access freeways.

▶ **How many students are allowed in the vehicle during training sessions?** You may request that your teen receive training alone if you would prefer not having other students in the vehicle.

▶ **May parents ride along during training sessions?** Many schools will not allow parents to accompany students during training sessions.

**EVERY DAY**, car crashes end more teen lives than cancer, homicide and suicide combined, and many of these teens are killed as passengers of other teen drivers. Even the best teen drivers have increased risk of being involved in a deadly crash compared with drivers who have more experience.

Get informed and make sure your teens know that driving is risky and should be taken seriously:

- AAA Michigan's SmartStart program promotes family discussion about driving rules and privileges during the first years of licensure. [teendriving.aaa.com/MI/getting-ready/understand-facts-and-risks](http://teendriving.aaa.com/MI/getting-ready/understand-facts-and-risks)
- DriveSteady.com includes a page of “shocking teen driving statistics to prove your point to teen drivers.” [drivesteady.com/teen-driving-statistics](http://drivesteady.com/teen-driving-statistics)
- Impact Teen Drivers lets you take a spin on their probability wheel and find out how your chances of getting into a car crash are affected with each additional distraction. [impactteendrivers.org/the-ugly-truth](http://impactteendrivers.org/the-ugly-truth)

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







# Pond Hill Farm

Photos: Courtesy—Marcie Spencer



**A**fter bottling 900 cases of wine last year—and selling out of four varieties—you get the feeling that the folks at Pond Hill Farm have been doing this kind of thing for generations. Add a farm-to-table cafe, gourmet-tasting dinners, and a brewery on the horizon, you might even think someone in the family has a master’s in business. And when you’re pulled onto the dance floor by an octogenarian at a Pond Hill Barn Dance, you could assume that the barn you’re in has held parties for decades.

The truth is, the rolling fields of Pond Hill Farm, tucked into a bend of northern Michigan’s legendary “Tunnel of Trees” on M-119, have only served Jimmy Spencer’s family since 1993. And, at the time, no one was very serious about farming.

“Jimmy’s parents bought half of an old dairy farm, and Jimmy tried to grow stuff for a few years,” says Jimmy’s wife, Marci. “He didn’t know what he was doing, since he was only about 16 years old at the time,” Marci recalls, “but he knew he loved it, so he put up a little table for vegetables and egg crates and an honesty box at the end of the drive.” Jimmy’s dad wanted him to be an investment banker, but he couldn’t (and still can’t) sit still. After studying horticulture at MSU, he came home to farm full-time.

His buzz of energy for Pond Hill drew locals who had watched him tinker with his fields. “It was all word of mouth, at first,” Marci explains. “When I first came here six years ago to work on the farm for the summer, I felt like I’d discovered a hidden treasure, and I think that’s a feeling I shared with a lot of people.”

**Above:** Most of the food served and sold at Pond Hill Farm is grown there, and there’s lots to do and see for kids of all ages. **Right:** Sharon, Jimmy, and Marci Spencer are the Farm owners; shown with some of their products.

She didn’t know Jimmy; she was only looking for a break from the heat of her home in Arizona and basked in the cool breezes off Little Traverse Bay. When she came up the dusty farm drive with fishing poles on the top of her car, Jimmy took notice. After a summer of farm markets and field work, Jimmy took a chance. “He said, ‘You need to leave and never come back, or come back and never leave,’” says Marci. “We were married soon after.”

Since then, the little farm has exploded with adventure, enterprise and goodness. There’s a squash rocket (yep, a device visitors can use to test their squash-flinging skills), playground, and pig races for kids. There’s a goose that thinks he’s a dog, a tire swing in the barn, and animals who thrive on human touch. Rows of u-pick berries and a pond where the rainbow trout actually leap out of the water. In the cafe, dishes are created with just-pulled veggies and daily-fresh ingredients. If it all sounds somewhat like a fairy tale, well, it just may be.

“I’m not saying it’s not work, because it is,” Marci adds, recounting a story about performing mouth-to-mouth resuscitation on a newborn lamb (who lived, by the way) in a barn crowded with tourists. “But the food is

## *Pond Hill Farm Offerings:*

- On-site farm market
- Canned goods
- Beef, pork, lamb, rainbow trout
- Wine • Pumpkins
- Christmas trees, wreaths
- Plantings, baskets, hanging flowers, flats, vegetable and herb seedlings
- U-pick berries
- Grapes • CSA program
- Cafe • Barn dances

## *Find them at:*

**PondHill.com**  
**231-526-FARM**  
 Five miles north of Harbor Springs, on M-119

so amazing—everything is grown organically, we offer our own farm meats and fish—and people come out to these barn dances and teenagers dance with their grandparents. And we work alongside one another, Jimmy and I, and our kids, and his mother, Sharon, and it’s really all pretty wonderful.”

Tell us about your favorite, or a unique, Michigan-made product. Email [czuker@meca.coop](mailto: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.





Tuna-Apple Boats

# Fun Food *for* Kids

Ask your kids to help you cook up some fun with these kid-approved recipes! Here are some healthy eating tips: ▲ puree veggies into pasta sauce or smoothies, or hide it in ground meats, casseroles, sandwiches or pizza; ▲ food coloring can taste very bitter if you add too much; ▲ healthier substitutes are applesauce for oil and agave syrup for honey. *Enjoy!*

## Tuna-Apple Boats

1 12-oz. can tuna fish, drained  
 1/2 c. diced apples, skin removed  
 2 T. mayonnaise  
 1 T. lemon juice  
 salt and pepper, to taste  
 English muffins, toasted  
 Doritos®

Combine first five ingredients. Place about 3 tablespoons on each muffin and top with a Dorito, so it looks like a sailboat.

*Christin Russman (my mom's recipe)*

## Cheeseburger Meatloaf

1 lb. ground beef  
 1/2 t. salt  
 1/8 t. pepper  
 3 T. ketchup  
 1 T. yellow mustard  
 3 T. pickle relish  
 2 slices white bread, no crust, torn into pieces  
 1 egg

Combine all ingredients well. Preheat oven to 375°. Cover cookie sheet with tin foil. Spray foil with non-stick spray. Scoop entire

mix onto foil sheet; form loaf. Bake for 1 hour and 10 minutes. Turn oven off. Lay three American cheese slices across top. Let sit in oven 2 minutes until melted. Cut in approximately 1½-inch slices.

*Julie McDonald, Freesoil*

## Indoor S'mores

2 c. semi-sweet chocolate chips  
 2 T. peanut butter  
 2 c. mini marshmallows  
 6 whole graham crackers

Break grahams into stamp-size pieces; set aside. In microwave bowl, melt chocolate chips and peanut butter. Remove and stir 3 minutes, then add marshmallows and graham pieces. Mix until well-coated. Spread into greased 9x13-inch pan. Refrigerate 1 hour. Cut and serve.

*Paula Brousseau, Bellaire*

## Tootsie Rolls

2 T. butter, softened  
 1/2 c. unsweetened cocoa powder  
 3 c. powdered sugar

1 t. vanilla  
 1 c. powdered milk  
 1/2 c. white corn syrup

Mix all ingredients together. Knead like bread dough, rolling into a rope. Cut. If sticky, add powdered milk. Let dry for 30 minutes before storing.

*Mary Jo La Londe (for April),  
 Johannesburg*

## Taco Flats

1½ lbs. ground beef  
 1/2 c. chopped onion  
 1/2 chopped green peppers  
 1 8-oz. can tomato sauce  
 1 8-oz. jar mild taco sauce  
 1/2 head lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces  
 tortilla chips  
 2-3 c. shredded Monterey Jack or Cheddar cheese

sour cream and/or salsa, optional

Brown meat with onion and green peppers until onion and peppers are tender. Drain

Photography by: 831 Creative

off fat. Add tomato sauce and taco sauce into meat mixture. Cook until bubbly and simmer uncovered for about 10 min until thick. Arrange tortilla chips on plates. Arrange lettuce over chips. Spoon meat mixture over lettuce. Sprinkle cheese over meat mixture. Spoon sour cream and salsa on top. Makes 4-6 servings.

*Cora Kuiper, Grand Rapids*

## Apple & Cinnamon Wraps

*1/2 c. sugar*

*2 t. ground cinnamon*

*1 pkg. (14-oz.) refrigerated pie pastry*

*3 T. butter, melted, divided*

*2 med. tart apples, cut into 8 wedges each*

In small bowl, combine sugar and cinnamon; set aside 1 tablespoon. On a lightly floured surface, unroll pastry. Brush with 2 tablespoons butter; sprinkle with remaining sugar mixture. Cut each sheet into eight 1-inch strips, about 8 inches long. Wrap one strip around each apple wedge, placing sugared side of pastry against the apple. Place on parchment-paper-lined baking sheet. Brush tops with remaining butter and sprinkle with reserved sugar mixture. Bake at 425° for 13-15 minutes or until pastry is golden brown. Serve warm. Serves 16.

*Marie Rizzio, Interlochen*

## Wormy Apple

*1 1/2 c. whipped vanilla frosting*  
*red paste or gel coloring*

*plastic bag*

*12 unfrosted cupcakes*

*Stems: 3 sm. unwrapped Tootsie Rolls, cut lengthwise in quarters*

*Leaves: 12 gumdrop spearmint leaves*

*12 gummy worms*

*drinking straw*

Tint frosting red. Spoon into the plastic bag, snip off one corner and pipe the outline of an apple on top of each cupcake. Pipe frosting within outline to fill, then spread frosting evenly. Press a Tootsie Roll stem and gumdrop leaf onto each apple. Worm hole: Insert drinking straw through frosting into cupcake, then remove. Place end of worm into hole.

*Janice Harvey, Charlevoix*

## Tex-Mex Chicken Crunchies

*1/2 c. Bisquick® all-purpose baking mix*

*1 large egg*

*1/2 c. enchilada sauce*

*2 c. crushed spicy tortilla chips*

*1/4 c. minced fresh cilantro*

*6 skinned, boned chicken breast halves, cut into 1/2-inch pieces*

*1 c. vegetable oil*

*ranch dressing*

*barbecue sauce*

Place baking mix in a shallow dish. Whisk together egg and enchilada sauce in a small bowl. Stir together tortilla crumbs and cilantro in separate shallow dish. Dredge chicken pieces in baking mix; dip in egg mixture and dredge in crumb mixture. Cover chicken and chill 30 minutes. Pour oil into a large skillet; heat to 375°. Fry chicken, in batches, 3 minutes on each side or until brown. Drain on wire racks over paper towels. Serve with ranch dressing or barbecue sauce. Serves 8-10.

*Marie Rizzio, Interlochen*



Wormy Apple

## Fried Ice Cream Sundae

*1 qt. vanilla ice cream*

*1/4 c. butter*

*1/2 c. brown sugar*

*3 c. toasted and crushed corn, wheat or rice cereal*

*1 12-oz. jar chocolate fudge ice cream topping*

Scoop ice cream into six balls using 2/3 cup ice cream scoop; place on cookie sheet and freeze until solid. Melt butter and brown sugar in heavy skillet, stir in crushed cereal. Remove ice cream balls from freezer and roll in cereal mixture until coated. Place on cookie sheet and return to freezer until ready

to serve. To serve, place balls on individual serving plates; drizzle with topping. Serve immediately. Serves 6.

*Marie Rizzio, Interlochen*

## Golden Tacos

*10 flour tortillas*

*shredded or sliced cheese (cheddar, muenster or colby-jack)*

*deli turkey or ham*

*vegetable oil for pan*

*salsa, optional*

Heat oil in a skillet. Put two slices lunchmeat and one slice cheese in center of flour tortilla. Roll up tortilla. Place seam-side down in hot oil. Brown all sides of tortilla. Remove from pan. Let cool on paper towels. Serve with salsa. Perfect for lunchboxes or pair with soup for a quick, homemade meal.

*Jennifer Sylvester,  
Sand Lake*

## Amish Hats

*Ritz® crackers*

*peanut butter*

*large marshmallows (regular or toasted coconut)*

Lay Ritz crackers (2-3 per person) on a cookie sheet. Spread each with a small amount of peanut butter and top with a large marshmallow. Bake at 350° for 10 min or until browned and puffy. Serve warm.

*Jacob Armstrong, Lyons, OH*

## Bubble Pizza

*1 1/2 lbs. ground beef*

*1 15-oz. can pizza sauce*

*2 tubes (12-oz. each) refrigerated biscuits*

*1 1/2 c. shredded mozzarella cheese*

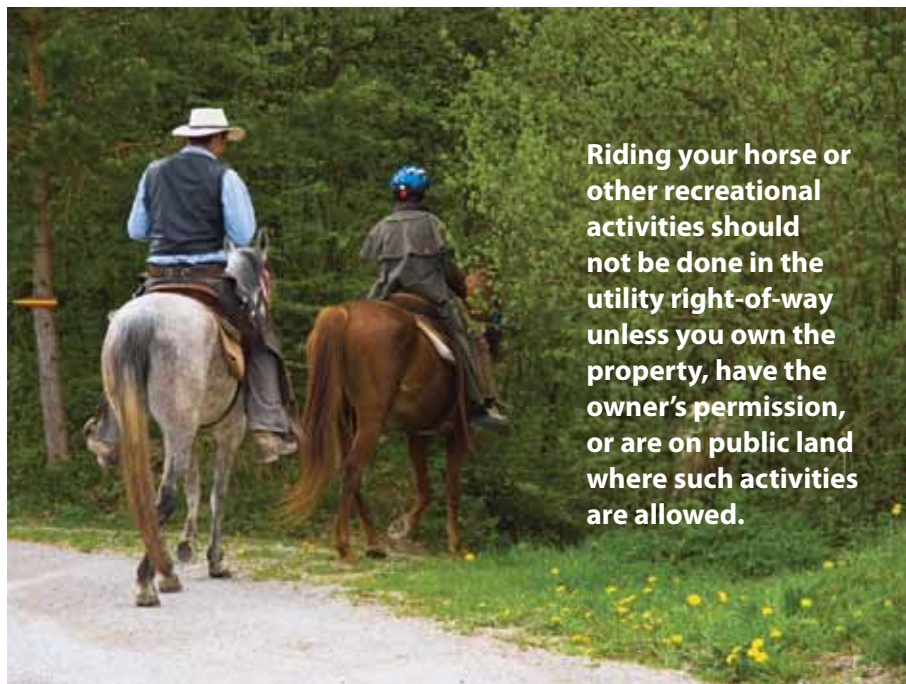
*1 c. shredded cheddar cheese*

In large skillet, cook beef until no longer pink; drain. Stir in pizza sauce. Cut or tear each biscuit into quarters. Place in greased 13 x 9-inch baking dish. Top with beef mixture. Bake uncovered at 400° for 20 minutes. Sprinkle with cheeses. Bake 5-10 minutes longer or until cheese is melted.

*Bonnie Bourn, Constantine*

**SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!** Contributors whose recipes we print in 2012 will be entered in a drawing. We'll draw one winner in December and pay their January 2013 electric bill (up to \$200) as a prize.

Thanks to all who sent in recipes! Upcoming: Please send in **MULTI-MEAL** recipes by July 10 and **TRICK-OR-SWEET** recipes by Sept. 10. Mail to: *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email [recipes@countrylines.com](mailto:recipes@countrylines.com).



**Riding your horse or other recreational activities should not be done in the utility right-of-way unless you own the property, have the owner's permission, or are on public land where such activities are allowed.**

Photo - iStockphoto.com

## Right-of-Way 101

**M**otorists should be familiar with the term “right-of-way,” but it has a different meaning to your electric cooperative.

### What is the right-of-way?

The right-of-way is the strip of land that electric utilities, through an easement or other mechanism, are granted access to use for specific purposes. A typical Great Lakes Energy right-of-way is 30 feet wide for single-phase (two overhead wires) lines and 40 feet for three phase (more than two wires) lines. The power line is usually centered within the right-of-way.

Easement agreements give Great Lakes Energy access rights to private property for the purpose of constructing, inspecting and maintaining its power line distribution system. The easement is typically a written agreement between the utility and property owner.

### Who owns the right-of-way?

The property owner is the owner of the land that the power line crosses. Please remember that Great Lakes Energy's rights-of-way are often on private property. They must be treated like any private land and only be used with the owner's permission. If the right-of-way crosses state forest or other public land, rules on allowable uses of the property still

need to be followed. In addition, the use of motorized vehicles (especially ATVs and snowmobiles) in the power line right-of-way can be dangerous and should be avoided. A collision with a utility pole or guy wire is a personal hazard that can also result in outages.

### How does GLE use the right-of-way?

Access to the right-of-way allows the co-op to service and repair its power line distribution equipment, manage vegetation growth within the right-of-way that threatens electric service reliability and safety, and extend new lines to meet growth.

Trees are the most common cause of power outages for our members. Routine maintenance of trees and other vegetation on more than 11,000 miles of GLE overhead line is a large undertaking, but one that improves reliability for our members. Routine tree maintenance in the right-of-way is completed on an approximate six- to seven-year cycle. Power line rights-of-way in 17 counties are on the tree-trimming schedule for this year. Members served by the lines scheduled for maintenance are contacted by phone and postcard prior to the start of any work.

Please visit [gtlakes.com](http://gtlakes.com) or contact us for more information.

**Please remember that Great Lakes Energy's rights-of-way are often on private property.**

## 'How Much Did I Earn Last Year?'

See the 2011 allocation message on your June bill.

**P**art of the value of being a member of Great Lakes Energy is you are entitled to a share of the margins or profits the cooperative earns.

We maintain an annual record of your share of these margins. Your share is referred to as a “capital credit allocation” and remains with the cooperative until financial conditions permit us to return the earnings to you.

A short message will appear on your June bill to inform you of the capital credit allocation amount you earned in 2011. This amount is *not* a refund, but a record of your annual investment in your cooperative.

You will be notified when part of your allocations are to be returned to you as a refund. The next capital credit refund is expected to occur in December or January, and details will be shared later in *Michigan Country Lines*.

### ► How is my share determined?

Capital credits are allocated based on the total amount members pay each year for electricity. If the total amount you paid last year was more than your neighbor's, your allocation amount will also be larger.

### ► What does the co-op do with my capital credit allocation money?

Capital credits represent operating capital provided by the membership to the cooperative and are a major source of equity and operating funds for Great Lakes Energy. Capital credits help make it possible for us to secure loans, improve electric service reliability, and expand our system to meet the demands of our membership.

**At Great Lakes Energy, you're more than just a customer; you're a member. The capital credits program is another way we look out for you.**

### Election Ballot In Next Issue

The mail-in ballot for election of Great Lakes Energy directors will be included in your July-August issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

Exercise your right as a co-op member by voting for the board candidates of your choice.

**GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CONSOLIDATED BALANCE SHEET\***  
as of Dec. 31, 2011

**ASSETS**

<b>Electric plant:</b>	
Distribution plant	\$ 378,418,767
Construction in progress	7,328,288
	<u>385,747,055</u>
Less accumulated depreciation	104,969,483
Net electric plant	<u>280,777,572</u>
<b>Other assets and investments:</b>	
Nonutility plant, net of depreciation	3,142
Investments and memberships	94,548,200
Notes and other receivables	520,762
	<u>95,072,104</u>
<b>Current assets:</b>	
Cash	1,153,023
Temporary investments and special funds	5,040,970
Accounts receivable, net of bad debt reserve	19,550,729
Materials and supplies	2,192,061
Other current assets	1,837,390
Total current assets	<u>29,774,173</u>
<b>Deferred charges</b>	149,654
<b>Total assets</b>	<u>\$ 405,773,503</u>

**EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES**

<b>Equities:</b>	
Memberships	\$ 519,740
Patronage capital	144,386,718
Donated capital	3,250,427
Accumulated other comprehensive expenses	(7,703,580)
Total equities	<u>140,453,305</u>
<b>Long-term debt, net of current portion, and non-current accrued expenses:</b>	
Rural Utilities Service, Cooperative Finance Corporation and CoBank long-term debt	135,307,357
Other long-term debt	79,505,935
Non-current accrued expenses	18,154,529
Total long-term debt and non-current accrued expenses	<u>232,967,821</u>
<b>Current liabilities:</b>	
Current maturities of long-term debt	4,991,213
Note payable	173,902
Accounts payable	12,054,198
Accrued expenses	6,605,405
Customer deposits	1,411,271
Total current liabilities	<u>25,235,989</u>
<b>Deferred credits</b>	7,116,388
<b>Total liabilities and equities</b>	<u>\$ 405,773,503</u>

**GREAT LAKES ENERGY COOPERATIVE CONSOLIDATED OPERATING STATEMENTS\***  
for the years ended Dec. 31, 2011 and 2010

	2011	2010
<b>OPERATING REVENUES</b>	\$ 164,335,520	\$ 154,912,162
<b>Operating expenses:</b>		
Cost of power	104,719,318	99,011,929
Distribution system operating and maintenance expenses	21,136,258	20,716,538
Customer service and information expenses	6,966,811	6,782,894
Administrative and general expenses	7,732,129	7,465,097
Depreciation and amortization	11,393,031	10,917,691
Other operating expenses	411,633	276,075
Total operating expenses	<u>152,359,180</u>	<u>145,170,224</u>
Operating margins before fixed charges	11,976,340	9,741,938
<b>Fixed charges, interest expense</b>	10,082,897	9,921,220
Operating margins after fixed charges	1,893,443	(179,282)
<b>Non-operating margins:</b>		
Interest income	1,099,412	1,087,784
Other income, net	(311,085)	(265,734)
Total non-operating income	<u>788,327</u>	<u>822,050</u>
<b>Capital credits from associated organizations:</b>		
Wolverine Power Company	-	-
Other associated organizations	6,402,602	304,508
Total capital credits from associated organizations	<u>6,402,602</u>	<u>304,508</u>
<b>Net margins</b>	<u>\$ 9,084,372</u>	<u>\$ 947,276</u>

\* A copy of the audited financial statements and auditors' report is on file at the cooperative's office in Boyne City, MI.



## Transmission Improvements Continue in 2012

Fifty-eight miles targeted for upgrades.

**Photos:** (L) Wolverine's upgraded substation near Baldwin. (R) Installation of 115-foot steel poles near Dorr, south of Grand Rapids.

**W**olverine Power Cooperative is rebuilding 58 miles of its transmission system in 2012 to ensure continued, reliable service to members. The co-op will also replace close to 900 poles and upgrade five substations on its 1,600-mile system.

In its northern territory, the co-op is working on lines near Grawn and East Jordan, and south of US-10, Wolverine is installing new poles and wire in the Weidman, Baldwin and Wayland areas. Additionally, substations near Atlanta, Traverse City, Odessa, Portland and Baldwin will see improvements.

"We're making good progress on projects planned for the year," says Danny Janway, vice president of engineering and operations for Wolverine. "We shifted our focus for about a week in early March to assist members with outages caused by the snowstorm and then went right back to work on our system."

Transmission system projects are identified using a five-year construction work plan that is reviewed each fall by engineering and operations personnel from

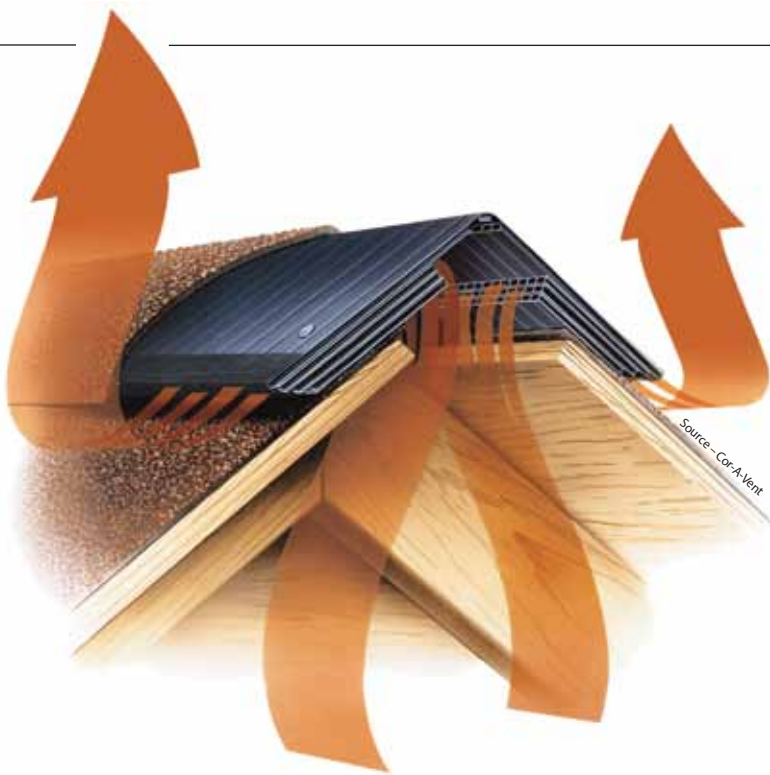
Wolverine and its members and updated accordingly.

Projects are prioritized, yet subject to change to accommodate load growth or new load in a member's service area. Required industry planning standards and power flow modeling also determine which projects will be completed.

The primary component of the plan continues to be the replacement of transmission lines to improve Wolverine's aging system. Some equipment on the system is more than 50 years old.

"Our employees work hard to maintain and improve our transmission system," Janway says. "We have 230 miles of upgrades planned for the system between 2012 and 2016 and completed 210 miles from 2007 to 2011."

Wolverine's transmission lines extend 1,600 miles and serve the distribution systems of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative and Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. Midwest Energy Cooperative, Wolverine's newest member, maintains its own, separate distribution system.



Source - Lomario

**Above:** A roll-out continuous attic ridge vent has many passages for the air to flow out of the hottest part of the attic.

**Left:** This schematic shows the hot air flow from an attic through a rigid-type vent. Notice it is covered with shingles for a nice appearance.

## Block Heat for Cooler Rooms

Beyond a new roof, adding insulation and attic ventilation can help cool rooms directly below hot attic space.

**Q:** *Even though I think my house is adequately insulated, my air conditioner runs a lot. On sunny days, the bedroom ceiling seems hot, so I assume heat is coming from the hot roof. How can I reduce this heat flow?*

**A:** Adequate attic insulation is only one aspect of keeping your house cool and reducing air-conditioning costs. By “insulation,” most folks mean thermal insulation that blocks heat conduction. This includes fiberglass, rock wool, foam, and/or cellulose insulation on the attic floor and in the walls.

There are three modes of heat transfer—conduction, convection and radiation. Conduction refers to heat flow through solid materials—this is how the handle of a metal skillet gets hot on the stove. Convection is similar to conduction, but occurs in fluids and gases. This is why you feel colder in the wind than in still air.

Regular thermal insulation in your home’s walls and ceiling, which you refer to, blocks both conduction and convection heat losses. Most recommended insulation charts, which rate it by R-values, refer to thermal insulation.

Unfortunately, standard thermal insulation is not very effective for blocking the third heat flow mode—radiation. Radiation heat flow is how the sun heats the Earth, and why you feel warm in front of an open fireplace. On a hot summer day, a roof, especially one with dark asphalt shingles, gets extremely hot. This heat then radiates downward through the attic floor insulation and into your house.

You can tell if the ceiling is hotter than the walls just by putting the back of your hand against it in the afternoon, and if it feels much warmer, this may be a major reason for high electric bills.

Even with the air conditioner running and the room feeling reasonably cool, you may still feel uncomfortable under a warm ceiling. This heat often causes you to set the air conditioner thermostat even lower, which further increases your electric bills.

If your house will need a new roof soon, replace it with light-colored—preferably white—shingles to reduce roof temperature. Metal roofs, particularly aluminum ones with heat-reflective (not visibly reflective) paint, stay even cooler and minimize heat transfer down to the ceiling below.

Other than replacing the roof, adding more insulation and adequate attic ventilation can help significantly. When I installed more attic vents in my own home, I could immediately feel the temperature difference in my second-floor bedroom.

Adding extra insulation will also cool ceilings that meet attic space because it blocks heat transfer. Attic vents, continuous ridge or inlet soffit, work best because they allow cool air to move low over the insulation, become less dense as it warms up, and then flow out the ridge vent.

Your attic and roof will still be hot, but extra insulation and ventilation will help cool the living space underneath it.

If you have a question for Jim, please email [jdulley@countrylines.com](mailto:jdulley@countrylines.com), or mail to James Dulley, Michigan Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Be sure to let us know which electric co-op you receive service from.

Visit [dulley.com](http://dulley.com) for more home improvement and do-it-yourself tips.

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



# Watch for Signs of Heat Illnesses

Keep the fun in your summer by knowing how to recognize and prevent heat-related illnesses.

**HEAT STROKE** The most serious of heat illnesses, this can be deadly and swift. Your body temperature could rise to 106 degrees F or more in as few as 10 to 15 minutes. Heat stroke happens when your body temperature rises rapidly but cannot sweat quickly enough to cool itself. Symptoms include hot, dry skin or the opposite—profuse sweating, hallucinations, chills, throbbing headache, confusion or dizziness, and slurred speech.

When these symptoms occur, immediately call 911 and move the person to a shady area. Try misting the person with cold water, soaking his or her clothes, or fanning the body.

**HEAT EXHAUSTION** Heat exhaustion results from heavy sweating—extreme loss of salt and water. People prone to this include the elderly or those with high blood pressure or who work in hot conditions. Besides excessive sweating, symptoms include extreme weak-

ness or fatigue, dizziness, confusion, nausea, clammy skin, muscle cramps and shallow, rapid breathing.

Move the victim to a shaded or air-conditioned area, and have him or her drink cool, non-alcoholic beverages; a cool shower or bath is also recommended.

**HEAT SYNCOPE** Sunbathers may be prone to heat syncope, which is dizziness or fainting after lying (or standing) for long periods. Dehydration can contribute to heat syncope, so keep that water bottle handy when you go to the beach.

If you feel dizzy after lying for a long time, sit or lie back down in a cool place and sip on a cool beverage—water, sports drinks, or clear juice.

**HEAT CRAMPS** Folks who work or play sports in the heat may suffer from heat cramps, which result from low salt levels after heavy

sweating. The cramps are usually felt in the arms, legs or abdomen.

With these symptoms, stop what you're doing, sit in a cool place, and sip clear juice or a sports beverage. Take it easy for a few hours after the cramps are gone—if you return to your activity, the condition could transition to heat exhaustion or heat stroke. If you have heart problems, are on a low-sodium diet, or the cramps do not go away in an hour, call a doctor.

**HEAT RASH** Heavy sweating can cause a rash that looks like a red cluster of pimples or small blisters that usually show up on the neck or chest, groin, and crook of your elbow. You can't do much to treat this besides keeping the area dry and using baby powder to alleviate discomfort.

Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control

## Pump Up Your Pool's Efficiency

Soak up these pool efficiency tips to save money while maintaining your personal oasis.

Each swimming pool is equipped with an energy guzzler: the pump. The bigger the pump, the higher the electric bill. Make sure your pool uses the smallest unit possible, and new products like variable-speed pumps offer a good way to save. A knowledgeable pool supply or service store can help choose a proper pump for your pool, while considering its size, filter and piping.

Greater savings can come from decreasing pump operation time, no matter the pump size. Keep drains clear of debris, or your pump will work harder to circulate water. Also, find a proper balance for backwashing the filter. Too much backwashing—filtering and disposing of dirty water—wastes water, while too little strains the pump.

**These common myths lead to extra pump time (and wasted energy):**

■ **I need to run my pump to keep chemicals mixed – FALSE.** Circulate while adding chemicals, and they will stay mixed. There's

no need to “re-mix” by recirculating the water each day.

■ **My pool will be dirty if I don't run my pump to constantly clean debris – FALSE.**

Try running your pump for six hours or less a day (EnergySavers.gov). If the cleanliness is not to your liking, increase filtration time by 30-minute increments until you are satisfied. If six hours works well, try decreasing filtration time to find a balance with energy efficiency. To keep debris down without running the pump overtime, use a skimmer to manually clean the water. Also, try using a timer to run the filter for several short periods during the day rather than allowing debris to pile up after one long, continuous filtration.

■ **I need my pump to run continuously to keep algae at bay – FALSE.** Proper chemical balance and brushing down pool walls are the best algae fighters.

Make sure your pool isn't draining energy dollars needlessly by adjusting pump time



Source – Pentair Water Pool and Spa, Inc.

If you're thinking of updating your pool pump, learn about energy-efficient technology like a variable speed pump.

and investing a little legwork. You'll have a prime poolside spot to relax in afterward, and the relief you'll see on your power bill will be worth the effort.

Find more ways to save energy around your home at [TogetherWeSave.com](http://TogetherWeSave.com).

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, Pentair Water Pool & Spa, Inc.

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



# Online Home Audit

## The Do-It-Yourself Way To Save Energy

On average, people spend 90 percent of their time indoors, so your home is more than a roof over your head—it's a place of comfort, safety and well-being where families relax and spend time together.

An investment in the energy efficiency of your home is an investment in your family and well-being. When you save energy, you:

- ▲ **Solve common household problems**—drafty rooms, ice dams, mold, moisture or musty odors.
- ▲ **Regain control.** Identify the parts of your house that use the most energy and tackle energy waste.
- ▲ **Feel better at home.** An energy efficient home can improve indoor air quality and overall comfort.

### Home Energy Assessment

An on-site home energy assessment is the best way to determine where your home is wasting energy. A certified energy professional conducts a series of tests to assess air tightness, insulation levels, ventilation, heating and

cooling equipment, and combustion safety. You are then provided a report identifying energy-related improvements to help lower your energy use.

The only challenge is that an in-person home energy assessment may cost between \$300 and \$600 to complete. That price tag can put this assessment out of reach for a lot of folks. Fortunately, Great Lakes Energy members have another option—an online home audit.

### Affordable Alternative—Online Home Audit

Great Lakes Energy's Home Energy Optimizer is a *free* online tool that leads you through a series of questions about your home to evaluate your energy use and determine how your home may be losing energy.

The Home Energy Optimizer tool is also calibrated for your location and climate. You enter as little or as much information as you like, although more detail provides more accurate and customized results. Either way,

you receive personalized energy-saving tips, and you won't have to pay a cent for them.


For your convenience, you can save your responses and come back later. This is useful if you run out of time to answer the Home Energy Optimizer questions or want to change your answers in the future.

### Getting Started

- Go to [michigan-energy.org/greatlakes](http://michigan-energy.org/greatlakes) and click on the "Home Audit" link on the left-hand menu.
- **Enter details** about your home and answer the questions. Jot down your session ID.
- **Finish the audit and get a *free* energy-saving kit** that includes: 5 CFLs, 1 energy-efficient bath aerator, 1 energy-efficient kitchen aerator, and 1 energy-efficient shower head.
- **Take action.** Complete the easy energy-saving tips first, then move onto more advanced ones.

### More Ways To Save

In addition to the Home Energy Optimizer, Great Lakes Energy offers many other Energy Optimization (EO) programs that help you manage your energy use. Learn more at [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or call 877-296-4319.




**Put your home to the test—virtually**


Is your home wasting energy? Now you can use your computer to find out. The online Energy Optimizer tool asks you questions about your home to help you determine its energy efficiency. You'll also receive customized energy-saving tips and ideas. Best of all, it's FREE!

**PASS? FAIL?**

**ENERGY TIP: Complete an online energy audit and receive a FREE energy-saving kit.**

**Online:** [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org)    **Phone:** 877.296.4319

 **Energy Optimization**

 **Great Lakes ENERGY**  
Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org).

# Family Man

This will be my first Father's Day without my Dad. Given my age, that's remarkable. Most friends of a similar age lost their fathers long ago.

We have a picture of Frank (right), taken before any of his five kids were around, that shows him fishing, dressed like a Calvin Klein model in t-shirt and khakis. I love that picture because it shows him in all of his youthful promise, before we knew him and before life intervened.

He lost his own father not long after I was born, so he was "The Man" in the family for a long time. He was in the Army when his first child (me) was born, getting ready to wade ashore on Guam. So he wasn't around for my first year.

But he was around all the time after that, which is not the case for too many kids today.

He was a gentle, smart, hardworking and quietly religious guy who enjoyed simple things: the abandoned farmhouse he rescued and remodeled with Mom, gardening, making old things work again, beer and nuts, pork ribs cooked on a Weber grill, an Upper Peninsula sunset, an interesting Charlie Rose interview. But his family was the most important thing in his life, with his grandchildren the crowning achievement.

He could have gone to college, as many who returned from the war did under the G.I. Bill. But he had a family, and so he went back to working for the railroad, helping to keep the trains running that shipped the iron ore that kept America's factories supplied with steel for the post-war consumer products boom. Dad helped build America, for which the laborers of this country are not given enough credit.

He once told my brother Tom he hated the Army, but he was very proud of his service. He was inducted in July 1942 and in July 1944 started a full year of almost continuous combat. Other than that, we don't know much about his service, because like so many other soldiers he wasn't comfortable talking about his war experience.

When he returned, he took my mother to every war movie. Tom thinks it may have been his way of telling her what he experienced, and a way to decompress.

He wished to be buried with military ceremony, so we buried him last month, at



Frank Buda, 1918–2012

age 94, in Fort Snelling National Cemetery in Minneapolis.

He was a railroad man who walked to work, a mile each way. He spent his days outside, doing hard physical labor, and was physically strong into late-life because of it, which explains how he was able to rake snow off his second-story roof when he was nearly 80. We thought he was crazy for going up there with the cold and ice, but I understood his need to know he could still do those kinds of things.

Even when he retired, he couldn't get away from the railroad. He and Mom bought a farm next to the railroad tracks, where trains ran daily and blew their whistles late into the night. Ironically, he found quiet there.

He loved Weber grills—the round, charcoal ones, not the gas ones. Our last argument 30 years ago was over some disparaging remark he made about my cheap propane grill. I now use his Weber for his famous pork ribs.

He could cook and bake, and was good at both. When he was occasionally laid off, he came up with new recipes, and his cherry nut ring was exceptional.

By current health standards, he was a model for good eating. He liked bacon and eggs, cream in coffee, nuts with beer, sardines, the other white meat, and Hostess fruit pies in his lunch box. No fad diets for him.

He would crack us up at dinner with stories about the hijinks of the railroad crew

he worked with in such exotic places as Park Falls, Mellen and Marengo, WI.

He was also an example of the kind of patience that let his kids learn from their own dumb mistakes, and the kind of pride that insisted on paying his way, stubbornly carrying his own load, and regretting the need to ask for help. But he asked when he had to—for his family.

He kept the cleanest basement in three states. You could perform an operation there without fear of infection. Tools and sorted bottles of screws, nails and bolts stood with military precision on his work benches.

Dad wasn't much into sports, but he became a football fan in later years, following the Green Bay Packers and, especially, the golden boy Bret Favre—until Favre became a traitor by coming out of retirement to play for other teams.

I remember hot, woodstove fires in the farmhouse that allowed him to wear shorts and t-shirts all winter; the petroleum jelly, WD-40 and duct tape that kept his secondhand cars on the road; his cursing like the father in *Christmas Story*; and teaching him to drive.

We didn't have a car until I was a senior in high school. Since I had taken driver's ed, it fell to me to give him lessons. I don't know which of us was more nervous when he took the driving test.

One of my favorite memories is the Father's Day, about 20 years ago, when he went golfing with me and my sons, Dan and Jon. I'd never known him to golf, but while the rest of us tried to crush the ball, driving it from one side of the fairway to the other without much progress, he hit simple, straight strokes right down the middle and reached the green well before we did.

Simple, steady and true, as always. Happy Father's Day.

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





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