

# Michigan

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Photo - Lynn Betts, NRCS

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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.

Photo - 831 Creative



Michigan's Electric  
Cooperatives  
countrylines.com



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Robert Hance

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# Nonprofit Politics & Rates

**H**as this felt like the longest political season on record, or is it just me?

At national, state and local levels, it seems like the inter- and cross-party bashing has been particularly heated and unsavory this year, and the political rhetoric even more pronounced. I'm a very politically engaged and astute person, but it's getting old and we still have a lot of time before the general election.

Personal opinions aside, I want you to know that your electric co-op is constantly working across all levels of the political spectrum to make sure your voice is well-represented as it relates to energy policy and other issues that impact you as an owner of Midwest Energy. We have no corporate political affiliation; our only motivation is to make sure that anyone who drives policy—Republican, Democrat, Independent or some hybrid of these—is well informed about and aware of the impacts of their decisions on our members. *You* are our only affiliation.

Climate change is a perfect example. Great sound bites are born out of the desire to clean up our environment, but retrofitting coal-powered generating stations or shuttering those stations altogether in favor of renewable generation will result in major increases to power supply costs. The environmental folks clearly have the attention of the legislators, and we need to be sure we have equal time and attention to promote a balanced approach between environmental concerns and the impact on electric ratepayers. We accomplish that through our own initiatives, and as an active player in well-organized and orchestrated state and national efforts.

The same commitment holds true related to your rates. We are regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC). It's not a simple relationship, but it boils down to the simple point that we propose rate structures for the various classes of members (residential, commercial, irrigation, etc.) and the MPSC

ultimately blesses our proposal or works with us on something they consider more palatable. As a member-owned utility, we have no motivation to propose ludicrous

rate structures; that serves no one in a cooperative business model. But we do engage in many conversations with MPSC staffers, just as we do with legislators, to make sure that we help them make appropriate decisions for you.

The MPSC provides an online monthly comparison of average rates among regulated electric utilities. In their May 1 report,

the average residential rate for 1,000 kilowatt hours (kWh) for all regulated utilities, including cooperatives and investor-owned, was 13.51 cents/kWh. Midwest Energy's rate at that level of use was 12.79 cents/kWh. We work hard to provide high levels of reliability and great value, and I believe we are doing just that.

Just like any other business, our costs are going up. As shown on the annual report on the next page, about 66 cents of every dollar you pay us goes towards power supply. That's money you pay in and we pay right back out. The remaining 34 cents is the cost of running our distribution system. We have worked hard over the years to manage these costs, and based on the MPSC comparison I believe we have done an excellent job. However, after a careful and thorough review of costs, we have submitted to the MPSC a modest rate increase request that averages 2.34 percent. If approved, this will go into effect early this fall and a portion of the increase will likely be reflected in the service charge.

Next month, I will share more information about our recent cost-of-service study and how that may impact rates in coming years. We work hard to manage expenses while providing a highly reliable and valuable service to you, and we intend to be fully transparent about what we're doing and why. We advocate, evaluate, communicate and deliver. As owners of this business, you deserve nothing less.



**Robert Hance**  
President/CEO



Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE

# 2011 Annual Report

## Independent Auditor's Report

We have audited the accompanying balance sheets of Midwest Energy Cooperative as of December 31, 2011 and 2010, and the related statements of revenue, patronage capital, and cash flows for the years then ended. These financial statements are the responsibility of Midwest Energy Cooperative's management. Our responsibility is to express an opinion on these financial statements based on our audits.

We conducted our audits in accordance with auditing standards generally accepted in the United States of America and the standards applicable to financial audits contained in Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements are free of material misstatement. An audit includes examining, on a test basis, evidence supporting the amounts and disclosures in the financial statements. An audit also includes assessing the accounting principles used and significant estimates made by management, as well as evaluating the overall financial statement presentation. We believe that our audit provides a reasonable basis for our opinion.

In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Midwest Energy Cooperative and subsidiary as of December 31, 2011 and 2010, and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the years then ended in conformity with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.

*Harris Group  
March 5, 2012*

## Director's Compensation Disclosure

Elected directors of Midwest Energy Cooperative are provided with an annual retainer of \$1,200 and a \$500 per diem for meetings attended on behalf of the cooperative. The chairman receives an annual retainer of \$2,200 and \$550 for meetings.

## STATEMENTS OF REVENUES

Years ending December 31, 2011 and 2010 (Dollars in 000)

	2011	2010
Operating Revenues	\$ 68,022	\$ 65,628
Operation & Maintenance Expense	58,019	55,902
Depreciation, Taxes, Interest, Etc.	9,778	9,496
Operating Margin	225	229
Capital Credits	1,658	1,516
Other non-operating income (exp)	823	984
Net Margins (LOSS)	\$ 2,706	\$ 2,730

## BALANCE SHEETS

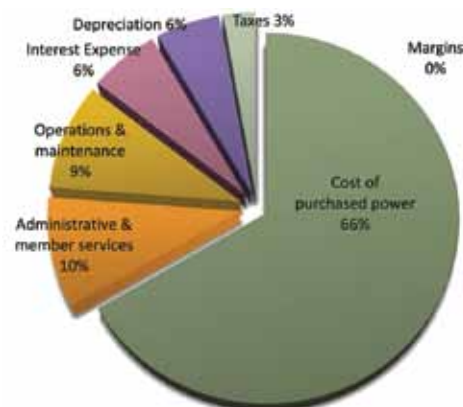
Years ending December 31, 2011 and 2010 (Dollars in 000)

<b>ASSETS</b>		
Utility plant in service, net	\$ 100,168	\$ 95,249
Other assets and investments	17,739	16,072
Current assets	7,166	10,922
Deferred charges	2,610	4,683
Total Assets	\$ 127,683	\$ 126,926
<b>EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES</b>		
Equities	\$ 33,093	\$ 34,935
Long-term debt	76,272	72,539
Accumulated operating provisions	6,982	2,999
Current liabilities	10,702	9,534
Deferred credits	634	6,919
Total Equity and Liabilities	\$ 127,683	\$ 126,926

## Where Our Sales Come From



## Where Your Dollar Goes





# 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](http://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](http://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

## CELEBRATE INTERNATIONAL YEAR of COOPERATIVES!

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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.



# Midwest in the Community

**G**iving back to our communities is one of the core values of Midwest Energy. We believe in doing what we can, individually and as a family of employees, to strengthen and support the communities in which we live, work and serve. Following are some of the ways we impacted our communities over the last few months.

In April, Midwest employees provided our hotline safety demonstration program to nearly 600 fourth grade students as part of our 2012 Safety Month Contest. Students from Britton, Clinton and Deerfield schools in southeast Michigan and Watervliet, Hartford and Paw Paw schools in southwest Michigan were presented with the interactive safety demonstration, then provided with supplies to draw a poster to show what they learned. Each participating classroom will select one poster to represent their class, and a team of Midwest Energy employees will select one winning design from each school, as well as one overall winner from all entries. The winning classrooms will be treated to a field trip, courtesy of Midwest, and each student will be presented with a Safety Month t-shirt featuring the 2012 winning design.

Watch the July/August issue for a picture of the winning design and pictures from our field trips!

**Midwest Energy Cooperative  
offices will be **CLOSED** for the  
**INDEPENDENCE DAY** holiday  
on Wednesday, July 4.  
Payments may be made at  
the drop box and will be  
posted on the next open  
business day.**

***Have a happy and safe  
Independence Day!***



A team of 10 Midwest employees and family members brought some warmth and sunshine into the lives of local residents on a cold, wet April Saturday as they hosted and served at the St. Paul's Episcopal Church soup kitchen in Dowagiac. Roxanne Roush (left), wife of vice president of operations Mike Roush, and Patti Clymer, billing representative, work together in the food line to dish up both food and hospitality to guests.

Lineman Mark Kangas (right) and field technician Rich Drews (below) were part of the team of employees who presented hotline safety demonstrations to nearly 600 fourth grade students as part of the 2012 safety month contest.







## April Winner!

The votes are in and Angel Wold, a member from Lawton, is the April winner of our 2012 Your Perspective Photo Contest. The photo of a pasture on a beautiful autumn day secured the most votes by Apr. 30 and won Angel a \$20 bill credit. There's still plenty of time to submit your entry. Visit us at [Facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest) for details and official rules.



## Free Energy Forums in July

Looking for more efficiency, safety and comfort in your mobile or manufactured home? Midwest Energy Cooperative invites you to join us at one of our free forums where you will learn about some of the unique challenges involved in weatherizing in this housing sector. Presenters will address:

- ▲ How to make your existing home more comfortable, safe and energy efficient;
- ▲ What to look for in a weatherization contractor;
- ▲ Where to find local resources and financing;
- ▲ What to look for when purchasing a new mobile/manufactured home.

These events are free and open to the public. Sessions will be held from 6-8 p.m. on Tues., July 17, at The Centre in Adrian; Wed., July 18, at the Van Buren Conference Center in Lawrence; and Thur., July 19, at the Southwestern Michigan College Mathews Conference Center West in Dowagiac.

For more information or to reserve your spot, please call Lori at 269-445-1139 or visit [TeamMidwest.com](http://TeamMidwest.com).

## Employee Accomplishments



Kerri Wade



Angie Edge



Greg Hodgson



Brad Jensen

Midwest Energy Cooperative supports our employee family in seeking training and education to allow us to provide the highest levels of leadership and member service. This month we're pleased to share recent accomplishments among our employees.

Kerri Wade, vice president of administrative resources, and Angie Edge, controller, graduated from the Robert I. Kabat Management Internship Program (MIP), a series of workshops offered by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin. The program guides participants through all facets of the electric utility industry, equipping them to manage and lead employees and operations to best serve members and other constituents.

Greg Hodgson and Brad Jensen, members of our operations team, recently completed the necessary 7,000 hours and required course material to graduate from the apprenticeship program, earning the title of journeyman lineman.

# 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



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* to find out how little measures around the house add up to big energy savings.

## 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*

# 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.

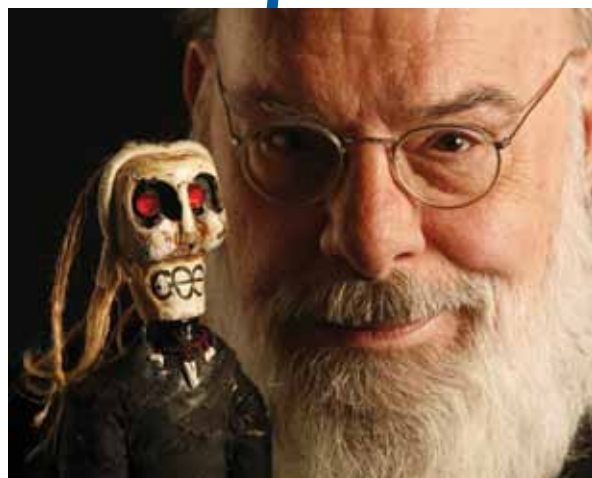
With help from family, friends and magicians across the country, Bordner continues producing "Abbott's Magic Get-Together" each August. The 75th event, Aug. 1-4, features multiple performances, competitions, classes, dealers and demonstrations, and a guided tour of Lakeside Cemetery, where Blackstone 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**  
**269-432-3235**

Abbott's Magic Get-Together  
**magicgettogether.com**

FAB Magic Company  
**fabmagic.com**  
**269-432-4017**

American Museum of Magic  
**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



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



Ball Horticultural Company

Aquilegia 'Robin' (columbine)



Walters Gardens, Inc.

Dicentra 'Valentine' (bleeding heart)



Walters Gardens, Inc.

Aruncus 'Misty Lace' (goatsbeard)



Walters Gardens, Inc.

Ligularia 'Bottle Rocket'



# 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 - Jim Archambault/Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA



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



## *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,

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.



Photo - iStockphoto.com

**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

**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 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 13x9-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).

# STATE OF MICHIGAN

## BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

### NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-16426-R

- Midwest Energy Cooperative requests Michigan Public Service Commission approval to reconcile its 2011 power supply cost recovery costs and revenues, revise specified tariffs, and increase its revenues through its times interest earned ratio (TIER) ratemaking mechanism.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 East State Street, P.O. Box 127, Cassopolis, Michigan 49031, (800) 492-5989 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at the offices of Midwest Energy Cooperative.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

**DATE/TIME:** June 26, 2012, 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 Theresa A. Sheets

**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](http://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 March 30, 2012, application of Midwest Energy Cooperative (Midwest) to reconcile its 2011 power supply cost recovery (PSCR) costs and revenues. Midwest represents that its 2011 net overrecovery is \$445,432, including prior years' balances. Midwest is also seeking specified tariff changes, and a \$1,581,193 or 2.34% increase in its rates through its TIER Ratemaking Mechanism for the 12-month period ended December 31, 2011.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: [michigan.gov/mpscdockets](http://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](mailto: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](mailto: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 June 19, 2012. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Midwest's attorney, Bret A. Totoraitis, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

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

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

A copy of Midwest's request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: [michigan.gov/mpscdockets](http://michigan.gov/mpscdockets), and at the offices of Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 E. 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.

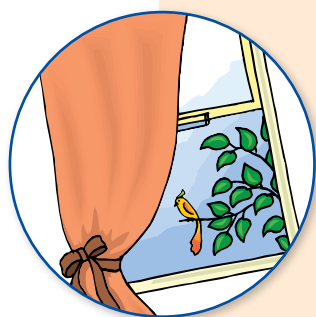
Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

May 9, 2012

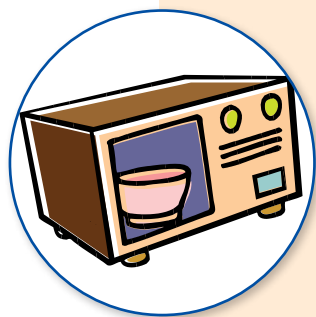


# 10 Simple Ways You Can Help Conserve Electricity During Peak Energy Periods

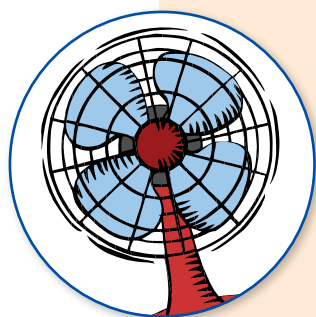
In the heat of summer, it's not uncommon for your co-op to experience peaks of high energy use. During these peaks, we ask that you do what you can to help conserve energy. You'll not only help your electric cooperative through the brief period of peak energy use, you'll also reduce your own consumption.



**1** Set your thermostat at the highest comfortable temperature—76 degrees or higher—and keep it there. Each degree a thermostat is raised can save up to 4 percent of the cost of operating an air conditioner and help the power companies keep the electricity flowing. If you have window air conditioning units, keep them on the highest temperature setting.



**2** Postpone the use of major appliances, such as clothes dryers and dishwashers, until late in the evening or early in the morning.



**3** Turn off all unnecessary lights. Also check for any computers, TV sets, stereo equipment and other appliances that may be on but aren't in use. Not only do they use extra electricity, they add heat to the house and that makes your air conditioner work harder.

**4** Close drapes and blinds on the sunny side of the house. The sun streaming in through a window can add considerable heat to a room and make it harder to cool.

**5** Reduce the amount of space that must be cooled in your home by closing off rooms that aren't being used. If you have a den, a utility room or bedrooms that aren't in use, close the air conditioning vents in those rooms and shut the door. With window units, simply shut the doors to unused rooms or shut off any window air conditioners that are located in these rooms.

**6** Keep the door to your refrigerator and freezer closed as much as possible. A refrigerator with the door standing open uses a lot more energy than the one with the door closed.

**7** Make sure the filter on your air conditioner is clean. Good air flow is a key to keeping cool, so make sure your system isn't working harder than it has to. In addition, make sure vents are clear of furniture or other objects that might block air flow.

**8** Use your microwave instead of a conventional oven—it uses up to 70 percent less energy and also releases far less heat into the kitchen.

**9** If your water heater runs on electricity, limit your use of hot water so the unit doesn't run as often.

**10** Use fans to keep air moving. Ceiling fans use about as much energy as a light bulb, which is far less than an air conditioner. With a fan, you can set the thermostat on your air conditioner to an even higher temperature and still stay comfortable.



## 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.

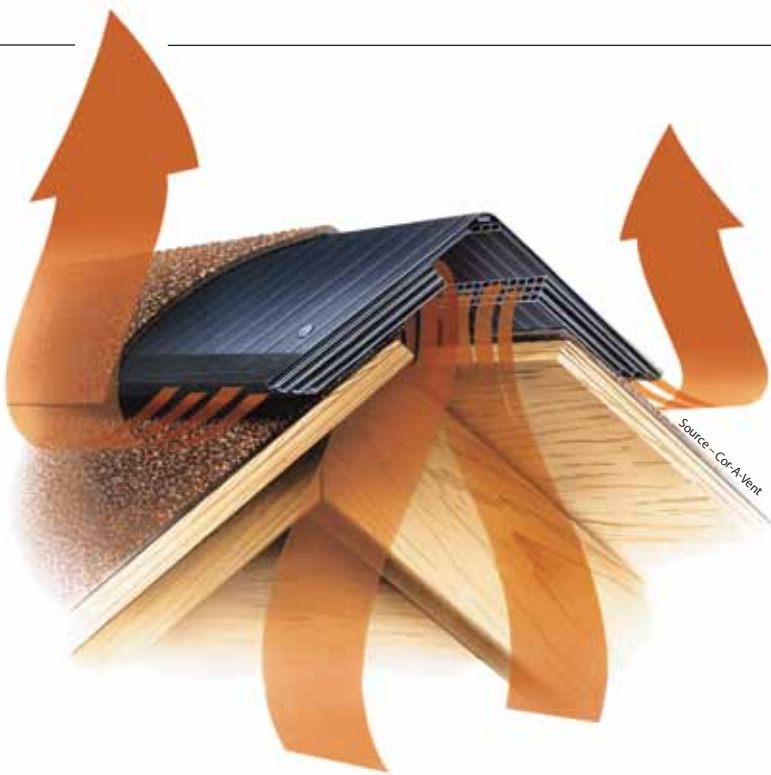
Projects are prioritized, yet subject to change to accommodate load growth or new load in a member's service area. Required industry planning standards and power flow modeling also determine which projects will be completed.

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 - Lomanco

**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

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Measure		Retail	Member Price
 <b>13w CFL Bulbs (3pk)</b> <small>(Limit 4 3pks)</small>		\$6.00	<b>\$1.50</b>
 <b>Advanced Power Strips</b> <small>(Limit 2)</small>		\$25.00	<b>\$5.00</b>
 <b>Aerator Kits</b> <small>(Limit 2)</small>	<small>Kit includes: low flow showerhead, kitchen aerator and 2 bath aerators</small>	\$15.00	<b>\$5.00</b>
 <b>LED Nightlight</b> <small>(Limit 4)</small>		\$2.00	<b>\$1.00</b>

### What's in it for you?

As a member, here's your chance for special deals—save up to 75%. Plus, you'll keep on saving money at home too. Be the energy-saving superstar of your neighborhood!



Midwest ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Must be a MI Midwest Energy electric member. See manufacturer for any warranty claims.



# Online Home Audit

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

**O**n 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, Midwest Energy Cooperative members have another option—an online home audit.

### Affordable Alternative—Online Home Audit

Midwest 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/midwest** 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, Midwest 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**

 **Midwest 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

**T**his 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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Southwestern Michigan College  
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