

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES



Michigan-made:

Luminature

*Wildly unique lighting
and decor*

Don't miss your co-op's
ANNUAL MEETING
June 20
(See back cover for details)

4 Co-op Election Results
Announced

5 Jerry Apps To Speak
At Annual Meeting

25 Recycle Those
Appliances



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

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

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

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

Berrien Springs
WaterFurnace Michiana
(269) 473-5667

Big Rapids
Stratz Heating & Cooling
(231) 796-3717

Caro
AllTemp Comfort, Inc.
(866) 844-HEAT (4328)

Carsonville
Certified Temperature Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Charlotte
Applegate Home Comfort
(517) 541-8013

Cheboygan
Jim's Handyman
(231) 627-7533

Clifford
Orton Refrigeration & Htg
(989) 761-7691

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

Gaylord
Family Htg & Clg
(989) 732-8099

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

Total Comfort Resource, LLC
(616) 406-3182

Hart
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Ionia
Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

Kalkaska
Kalkaska Plumbing & Htg
(231) 258-3588

Lapeer
Porter & Heckman
(810) 664-8576

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

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

Muskegon
Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(800) 922-3045

Onaway
Standard Heating
(989) 733-8309

Palms
Lakeshore Improvements
(989) 864-3833

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

D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

Webberville
Applegate Home Comfort
(800) 377-2272



waterfurnace.com
(800) GEO-SAVE



Editor
Gail Knudtson

Associate Editor
Doug Snitgen

Design Editor
Cindy Zuker

Publisher
Craig Borr



Photo - 71777

10



Photo - 831 Creative

18



26

DEPARTMENTS

6 Readers' Pages
Letters, mystery photo,
co-op principles, Youth
Leadership Summit

18 Home Cooking
Crêpes
*Christin Russman &
Our readers*

22 Wolverine Power*
WCEV air permit
affirmed
Nancy Tanner

COLUMNS

14 Gardening
Install your own
irrigation
Neil Moran

16 Family
Raising an only child
Linda Wacyk

17 Outdoors
Jerry Regan is 'der
flymeister"
Don Ingle

23 House & Home
Central air upkeep
James Dullely

26 Ramblings
Never trust a fire
Mike Buda

FEATURES

10 Home Improvement
To finish or not to
finish?
John Bruce

13 Storms
Electrical safety during
and after storms
Frequently asked questions

15 Michigan-made
Luminature Design
Kathy Usitalo

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

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

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

Letters to the editor should be sent to the same address. Phone 517-351-6322. Email: gknudtson@meca.coop.

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

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

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

Display advertising:
Doug Snitgen
517-913-3535

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

YOUR CO-OP

Pages specific to your electric cooperative: 1, 4-5, 8-9, 20-21, 24-25, 28

*Not in all editions

On the Cover

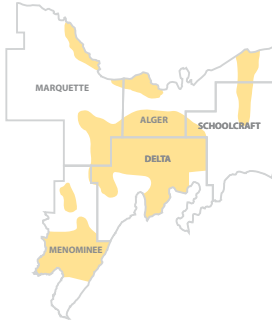
Lori McCarthy, owner of Luminature Design with her husband Paul, is pictured with some of their unique, handcrafted decor items.

Photo - David Olds



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com





BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Darryl Small, Big Bay

District # 1 - Big Bay
906-345-9369 • smallwld13@yahoo.com

Gerald Krieg, Autrain

District # 2 - Harvey-Deerton
906-892-8300 • pinewood@tds.net

Nancy Gardner-Platt

District #3 - Grand Marais
906-494-2772 • rlnkgard@jamadots.com

Roy Hubbard, Cedar River

District # 4 - Palestine
906-788-4385 • rhu Hubbard@dreamscp.com

Kevin Webber, Wilson

District #5 - Gourley, Labranche & Cornell
906-639-2937
kevinwebber.2937@gmail.com

Paul Sederquist, Daggett

District #6 - Nathan
906-753-4484 • seder@dreamscp.com

Gail Petersen, Rapid River

District #7 - Stonington
906-474-6572 • gjspetersen@gmail.com

Nick Denessen, Rapid River

District #8 - Isabella
906-644-7171 • nden@bbmi.com

Dennis Gramm, Munising

District #9 - Hiawatha & Maple Ridge
906-387-3709 • dgramm@jamadots.com

Tom Harrell

General Manager
tharrell@algerdelta.com

Office Headquarters:

426 North 9th St.
Gladstone, MI 49837

Office Hours/Phone:

M-F, 7:30 a.m. – 4 p.m. EST
906-428-4141 • 1-800-562-0950
FAX: (906) 428-3840

Co-op Election Results Announced

Alger Delta held its first district meeting of 2012 in Grand Marais, MI, on March 29, where incumbent Nancy Gardner-Platt was elected to a second term on the Alger Delta board with 62 percent of the vote total. About 45 members and employees of the cooperative attended the meeting. Gardner-Platt's opponent in the election was James Krempa, also of Grand Marais. Both candidates garnered solid support from the community, as evidenced by the good meeting turnout.

On April 3, the Harvey-Deerton district convened their election meeting at the Onota Town Hall. Sam Simonetta took the majority of the votes, unseating incumbent director Gerald Krieg. Simonetta garnered about 60 percent of the votes. About 45 members and employees attended.

The Cedar River district meeting was



Tom Harrell
General Manager

held on April 9. About 35 members and employees turned out to witness the results of the District 4 election where Bessie Anderson prevailed over Jim Bruner in the only open-seat election. The open seat was created when incumbent director Roy Hubbard recently retired from the board after more than 26 years of service.

Alger Delta's board president, Paul Sederquist (District 6, Nathan-White Rapids) chaired each of the three district meetings.

In addition to the elections, General Manager Tom Harrell gave a review of business activities and the cooperative's overall performance in 2011. Harrell also discussed activities planned for 2012 and answered members' questions.

Board members elected in 2012 will be officially seated at the annual meeting on June 20. Hope to see you there!

Why Do We Send You Michigan Country Lines?



Sure, *Michigan Country Lines* is full of great articles, valuable energy-saving tips, and—of course—delicious recipes. But why does your electric co-op send you this magazine?

Country Lines is the most economical and convenient way to share information with our members. It takes the place of many mailings we would otherwise make to get information to you about our services, director elections, member meetings, and the staff and management decisions you should know about as an owner of the co-op. The magazine also carries legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its basic principles—to

educate and communicate openly with its members.

The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Country Lines* on your behalf at a cost ranging from \$3.69 per year, paid as part of your electric bill. The current magazine cost is 62 cents per copy—only a few cents more than a first-class stamp.

Country Lines is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Okemos. As always, we value your comments about your magazine.



Meet Jerry Apps at Your Co-op's Annual Meeting!

Alger Delta is celebrating its 75th anniversary, and as a tribute, we have arranged for a special guest speaker. Jerry Apps, a celebrated presenter on rural life, will speak at the cooperative's 2012 annual meeting on June 20.

Born and raised on a Wisconsin farm, Apps is professor emeritus at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and the author of more than 30 books, many on rural history and country life.

Some of his nonfiction books include: "Humor from the Country," "Country Ways and Country Days," "Cheese," "Ringlingville USA" (History of Ringling Brothers circus), and "Campfires and Loon Calls." He's also written an audio book, children's books including "Eat Rutabagas" and "Tents," and published four novels, "The Travels of Increase Joseph," "In a Pickle: A Family Farm Story," "Blue Shadows Farm" and "Cranberry Red."

Apps is also a former publications editor for UW-Extension, an acquisitions editor for the McGraw-Hill Book Company, and editor of a national professional journal.

Besides farming, his interests include wilderness canoeing, nature study, and cross-country skiing. Visit jerryapps.com for more information.

For the third consecutive year, Alger Delta's annual meeting will be held in the gymnasium at Grace Church (see details at right and on the outside back cover). Seating is limited to 225 people, so members must call ahead to reserve a place. Seats will be filled on a first come-first reserved basis.

Newly-elected co-op directors will also be officially seated at the annual meeting.

See you there!

Notice To Members:

Beginning May 2012 Alger Delta will no longer be mailing a separate disconnect notice. If you are subject to receiving this notice or to be disconnected for nonpayment, you will still receive a shut-off notice on your monthly bill and two courtesy phone call reminders. Please make every effort to pay your bill on time or your account will be subject to disconnect.

Notice of Annual Meeting of the Members of Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association

Pursuant to the bylaws, notice is hereby given that the annual meeting of the members of Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association will be held on Wednesday, June 20, 2012, at Grace Church, 528 28th St. (off of M-35), in Gladstone.

A meal will be served from 5:30 to 6 p.m. Eastern time. The business meeting will start at 6:15 p.m. Actions will be taken on the following matters: 1) Installation of directors; 2) Presentation and consideration of reports; 3) New business.

Dated at Gladstone, MI,

March 21, 2012

Gail Petersen, Secretary



Why Does the Type of Power We Provide Matter?



Up to 75 percent of every dollar you pay your local electric cooperative goes directly for wholesale power costs. Bucket trucks, poles and wire, right-of-way trimming, payroll, and other operating expenses are covered by the rest.

Source: National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Letters

The loss of Don Ingle, more apples, hospital costs, storm help, and the Youth Leadership Summit. It's all here in your reader pages.

Loss of Don Ingle

The people of northern Michigan have lost an articulate and ardent spokesman for the outdoors (also *Country Lines'* Outdoors writer, see p. 17).

Don Ingle and his wife, Jean, tragically perished in a house fire on March 9, 2012. Don played an active role in the preservation and enjoyment of the northern Michigan environment. He participated in many outdoor organizations throughout northern Michigan and was an articulate voice in both community activism and his extensive writing. But Don's career as an outdoor writer was not his only career.

Don was the son of Red Ingle, a clarinetist with Spike Jones' band. Unlike his father's interest in comic showmanship, Don built a career in straight jazz, playing the coronet with the group Frank Assunto and the Dukes of Dixieland. In the 1980s, Don played with the Michigan Nighthawks, appearing at events around the Midwest. The Michigan Nighthawks produced three albums (youtube.com/watch?v=Y7pAFKaJEvG&feature=related).

Don graduated from Michigan State University in 1952. In the 1980s, Don also had his own outdoor show on channel 9, and



"The weekend that was" when we were all without power... A big "thanks" to all of you servicing on foot and snowmobile where the trucks couldn't go...if you missed these guys in action, you missed alot.

—Jan Goodwin, East Jordan

wrote a column for the *Big Rapids Pioneer* in the 1980s. In his retirement, Don wrote freelance for a number of publications.

Like Don, his wife Jean was active in the community, working for Child Protective Services in Baldwin. They were the kind of people who deeply touched the lives of everyone who met them.

Don was a personal friend and mentor to me, but his enthusiasm, energy and knowledge of the outdoors captivated anyone who personally knew him. Anyone who met Don, even briefly, became a friend. That's the way he was. That's the way they both were.

Don and Jean Ingle are already missed.

—Tim DeBlaey

More About Apples

Your apples article ("Ramblings"/Mike Buda/February) brought back many 'good' memories. I grew up on a farm with an apple orchard, and I vividly remember my siblings, cousins, neighbors and myself sitting in the trees eating the 'green apples'—especially the Transparent type. Mom was always wondering where her salt shakers were disappearing to. Yup, we had them up the tree with us. Only one time I remember getting a belly ache.

Sad to say the apples of today are a big disappointment to me. Whatever happened to Northern Spies or Wealthies, just to name a couple? The 'new' ones are way too big and sweet. Am I the only one who has noticed? But, I do still eat them because they are

good for you and an-apple-a-day keeps the doctor away, but they sure aren't like they used to be.

—Susan Heil, Farwell

March Mystery Photo

The picture of the sculpture of Paul Bunyan and Babe the Blue Ox pulling a sleigh of logs is located in the front yard of Clayton Smith on U.S. Hwy 31 south of Charlevoix.

Clayton is 96 years old and has a world of wisdom and a history of experience—from hitchhiking to California from Michigan in his late teens to working the CCC camps.

What an artist, as seen in his depiction of Paul Bunyan and Babe, and also writing two books. He is truly a man who lives by the road and is a friend to man!

—Lorraine Warner, Charlevoix

The March mystery photo of Paul Bunyan and his ox Babe is in front of "Smith's Little Acre" just south of the city limits of Charlevoix on Highway 31. Clayton Smith, the owner of the property, has created many unique displays of rural characters and legends at the side of the road for travelers to enjoy. We've lived in Charlevoix for over 35 years and each year have enjoyed his artistic creations. Clayton used to be active in hunting and trapping, and years ago different elementary school classes would go out to "Clay's Cabin" and he would show them historical tools used in these activities and talk to them (he is a great storyteller). It would be interesting if you



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

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

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone! Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com, or send by mail to *Country Lines Mystery Photo*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the July/August 2012 issue.

The March contest winner is Cindy Morgner of Central Lake, who correctly identified the photo as taken on U.S. 31 south of Charlevoix.



would do a story about him and his accomplishments.

—Dianne VanGuilder,
Charlevoix

Hospital Costs

I just finished reading the April 2012 issue of *Country Lines*, and with particular interest the letter from Jeff Lange of Alanson in reference to “Who’s Paying Hospital Costs?” (in reference to “Ramblings” column/January).

I’m afraid the gentleman is very badly misinformed. He does not understand that the 2,700 page document of Obama Care is not the solution to the health care problem. That document is not only about government controlling health care, but more accurately about the government eroding our individual rights as American citizens.

Although health care reform is needed to make medical care more available and affordable to the average person, the plan that is taking place before our eyes isn’t the answer. Just look at England or any other country that has socialized medicine in

place and you can see the quality and availability of human health care diminishes.

Immigrants have come to this country for over 200 years for individual freedoms. Taking away the right to choose your health care is a dangerous road that we are traveling toward complete Socialism.

A step in the right direction is to replace our federal, state and local elected officials with ones that will work to make sure American citizens have the rights guaranteed by the U.S. Constitution and not a dictatorial, oppressive leadership. Vote in November and make yourself heard.

—Mrs. James Lyons, Grayling

Editor’s Note: “Obama Care” is actually the “Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act,” passed by Congress in 2010.

Readers can learn more about this law and its provisions by visiting wikipedia.org, a free encyclopedia, and typing the Act name in the search box.

Thanks For Storm Help

“The weekend that was” when we were all without power (March) two or three days or more...I was amazed to see how remarkably well Great Lakes Energy took care of a real emergency in our rural area. A big “thanks” to all of you servicing on foot and snowmobile where the trucks couldn’t go was cool.

If you missed seeing these guys in action [also throughout Alger Delta, Cherryland Electric, Cloverland Electric Cooperative, and Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op service areas], you missed a lot (see the story, April issue, on countrylines.com). Thanks again.

—Jan Goodwin,
East Jordan



Permission To Dream

Co-op students expand their horizons at Youth Leadership Summit.

You’re here because your electric co-op recognizes you as a leader—in your schools and in your communities,” began Ferris State University president, David Eisler. “And as a leader, your most important asset is your ability to dream.”

Eisler’s discussion about the value of education kicked-off a three-day Youth Leadership Summit presented by Michigan’s electric cooperatives. Twenty nine students from across the state were chosen to attend the summit to develop their leadership habits, explore career opportunities in the electric industry, and learn how to be actively involved in the democratic process.

Above, Ferris State University President David Eisler addresses YLS participants.

Small-group discussions helped students explore how leaders take control of their lives by choosing their response to situations, and how to identify, focus on and achieve their highest priorities. In a session titled “The Next Great Challenge,” students learned about the cooperative business model by discussing the early challenges electric co-ops helped overcome in America’s rural areas. Discussion quickly moved to the great challenges faced today, such as making renewable energy more affordable and available, and to student challenges, such as finding “good” jobs after college. Students had an opportunity to get an up-close tour of a working “wind farm” and formed a mini-democracy by electing team members to represent their interests during a mock co-op board meeting.

In the “Careers In Energy” portion of the event, lineworkers from Midwest Energy, Great Lakes Energy and HomeWorks Tri-County Electric co-ops talked about their work and training, then gave bucket truck rides and helped students gear-up to try climbing a pole. Twelve co-op employees and directors serving as chaperones for the event also discussed their jobs and education.

“YLS was a real leadership experience for me,” one student commented after the event. “I finally got to act [like] myself, talk about pressing issues, and enjoy time with new friends—and that was really cool!”

The Michigan Youth Leadership Summit is held annually at the Kettunen 4-H Center in Tustin. Seventeen of the students have been chosen to attend the Rural Electric Youth Tour to Washington, D.C., coming in June. Learn more about these co-op-sponsored youth programs at myYLS.com.

Learn About Co-ops

It’s a Matter of PRINCIPLE

The Rochdale Principles

Co-ops deliver electricity, sell produce, provide loans, and arrange for housing, health care, and more. But despite these differences, they all have one thing in common—seven cooperative principles:

- Voluntary and Open Membership
- Democratic Member Control
- Members’ Economic Participation
- Autonomy and Independence
- Education, Training, Information
- Cooperation Among Cooperatives
- Concern for Community

Learn more at www.go.coop.

Cooperative Enterprises Build a Better World

A message from America’s Electric Cooperatives



Photo - Shawn Malone/LakeSuperiorPhoto.com

America's National Parks:

Elliot Creek Falls along the North Country Scenic Trail in the U.P.

Big Value for a Low Price

When it comes to vacations, America's national parks are a perennial favorite. From roaring geysers and sandy seascapes to frontier forts and presidents' homes, these unique treasures boast magnificent landscapes and cultural enrichment.

Lately, they've been getting even better. Visitors are reaping the benefits of the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which funded improvements to national park facilities and roads. Ninety-nine percent of these projects are finished, says Jeff Olson, spokesman for the National Park Service (NPS) in Washington, D.C. For example, the scenic Skyline Drive in Virginia's Shenandoah National Park sports dozens of new overlooks with jaw-dropping views and new interpretative signs.

Something for Everyone

National parks, nearly 400 now, offer something for everyone at a relatively low price. Enjoy hiking, biking, swimming, fishing and rafting, shop for locally made crafts at gift

shops, tour museums, explore cliff dwellings, take guided full-moon walks, and learn about science and biology from ranger talks.

The beauty and slower pace of a park vacation also draws people together. Parents are reminded that food cooked over a campfire tastes better. Kids remember how to make their own fun. Those in their '20s finally bond, adult to adult, with their parents. Even the most sullen teenager may crack a smile by the end of a day or two.

"For generations now, people have introduced members of their family to national parks," Olson says. "Parents and grandparents are now introducing their children to parks. These are places where you learn about American heritage and culture."

And, those who enjoy technology won't be disappointed, either. Visitors to the National Mall in Washington, D.C., can use the NPS' free app. The app displays the user's location, highlights historical and cultural points and offers tour suggestions, and gives directions to over 70 sites. Inside other national parks (rural or urban), visitors can deepen their

experiences by using smart phones and other mobile devices at visitors' centers and exhibits. Park websites sport live webcams, podcasts and links to lively social media, as well.

Michigan National Parks

Traveling closer to home, Michigan has its own wonders waiting for discovery within Isle Royale National Park, Keweenaw National Historic Park, Sleeping Bear Dunes, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, or the North Country Scenic Trail. Together, these national parks hosted 1,912,324 visitors in 2011.

A visit to **Isle Royale**, the country's only island national park, truly means "getting away from it all." At 45 miles long and 9 miles wide (third largest in the U.S.), hikers especially love its remote location and total automobile ban. It's also common to hear distant wolf calls or see a wandering moose or other wildlife in its wonderful, rugged scenery.

Over 160 miles of foot trails, 36 campgrounds, and one hotel are described as ample for those who make the effort to visit "one of the most pristine wilderness areas on earth." Note that the visiting season here is short (mid-April through October), and the Park Service's M.V. Ranger III ferry connects

Isle Royale with Houghton from early June to mid-September.

Established in 1992, **Keweenaw National Historic Park** celebrates life and history on the Keweenaw Peninsula, especially relating to 7,000 years of copper mining. The peninsula houses the oldest, largest lava flow, which created the largest known deposits of accessible pure (97 percent) native copper on Earth. Early miners could break the red metal from the rock to make jewelry and tools, and into coins and electric wire by later generations.

The entire picture of copper mining here, according to Wikipedia, is best-represented by the Village of Calumet (social, ethnic, commercial themes); former Calumet and Hecla Mining Company properties (corporate paternalism and power); and former Quincy Mining Company properties (extraction/processing themes). There's lots more for visitors to experience, from the Quincy Mine Hoist Museum in Hancock to a tour of the Delaware Mine near Copper Harbor, and many other museums, heritage centers, and Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park is nearby, too.

Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore stretches 42 miles along Lake Superior, and offers 15 miles of giant red, orange and gold-colored sandstone cliffs.

The home of America's first national lakeshore, the rock formations shape natural



Learning about birds of prey from a national park ranger.

Photo - John F. Mitchell

archways, sea caves and waterfalls that are framed by sand dunes. You can see the Rocks close by paddling a kayak through their tunnels, or backpack among the peaks and bases. Most visitors, however, get close on boat tours that depart daily from Munising, or you can hire a plane in Grand Marais or drive to the Miner's Castle overlook.

Other notable sites are many waterfalls,

including Munising Falls, interpretive centers, and nearby forests, lakes and opportunities for four-season activities.

Running through Pictured Rocks is the longest finished segment (581 miles) of the **North Country Scenic Trail**, which also winds through Porcupine Mountains Wilderness State Park and other parts of the U.P. before crossing the Straits of Mackinac into the Lower Peninsula.

Crossing seven northern states, this is the longest of eleven National Scenic Trails. Designed to provide peaceful recreational opportunities in some of our country's outstanding landscapes, it will stretch 3,200 miles from North Dakota to Vermont when it's done. Over 2,100 miles are already certified.

The North Country Scenic Trail is accessible mostly on foot, by hiking, snowshoeing or cross-country skiing, although bicycles and horses are allowed in some designated areas.

Most Michiganders know that a visit to **Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore** has to include "climbing the dunes," but while you're around, try the seven-mile-long Pierce Stocking Scenic Drive. This route takes you through several hundred feet of changes in elevation, vegetation, climate and great views of Lake Michigan. From the top of Sleeping Bear, you can see the Manitou Islands, a favorite place for campers and scuba divers.

Michigan also has 1,776 National Register of Historic Places listings, one National Heritage Area, 12 National Natural Landmarks,

Continued on page 20 ▶

Admission to Most National Parks Is Free!

Most of America's national parks don't have an entry fee.* For parks that do, admission is from \$3 to \$25 (good for an entire carload of people for a week). There are also bargain annual passes, good at over 2,000 federal recreation sites, including a seniors' pass for \$10.

The National Park Service has fee-free days in 2012 at over 100 national parks that usually charge entry fees. The dates are:

- **June 9** – Get Outdoors Day
- **Sept. 29** – National Public Lands Day
- **Nov. 10-12** – Veterans Day weekend

Search nps.gov/findapark/feefreeparksbystate.htm by park name or state to see which states are offering fee-free days, call 202-208-3818, or connect on YouTube, Facebook and Twitter. Also, visit the Public Broadcasting Service's website for enriching park stories at pbs.org/nationalparks.htm.

Many park-related hotels, restaurants, shops and tour operators offer specials on fee-free days (see National Park Hospitality Association at parkpartners.org/Special-Offers-for-2011.html and National Parks Promotions Council at nationalparks.org/special-offers/).

To find other free attractions (zoos, museums, concerts and festivals) check free-attractions.com or a city's visitor center, chamber of commerce or state tourism websites for ideas in the area you're traveling. Washington, D.C., and New York City boast an array of free activities at washington.org and nycgo.com.

*Fee waiver includes entrance fees, commercial tour fees, and transportation entrance fees. Other fees such as camping, tours, concessions and third party fees are not included, unless stated otherwise.



Photo: FEWA

To Finish or Not to Finish?

How do you get the most bang for your buck in home improvements during a down economy?

Americans are staying put. The down economy has been driving most people to bunker down in their homes instead of moving, and many wonder whether to finish that attic or replace the front door as they try to sit-out hard times.

Only 10 percent of the general public feels that now is the time to sell their home, according to Fannie Mae's National Housing Survey released in November 2011. The survey shows 75 percent of Americans believe the economy is on the wrong track. It stands to reason then that long-term homeowners want to make their property as livable as possible. So, which specific home improvements are shown to deliver the most value right now, according to the experts? On the flip side, can a home improvement actually reduce property value?

Exterior home improvements have customarily given homeowners the best return for their dollars, and today is no exception. The National Association of Realtors' (NAR) Cost vs. Value Report ranks exterior improve-

ments among the best home investments on HouseLogic.com, NAR's consumer website.

Good deals aren't limited to the exterior, however. Conversion of existing space, such as a minor kitchen remodel, turning an attic into a bedroom or finishing a basement is more likely to bring a better return than an addition.

The cost vs. value report "shows the value of putting your home's best façade forward, so to speak," says NAR President Moe Veissi, broker-owner of Veissi & Associates Inc., in Miami. Exterior projects are important to a home's regular upkeep and are expected to recoup far more than many other home improvements. Plus, they add instant curb appeal when times are finally right for selling.

A home's attractiveness, the indicator of initial appeal, makes a big difference. Exterior elements covering large areas such as siding, entry and garage doors have the greatest visual impact. Updated exteriors give sellers an edge, because buyers are attracted to a home before entering.

Top 7 Most Efficient Projects

Seven of the top 10 most cost-effective projects nationally in terms of value recouped are exterior projects, reports the NAR. The NAR has judged an upscale fiber-cement siding as the No. 1 improvement value, with an estimated 78 percent of costs recouped upon resale.

Two other siding projects ranked in the top 10, including foam-backed vinyl and upscale vinyl. Both are expected to recoup roughly 70 percent of costs. A steel entry door replacement, the least expensive project in the report, averages little more than \$1,200 and is expected to recoup 73 percent of its cost.

Garage door replacement, a wood deck addition, and vinyl window replacement are all expected to recoup around 70 percent of costs.

On the interior, NAR considers three kinds of remodeling projects worthwhile investments. The least expensive way to add a bedroom and bathroom within a home's existing footprint is a mid-range attic bedroom, expected to return 72.5 percent of

◀ Fiber-cement siding is considered the No. 1 ranking, top-value home improvement, according to the National Association of Realtors. Fiber-cement siding is also used in wind-resistant building techniques to help protect buildings during tornadoes and high winds.

costs. A minor kitchen remodel, expected to return 72 percent of costs, is fourth overall.

Least Cost-Efficient Projects

Least-return improvements are a sunroom addition and a home office remodel, both estimated to recoup less than 46 percent of costs. An in-ground pool can add to home value, but there's little chance of recovering the money spent on upkeep. The NAR says an above-ground pool and its high upkeep factor can actually reduce the resale value of a home.

All homes benefit from increased insulation and sealing, regardless of climate. Older homes are usually under-insulated compared to new homes. Adding more can help you realize a return on your investment. Beefing

up R-values in an attic or crawlspace also helps cut energy use.

Do-It-Yourself Or Not?

Most homeowners can handle routine maintenance projects and cosmetic touch-ups, but it's recommended that you consult with qualified professionals for larger remodeling jobs and major structural changes.

After deciding on one or more projects, how can you get started? What to do first on a project can be daunting in itself, so what's the best solution to avoid confusion?

Jerry Fedewa, president of The Greater Lansing Home Builders and Remodelers Association, suggests the priority should be to stick to the scope of work unless you become aware of additional items that make sense to complete at that time. "It's best to know exactly what you want done and to be able to communicate the scope of the project," Fedewa explains. "If the builder or remodeler sees additional work that needs to be done, they will suggest it."

Fedewa recommends contacting the local homebuilders and remodelers association for a list of licensed and insured contractors. "I would choose three contractors to visit your project," he advises.

The down economy offers homeowners some opportunities for savings, he relates. "Additions and remodels really did not slow nearly as much as home building has," Fedewa says. "So, more homebuilders started taking on more additions and remodels." This means there is probably some savings

for homeowners here, because more contractors are chasing the same amount of work. "Customer service has improved and project time has improved," Fedewa says.

Asking contractors important questions makes all the difference, adds Roger Weymouth, broker/owner of Weymouth & Associates in Holt, MI. "Regarding the best questions to ask, I would say, 'as many as you can think of.'" For instance:

▲ Are you licensed and insured? (Make a copy of the license and insurance.)

▲ Do you carry workman's comp insurance? (Make a copy.)

▲ How long have you been in business?

▲ Can you provide me a list of the last three projects you did with names and phone numbers of the people that hired you?

▲ Is this your best price?

"I personally prefer to pay when the job is complete," Weymouth advises. "Be careful of the contractor that wants money up front." Always make sure your agreement with the contractor is in writing, he adds, and everything should be understood beforehand.

"It's very important to always include a project completion date in your contract, and what happens if the project isn't finished by that date," Weymouth continues. "For example, include wording such as 'contractor to pay owner x amount each day thereafter completion date if the project is not completed.'"

Homeowners should also be aware that the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has passed regulations for contractors working in homes built before 1978. The new rules are enforced, and consumers should check to see if contractors follow the law.

There's a lot to gain through home improvements, such as increased functionality, new appliances, efficient systems, updated décor and additional living space. But following expert advice helps you realize the pure enjoyment of making a home truly "your own."

More on home improvement, page 12 ▶

Countdown to Value!

The top seven home improvement values, per the National Association of Realtors:

#7: Vinyl siding (shown below)

#6: Deck

#5: Garage door

#4: Minor kitchen remodel

#3: Converting attic to bedroom

#2: Steel entry door

#1: Fiber-cement siding



Photo - CertainTeed Corp.

Other Resources

nariremodelers.com

Find home improvement professionals who voluntarily subscribe to a strict code of ethics.

HouseLogic.com

Find dozens of remodeling project ideas here. Each shows the recouped project value; lots of information on home maintenance and green remodeling. Also visit greenremodling.org.

ask-the-rehabber.com

Do-it-yourself remodeling information, with emphasis on saving money.

Home Improvement Help on the Computer

Search the internet by name to find details on the following programs, or more programs, and online help for planning home improvement projects.

Home Designer Suite 2012, \$98

Highly-rated. It can help plan and estimate costs before you begin. Create a new room, bath, kitchen or other space. View cabinet combinations, countertops, appliances, fixtures, custom colors, and more.

Home & Landscape Design Premium NexGen3, \$99

Planning tools for both home improvements and landscape/backyard beautification. Apply paint, carpet or other materials to a surface, room or entire house with a click. Pick default materials and colors before you start designing. Measuring distances within the drawing enables quick reference or planning for furniture. Accurate imaging and user-controlled sun angles and shadows add detailing.

HGTV Home Design & Remodeling Suite, \$49

Beginner's software with wizards to design bathrooms, kitchens or a full home. Ceate a new living space, add a fireplace, make your home energy efficient with new appliances, replace countertops, cabinets and fixtures, and enhance any room.

Big Hammer Deck Designer, free (requires Internet Explorer)

Over 70 customizable deck templates, or draw your own. Choose materials by classification, size and grade; provides a list of materials.

Energy Star Home Advisor, free

Simple, free and anonymous energy advice, with a summary of estimated savings in total energy, electricity, fuel use, and carbon emissions associated with custom-recommended measures, based on typical energy use of homes in your area.

Typical recommendations include sealing air leaks, adding insulation, replacing old heating and cooling equipment, installing a high-efficiency water heater, installing a programmable thermostat, and replacing lights and appliances with Energy Star® models.



Tough Flooring for Tough Times

Photo - Flooring Source/Michele J. Zelman

Laminate flooring is tough and low-maintenance, but looks impressive, which makes it perfect for an active home in a down economy.

One of the toughest, most appealing, functional, and simple-to-install floors just happens to be one of the least costly. Laminate flooring has come a long way since its invention in the 1970s and deserves serious consideration by anyone contemplating a new floor, particularly during tough economic times.

Laminate flooring doesn't enjoy the media attention of bamboo, wood, stone or tile floors. Ironically, homeowners can find laminate flooring products to match the look of every variant of each of those products. Laminate flooring's composition of a high-resolution image bonded to a composite core, sealed under a clear resin-based wear layer, lets it match the look of any surface. Natural designs from hardwood, bamboo, granite, marble, and even tile and carpet are all available in laminate. So, while laminate's popularity has skyrocketed because of price and performance, its looks are impressive, too.

Compared to wood, laminate's toughness shines—its resistance to scratches, dents and capacity to stand up to daily wear all exceed the performance of wood. Kids and pets have proven laminate's record. The first layer of laminate flooring is an abrasion resistant finish of aluminum oxide (diamond is the only material that is harder). Laminate does not require waxing, oiling or staining, but should be kept clean, as dust, dirt and sand particles can scratch the surface.

Laminate flooring's chief vulnerability is high moisture, which can harm the composite core. If you're planning on putting laminate in a kitchen or bath, make sure it's a type that is approved to minimize the risk of damage in high-moisture areas.

Laminate also provides better stain resistance compared with hardwood and bamboo, because the first layer is stain resistant.

Another plus is easy maintenance. All that you need to maintain laminate is a cleaner and rag. You can remove a broken plank and replace it in case of damage.

Toughness alone might sell a homeowner on laminate, but ease-of-installation is just as convincing, making it the flooring of choice for a do-it-yourselfer. Known as a "floating floor system," think of each plank of wood being nailed to the sub-floor, one after the other. By comparison, once assembled, laminate rests atop an existing floor. With click-together laminate, there is no nailing, screwing or gluing. You don't glue planks together. Installing the floor is as simple as laying down underlayment, cutting planks to the right lengths, and snapping them together.

Perhaps the biggest attraction of laminate, however, remains the price. For those feeling the crunch, every cent makes a difference, and economy lines are sold for less than \$1 per square foot. For a little more, high-end laminates provide a tougher, more appealing look. Either way, installing laminate is a low-cost solution to a high-cost project.

Gone are the days when laminates were easy to spot, too. Manufacturers now create strikingly realistic visuals and textures that often cannot be distinguished from the real thing.

Laminates are ideal for homeowners who desire the attractiveness of wood, stone or other costly coverings, but not the upkeep.

Source: World Floor Covering Association

Electrical Safety During and After Storms

Frequently Asked Questions

Severe storms and natural disasters can cause a variety of electrical safety hazards in and around our homes and businesses. Unfortunately, many of these hazards remain long after the storm has passed.

Lightning

What should I do if I am caught outside in a lightning storm? Lightning hits the tallest available object, so get down low in a crouched position if you are in an exposed area. Also, stay away from trees and don't hold onto metal items. Stay away from metal sheds, clotheslines, poles and fences, as well as water, including puddles, and anything damp—even grass. Don't stand close to other people. Spread out.

Is there a warning before lightning strikes? Sometimes. If you feel a tingling sensation or your hair stands on end, lightning may be about to strike. Do not lie down; crouch, tuck your head, and cover your ears.

What should I do if I encounter a lightning storm while driving? Slow down, and do not drive over downed power lines. If possible, pull off the road into a safe area. Do not leave your vehicle. A vehicle is considered safe if it is fully enclosed with a metal top. While inside, do not use electronic devices.

Are we safe from lightning if we stay inside the house? Stay away from windows and doors. Unplug electronic equipment before the storm arrives. Avoid contact with electrical equipment and cords, as well as water and plumbing. Use corded telephones only for emergencies. You can use cordless or cellular phones. Also, bring pets inside—doghouses are not lightning-safe, and chained animals can easily become victims of lightning strikes.

Power Lines

What should I do if I encounter a downed power line? Move at least 10 feet away from the line and anything touching it. The human body is a ready conductor of electricity. The proper way is to shuffle with small steps, keeping your feet together and on the ground at all times. This minimizes the potential for a strong electric shock. Electricity wants to move from high voltage to low, such as through your body.

What can I do to help someone who has contacted with a downed power line? Do not touch the person! You could become the next victim. Call 911 instead.

Do not try to move a downed power line or anything in contact with the line by using another object, such as a broom or stick. Even nonconductive materials like wood or cloth, if slightly wet, can conduct electricity. **What if a power line comes down onto my car or I didn't see it until I've driven into it?** Stay in your car and tell others to stay away.

If you must leave your car because it's on fire, jump out with both feet together and avoid contact with the live car and the ground at the same time to avoid being the path of electricity from the car to the earth. Shuffle away from the car.

Is a downed power line still dangerous in water? Any amount of water—even a puddle—could become energized. Be careful not to touch water—or anything in contact with it—near a downed line.

Flooded Areas

Is it safe to go into a flooded basement? Use extreme caution. Submerged outlets or electrical cords can energize the water.

Electrical items, such as circuit breakers, fuses, ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs), receptacles, plugs and switches can malfunction when water and silt get inside. Discard them if they have been submerged and have a licensed, qualified professional replace them.

Do not use electrical appliances that were wet until they have been examined by a qualified service repair dealer. Electrical equipment exposed to water can be extremely dangerous if re-energized. Damage to electrical equipment can also result from exposure to flood waters contaminated with chemicals, sewage, oil and other debris.

The National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA) has a brochure, "Guidelines for Handling Water Damaged Electrical Equipment," that can be downloaded free at: nema.org/stds/water-damaged.cfm.

Can flooded outside areas be dangerous, too? Yes, downed power lines or submerged outlets from adjacent homes could energize the water. Use extreme caution when entering any flooded area.

Portable Generators

▶ A licensed electrician should install home generators to ensure they meet all electrical codes. Make sure it is properly grounded according to manufacturer instructions.

▶ Do not connect generators directly to the household wiring unless the proper transfer switch has been installed by a licensed, qualified electrician. Without this, power can "backfeed" along the power lines, creating an electrocution hazard for anyone coming in contact with the lines, including lineworkers making necessary repairs.

▶ Never operate a generator inside your home or any enclosed, or partially enclosed area. Generators very quickly produce carbon monoxide, a colorless, odorless and poisonous gas that can easily enter your home. Opening windows, doors or using fans does not provide adequate ventilation to prevent carbon monoxide build-up. Generators must be located outside, over 15 feet from windows, doors and vents, through which carbon monoxide can enter your home. Keep it a safe distance away from your neighbors' homes, too. Make sure there is at least one battery-operated or battery-backup carbon monoxide alarm in your home. Test it before using the generator.

▶ Place the generator on a *dry* surface under an open, canopy-like structure. Do not operate the generator in wet conditions or where there is standing water.

▶ Keep children away from portable generators and fuel at all times.

▶ Generator capacity varies. Follow the manufacturer's instructions carefully, and do not overload it.

▶ *Refueling the generator while it is running is a fire hazard.* Unplug all appliances from the generator before shutting it down; turn it off and let it cool down before refueling.

Post-Evacuation

First and foremost, do not return home until instructed by the appropriate local authorities. Once they give the go-ahead, return home during daylight hours, especially if power has not been restored.

If you smell gas, leave the premises and notify emergency authorities immediately. Do not turn on lights, light matches, or engage in any activity that could create a spark.

Source: Electrical Safety Foundation International

Install Your Own Irrigation System

I can't imagine a better investment these days than a lawn or garden irrigation system to put the right amount of water where it's needed, when it's needed. However, until now it's been a little difficult to find such a system that a homeowner can easily install, and having a professional install one can be a little pricey for some of us.

Thanks to John Coyne, of Marquette, a lawn and garden irrigation system is available that is both affordable and practical to install for the do-it-yourselfer (DIY). It's also a self-draining system, which means one less chore to do on weekends in the fall.

Coyne invented what he has patented and calls Auto Rain Lawn Gear® (ARLG). These irrigation kits come in six different sizes and zones, to suit the size and layout of your lawn—from an inexpensive, small, one-zone kit that covers 800 square feet, to larger three-zone kits that cover as much as 25,500 square feet. The kits use Rainbird® brand components.

“These do-it-yourself kits can save over 70 percent of the cost of hiring a contractor,” explains Coyne, who has been installing irrigation systems for the past 17 years. Detailed instructions come with each kit, and there is a helpful instructional video on the ARLG website (noted below). Of course, if you're not the DIY type, you can hire a landscaper or other contractor to install a kit for you.

The ARLG systems can hook right up to an outdoor spigot, or you can have a professional plumber attach it directly to a water source under the house. If done the latter way, make sure a back-flow preventer is included to avoid contamination of your water supply. First, though, make sure you have adequate water pressure for the system. If you can fill up a five-gallon bucket in a minute or less—which is achievable in most homes—then you're all set, Coyne says.

The system itself can be installed with a minimum of tools, such as a shovel and a few hand tools to fasten parts together. The actual poly-plastic hose is purchased separately at any hardware store. Because the hose need only be buried under the sod, a spade shovel is all you need for digging—no backhoes or pipe pullers required. Running the hose under a sidewalk requires that it be fed under the



Photo courtesy—John Coyne

What will lawn irrigation do for you?

SAVE TIME. Connect a timer to an irrigation system and you can water your lawn while you're at work, on the golf course, or out in the boat.

SAVE MONEY. Water is expensive these days, not to mention a precious resource. Consistent watering directed only where it is needed saves money.

IMPRESS THE NEIGHBORS. A nice lawn is a joy to look at and will be the envy of the neighborhood.

RELIEVE STRESS. No more kinked hoses or shoddy sprinklers. Pour yourself your favorite beverage and leave the rest to your irrigation system!

concrete, perhaps attached to the end of a metal or galvanized pipe.

“If you can use a shovel and turn a screwdriver, then you can do this,” he adds.

Coyne spent 23 years as a pharmaceutical salesperson before inventing his irrigation system. After losing that job to corporate downsizing, he was looking for a way to continue making a living. He believed that at the age of 50 he would be hard-pressed to find another job in sales (at least in the Marquette area) that paid him the money he was accustomed to. Besides, he said, most employers wouldn't have faith that he'd stay with the company very long at his age.

Luckily, Coyne had already been operating a part-time sideline business for 17 years, called U.P. Irrigation. While installing irrigation systems that other companies had designed, he was also thinking about how to improve them. This gave him a back-up plan for a career change after he lost the pharmaceutical job. The problem with those

John Coyne, of Marquette, has invented a do-it-yourself lawn and garden irrigation system.

systems was they were difficult for the do-it-yourselfer to install, and added work for gardeners who had to fuss with draining all the system lines each fall.

Out of this angst with the status quo came a new type of lawn irrigation system, and a new career for Coyne. So, about three years ago he came up with the idea for his new product. A year later, he was approaching stores to see if they were interested in selling it. He hopes this will be the career move that will sustain him in the years to come.

“I'd like to thank my employer who laid me off,” Coyne says, noting it was that pink slip that forced him to come up with a new line of work, and one that he is very satisfied with today.

His biggest challenge now is getting his product into the big-box stores. It's hard when you're an unknown entity from the Upper Peninsula of Michigan to get noticed by the big guys, Coyne explains. However, with hard work and persistence, which included traveling as far away as Texas to pitch his product,

he's making progress. The Auto Rain Lawn Gear kits are now carried by Lowe's stores in northern Michigan, and select Ace and True Value Hardware stores in the U.P., and are also available from the company website at autorainlawngear.com.

An irrigation system is a good investment because you'll save money by not watering more than a lawn or garden needs, and your plants will be healthier. In fact, when you water by hand you waste over 50 percent of the water applied in runoff and evaporation. You'll also save time, especially when you attach a timer to the system, allowing you to work on some of those other home improvement projects, go golfing, or have a barbecue.

Neil Moran offers garden tips on his website: northcountrygardening.neilmoran.com.



Luminature

Wildly unique lighting and decor

It started with a sketch of a tree and branched out into a business specializing in “wildly unique lighting.”

In the 15 years that Owosso native Lori McCarthy worked in the lighting field she was dismayed to see production move overseas and inferior fixtures swamp the market. Cheap materials, poor workmanship and boring, “copycat” designs replaced quality American-made goods. With the explosion of big-box stores, she says, “The integrity of the lighting industry has gone down the drain.”

After living in upstate New York for several years McCarthy returned to central Michigan and decided to create original, hand-made fixtures under the name Luminature Design. She found a local computer-aided design (CAD) source and fabricator who plasma-cut her hand-drawn tree illustration from steel in a silhouette effect. “It’s a complicated process, but I finally got my tree,” she says, stressing the importance of using her original artwork. “I want every single thing on my light fixtures to be my designs.”

Inspired by nature, McCarthy added moose, fish and pinecone motifs to her chandeliers, wall sconces and home décor items, such as paper towel holders. When Owosso, home of the Steam Railroading Institute, hosted the national Train Festival in 2009, McCarthy launched a line featuring powerful locomotives.

She and her husband Paul live north of Owosso in Henderson, where they turned their century-old barn into a workshop. “It was always my dream to have that barn studio,” she says, “and it’s gorgeous: two stories with a 30-foot-high ceiling.” The couple hand-torches their cut-out art to finish the steel in shades of orange and blue, and welds and wires the pieces into functional, decorative fixtures.

Although most of her work features plasma-cut steel, McCarthy also likes to assemble found objects into one-of-a-kind fixtures. A stunning example is a chandelier crafted from an 1895 hay pulley with thick, 100-year old rope holding the antique amber light globes. A bundle of unused, vintage burlap potato sacks became drum lampshades. And she creates stained glass art, much of it custom. “One woman brought some wheat to incorporate in a glass project,” she explains.

McCarthy recently moved from her own storefront in Owosso to Artisan Alley Mall in Corunna, and is excited about being under one roof with other creative folks. The market-like showcase occupies part of a former window factory that is anchored by 2nd Chance Wood Company (2ndchancewood.com).

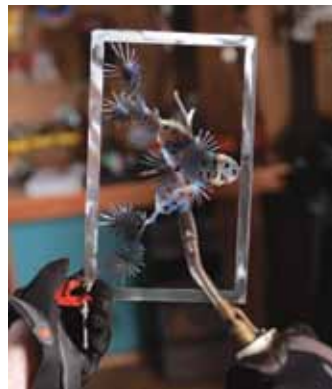
Tadd Wilson founded 2nd Chance Wood as a source for building materials rescued from fallen trees, barns and other structures, but the company evolved into making rustic furniture, cabinetry, mantels and decorative accessories from the reclaimed wood. By welcoming other artisans and antique dealers to his building, Wilson has created a one-stop decorating shop for the individuals, designers, architects and restaurateurs who travel to see his wood products.

“It has the most elegant pieces of junk you’ll ever see,” says McCarthy of Artisan Alley Mall and 2nd Chance Wood. “It’s just a place to go for really cool things.”



Photos - David Oles

Lori McCarthy uses a grinder on a steel panel which will be used to produce a lamp. She and her husband make decorative home products out of wood, steel, glass and other resources.



Lori uses a blow torch to add color to a steel panel which will be used, along with thin sheets of the mineral, mica, to produce a lamp.



Lori and Paul McCarthy of Luminature Design in their studio, a renovated barn in Henderson. Their website is wix.com/mccarthylori/luminature and “Luminature Design” on Facebook.

Going Solo

Single-child Families Are On The Rise

What do Albert Einstein, Joe Montana and Brooke Shields have in common? Fame, of course, but also a shared experience with 20 million of today's young Americans: each was an only child.

Whether they formed by choice or by circumstance, the single-child family is the fastest-growing family type in the U.S. and most of Western Europe. And contrary to lingering stereotypes, studies show that singletons are not measurably different from other kids—except that they, along with first-borns and people who have only one sibling, score higher in measures of intelligence and achievement.

Attention + Confidence = High Achievement

This higher-than-average achievement comes partly from getting more than their share of nurturing attention. Plus, family time often involves adult-oriented activities such as trips to museums and historic attractions.

“My dad would insist on reading every sign in every museum display...out loud,” says Jeremy Harder, who grew up as an only child in Owosso, MI. “Without any siblings to run off with, or form a protest, I pretty much just slumped along, listening. ...These are experiences I really appreciate now that I’m older. And it’s surprising how much knowledge I’ve retained from those museums.”

He describes another set of powerful drivers of academic achievement: freedom and confidence.

“I could watch whatever I felt like, or play with whatever toy I wanted without conflict, or judgment,” he said. “If I wanted to try building a donut-making machine out of spare lawnmower parts, no one told me it was a stupid idea that wouldn’t work.”

Only children also benefit from having parents involved at school. They’re often the ones who can chaperone trips or volunteer in the classrooms, which can be a boon for teachers.

As it turns out, this combination of self-



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Resources:

- ▶ onlychild.com
- ▶ parents.com – Search for “10 Tips for Parenting Only Children: How to handle your overly mature, diligent, conscientious, perfectionist only child.”
- ▶ susannewmanphd.com – Dr. Susan Newman is author of *Psychology Today*’s “Singletons” blog and a new book, “The Case for the Only Child: Your Essential Guide.”

confidence and focused parent involvement provides a powerful formula for success.

Raising One Child Presents Some Unique Challenges

On the other hand, teachers say single-child parents sometimes need to leave their child alone so all that focused attention doesn’t encourage helplessness. She urges parents to teach children—especially as they enter middle and high school—to advocate for themselves in asking for extra help or discussing a grade. And as hard as it might be,

parents sometimes need to look the other way so their child can feel the consequences of their actions.

Michigan attorney Mercedes Dordeski agrees. As an only child, she benefited from both homework help and high accountability from her parents.

“If I ever complained about a particular subject being difficult, the teacher being mean, or how I just ‘didn’t get it,’ my parents would never let me use that as an excuse,” Dordeski said. “They just told me that I needed to work harder.”

Their methods paid off. Like a higher-than-average number of singletons, Dordeski stayed out of trouble, graduated high school with honors, and went on to college and an advanced professional degree.

“My advice to parents would be to never let your kids take the easy way out... If you make them do something, they will,” she says.

Parents in single-child families also are on the hook for providing the competition, camaraderie, and entertainment that come naturally with siblings. This is especially true if school friends live far away or keep too busy to visit often.

“One of the downsides of being an only child is boredom,” said Harder. “My parents were pretty good about joining in, but an adult’s threshold for playing games, throwing balls or playing pretend just isn’t nearly as wide as a kid’s.”

Harder offered parents his own set of tips—starting with the gift of time.

“Be involved daily in doing homework, playing, having dinner together, watching television together, listening to your child—everything—because your child doesn’t have anyone in the house to share that with.”

He also stressed the importance of getting an only child involved in extra-curricular activities, even if they are reluctant.

“A child who only spends time with adults can often feel awkward when alone with other kids. It will help them immensely if they are at a sports practice or music lesson a few times during the week. Ask them all about it when it’s over, but give them that time to learn how to interact without a parent there guiding the way.”

And his final tip: “Get a dog.”

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



Jerry Regan Is 'Der Flymeister'

If there ever was a master of the trout fly, it would have to be Jerry Regan, of Grayling. Most knowing fly-fishers around the “Holy Waters of the Au Sable” say no one is more worthy of the title, “Der Flymeister.”

Jerry retired from downstate and moved back home to pursue what has turned out to be busy second occupation—fly-tying. He is also busy demonstrating and teaching fly-tying while pursuing an increasingly important role as a historian of the arcane craft.

When it comes to Michigan and nationwide, Jerry is one of only a few tiers that have become walking encyclopedias of fly patterns, old and new. This scribbler can attest to that. When I had tied up a pattern I used to fish in western waters and showed it to him, he barely looked before naming it. “A ‘picket pin’—an old-time fly seldom seen used these days,” he said.

Regan is the third generation in his family to tie flies. His grandfather and uncle tied flies as well as guided on the AuSable and Manistee rivers. And like most guides, they tied to have flies available for clients to use and buy.

“They called these ‘pocket flies’—a few proven patterns they’d developed to give to their clients when fish got lockjaw,” Jerry said. “Every guide has some of these ‘go’ flies when things got tough—patterns that they knew would take fish in almost every situation.”

It wasn’t only the men in his family that were involved in tying feathers to a hook. “My Aunt Mary Carr tied the feather dressings on the hooks for lures from the Eppinger Company, makers of the old “Dardevle” and “Five O’Diamond” spoons and other lures,” he added.

As a youngster, Regan used to hang around with the old-timers that ran a local fly shop, called the Fly Factory. “I remember the old-timers like Sailor Bill, and later Art Westerville and the Southard family, that ran the Fly Factory (since renamed the Old Au Sable Fly Shop), and I have tied lots of flies for them over time.” Regan also noted that giving demonstrations on fly-tying came naturally since his Uncle Ralph tied and gave demonstrations at sports shows for many years.

Regan spent much of his adult life working



Jerry Regan is a master fly-tier.

as a barber in a shop in Davison, near Flint, and like many older fly-tiers of the north country, he tied flies in the shop when not busy clipping hair off humans. He also saved his off-work time for periodic trips back to Grayling to fish and later to begin both guiding and tying for more outlets in the north.

He knew many of the early tiers that formed what some call the “AuSable School of Tying.” He was a good friend of the late Bob Smock, one of the few remaining masters of the AuSable deer hair dry flies. “Bob only

tied dry flies—he never liked tying wet flies and stuck to tying the classic dry flies like those originated by Earl Madsen, Clarence Roberts, Marion Burtch, Ernie Borchert, Jim Wakely, Eggie Bugby, and Horace Failing,” Regan said. “Those were the ones we younger tiers learned from as we grew up and their patterns are still good flies for the AuSable and Manistee.”

Jerry Regan ties all types of flies, wet and dry, streamer, nymph, or dries tied with spent, divided or parachute hackle wings (resembles wings and legs of a mayfly). And there are few standard patterns that he cannot identify at a glance. When I wanted a pair of the classic Mershon wet flies for my collection of Michigan patterns, he had a pair—the light and dark—in my mailbox within the week.

Since retiring, Regan lives in his family home in Grayling, which he had kept all these years while working downstate, and is busy guiding in a classic AuSable riverboat, tying flies, and demonstrating at clubs and shows. The only change is that he now gets more time to fish for himself, as well.

“We talked about you and me going down the stream for a fishing day for several years, so let’s do it this summer, maybe during the ‘hopper hatch about August,” Jerry told me. “Neither one of us is getting any younger, so let’s do it.”

It did not take much time to say “yes” to an opportunity to fish the “Holy Waters” with the “Flymeister,” Jerry Regan.

Regretfully, Don Ingle and his wife Jean died recently in a tragic house fire, but this column was the last he submitted as the Outdoors writer for Michigan Country Lines for over 25 years, and we know he would’ve liked going out by talking about his love of fishing. (Also, see the reader letter about Don on p. 6). Rest in peace, Mr. Ingle, with dreams of fly-tying and fishing the “Holy Waters of the Au Sable.”





Crêpes

Sweet & Savory

Sunday Morning
Crêpe Cake

The word “crêpe” is of French origin, stemming from the Latin word *crispa*, which means “curled.” If you stroll through Paris, you’ll find many vendors serving these hot treats right on the street. Crêpes resemble thin pancakes, and they’re surprisingly easy to make. They are also so versatile you can eat them for breakfast—filled with sweets and creams—or enjoy them with savory meats and vegetables.

Sunday Morning Crêpe Cake

3 c. sifted flour
4 T. sugar
2 t. baking powder
1/2 t. salt
4 eggs, beaten
4 c. milk
4 T. butter or margarine
fruit preserves

Frosting:

8 oz. cream cheese, softened
3 T. sugar
2 t. vanilla

Sift flour with sugar, baking powder and salt. Combine eggs and milk; beat until well mixed; pour into dry ingredients and beat with mixer until smooth. Spray an 8-9-inch

skillet, pour 1/4 cup batter, rotating pan so batter quickly covers bottom of entire pan. Cook over high heat about 1 minute per side. Remove from heat. Begin by stacking each crêpe on a 10-inch plate. Lightly spread preserves over the top of each crêpe, stacking them on top of each other and spreading preserves as you go. Makes about 24 crêpes. Do not put preserve on last crêpe, finish with a plain crêpe. Combine all frosting ingredients together and frost cake. Top with fresh berries and powdered sugar.

Julie McDonald, Freesoil

Hot Fresh Peach Souffle

1 c. fresh peaches, pureed (2 peaches)
3 T. cornstarch
1/4 c. sugar
2 t. fresh lemon juice
dash of salt

4 large eggs, separated (1/2 c. whites)
1 peach sliced, for garnish

Butter a large bowl. Sprinkle bowl with sugar. Mix puree with cornstarch, sugar, lemon juice, salt and egg yolks. Beat egg whites until stiff, but not dry. Carefully fold egg whites into peach mixture. Turn into bowl and bake at 375° for 35 minutes, until puffed and brown. Serve with sliced peaches. Serves 6-8.

Joan Leahy, Bay City

Cherry Blintzes

3 eggs
3 T. oil
1-1/2 c. milk
1 c. flour
1/2 t. salt
1/3 c. melted butter
2 T. butter
confectioners' sugar
1 c. sour cream
1 can cherry pie filling

Cheese Filling:

1 egg yolk
2 T. sugar
1 c. cottage cheese
8 oz. cream cheese
1 t. vanilla

Combine eggs, oil, milk, flour and salt in

Photography by: 831 Creative

blender container. Blend until smooth. Heat 8-inch skillet until drop of water sizzles. Brush with butter. Quickly pour in 3 tablespoons of batter, tilting pan to spread evenly. Cook until golden on underside. Dry on paper towels; stack with waxed paper between. In medium bowl, combine egg yolk and sugar; beat until thick and yellow. Add cheeses and vanilla and stir until well-combined. Spread 3 tablespoons of filling on browned side of each crêpe, making a rectangle 4 inches long. Fold two opposite sides of crêpe over filling; overlap ends, covering filling completely. Melt 1 tablespoon butter in large skillet over medium heat; add half of crêpes, not touching, seam side down. Sauté until golden; turn and sauté other side. Keep warm. Serve warm with confectioners' sugar, sour cream and cherry pie filling. Serves 16-20.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

Mexican Crêpes

1 can pie filling, any flavor
1 pkg. small flour tortillas
1½ c. sugar
1½ sticks of butter
1 t. vanilla
2 c. water

cinnamon and nutmeg, to taste

Equally divide pie filling between tortillas. Roll up like enchiladas. Place in 9x13-inch baking dish. Melt together sugar, butter, vanilla and water. Pour over roll-ups. Sprinkle with cinnamon or nutmeg. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes. Serve hot or cold. Serve with vanilla ice cream.

Debra Looney, Grayling

Crêpe Appetizers

1 c. pancake mix, plain
1 egg, beaten
¾ c. water

8 oz. cream cheese

3 T. chopped onion

2 T. chopped sweet pickle

deli-style ham slices

Mix first 3 ingredients (should be thin, if too thick, add water). Heat skillet to 375°. Pour batter in skillet to make 7-inch crêpe. When bubbles form, turn over until both sides are golden brown. Lay crêpes flat, and cool. Mix cream cheese, onion and pickle. Spread mix on flat crêpes. Top each one with thin slice of ham and roll up (tube-like). Can be served cold or warm.

Deborah Black, Sandusky

Lemon-Blueberry Crêpes

1 c. Bisquick baking mix

2 eggs

¾ c. milk

Filling:

1 pkg. (3-oz.) cream cheese, softened

1 ½ c. half-and-half

1 T. lemon juice

1 pkg. (3-oz.) lemon instant pudding and pie filling, dry

1 c. blueberry pie filling

Lightly grease 8-inch skillet, heat until hot. Beat Bisquick, eggs and milk with hand beater until smooth. For each crêpe, pour 2 tablespoons batter into skillet, rotate skillet until batter covers bottom. Cook both sides until golden brown. Beat cheese, half-and-half, lemon juice and instant pudding on low

speed until well blended, about 2 minutes. Refrigerate at least 30 minutes. Spoon about 2 tablespoons of pudding mixture onto each crêpe; roll up. Top with remaining mixture and garnish with pie filling.

Paula Brousseau, Bellaire

Basic Crêpes

1½ c. milk

1 c. flour

2 eggs

1 T. cooking oil

2 T. sugar

In a bowl, combine all ingredients; beat until well-mixed. Heat a lightly greased 6-inch skillet. Spoon in 2 tablespoons of the batter; lift and tilt skillet to spread batter all the way around. Return to heat; brown on one side only (about 30 seconds to 1 minute). Invert pan over paper towels; remove crêpe. Repeat with remaining batter. Fill as desired, then roll up. Can be served with whipped cream or ice cream. Makes about 18 crêpes.

Mary Ellen Wynes, Mt. Pleasant

Orange Crêpe Recipe

1/2 c. milk

2 eggs

1 c. flour

pinch of salt

1-2 T. orange zest

1 T. melted butter

Mix all ingredients together; batter will be somewhat lumpy. Spray pan with cooking spray. Heat pan on medium heat. Pour 1/2 cup batter into pan. "Swirl" pan so batter coats pan bottom evenly. Cook for 1-2 minutes. Flip crêpe when edges begin to brown. Cook for additional minute. Suggested filling: cottage cheese. Topping: blueberries, fresh or frozen. Sprinkle with powdered sugar.

Heather Ann Alpin, Traverse City



Mexican Crêpes

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 **FRESH FROM THE GARDEN** recipes by May 10, **MULTI-MEAL** recipes by June 10, and your favorite **TRICK-OR-SWEET** recipes by July 10.

Mail to: *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.

National Parks, from page 9

and 34 National Historic Landmarks, according to the tourism website at michigan.org.

Lodging = More Than Camping

For lodging, people sometimes picture a grand historic lodge or a tent campground. While these are great options, there are typically other choices through concessioners in the park or in nearby towns. One reason that Great Smoky Mountains Park is continually ranked as most popular U.S. national park is accessibility. It's close to Gatlinburg, TN, and Cherokee and Bryson City, NC, which cater to visitors with a wide variety of affordable accommodations, restaurants, shops, museums, and other attractions.

Popular Acadia National Park in Maine has no "roof" lodging, but the nearby historic village of Bar Harbor offers house vacation rentals, cottages, motels and bed-and-breakfast inns that suit all budgets.

Planning Ahead Is Key

Consider your travel priorities—do you want to drive your car, or fly to the closest airport and rent one? Cook or eat out? Sleep under the stars in the back country or on a real bed? Do you prefer to be near cities or to venture out?

People are surprised that some parks are close to major metropolitan areas. Cuyahoga Valley National Park, blessed with a winding river and fascinating canal history, is only 30 minutes from Cleveland. It also hosts scenic train rides and evening concerts. Stanford House, a bed-and-breakfast inn in the park,

has a self-service kitchen and wireless internet. The renovated farmhouse's room rates, which include a continental breakfast with cereal and fresh fruit, start around \$50 for a small room with a bunk bed and shared bath.

If staying in a quaint cabin is for you, primitive ones can be rented in Shenandoah. The large capacity cabins (roughly \$30-\$45 nightly) have no running water or electricity, but are equipped with mattresses, cookware, and either a wood fireplace or woodstove. In most cases, you carry your items in from between a few tenths of a mile to several miles in. Returning guests rave about the mountain views and the cabins, booked through Potomac Appalachian Trail Club, an authorized concessioner.

Another get-away-from-everything place is Big Bend National Park in Texas. It has

spectacular canyon and mountain scenery, with lots of plants and animals and more types of birds than any other national park in the United States.

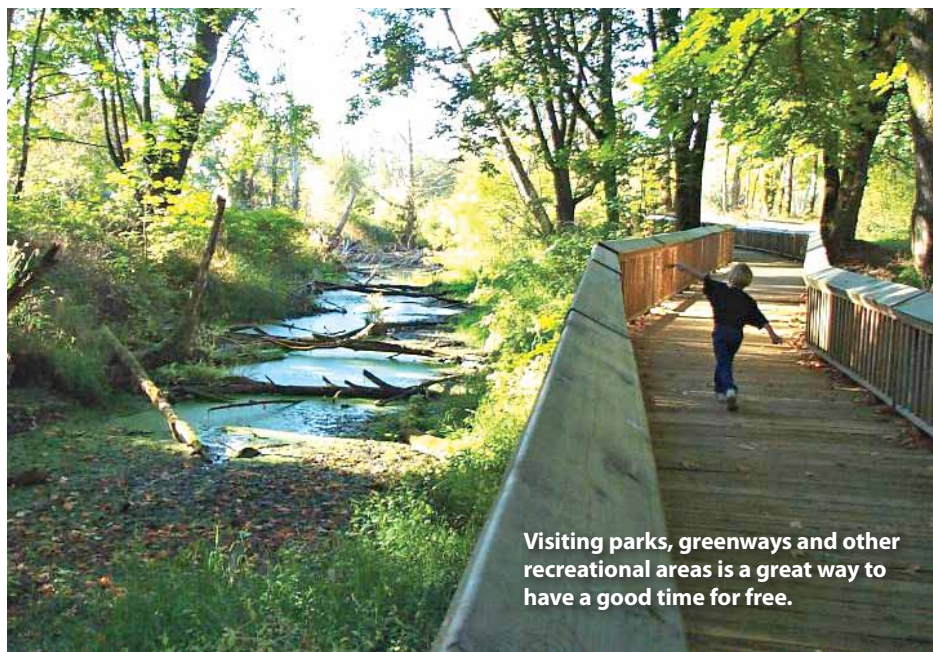
It pays to do your homework. Biscayne National Park boasts urban proximity, colorful coral reefs, and first-rate scuba diving and snorkeling. It's within sight of downtown Miami, but that doesn't mean its logistics are easy. More than 95 percent of this marine park is covered by water, so transportation is by boat here.

Finally, stay open to lesser-known parks. A newer park, the Black Canyon of the Gunnison in Colorado, receives a fraction of the Grand Canyon's numbers. However, its canyon's combination of narrowness and vertical drop are unmatched by any other in North America.



Grotto Falls in the Great Smoky Mountains

Source - Great Smoky Mountains National Park



Visiting parks, greenways and other recreational areas is a great way to have a good time for free.

Source - U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

Finding Other Travel Deals

Popular websites such as tripadvisor.com, smartertravel.com or travelzoo.com offer advice from fellow travelers about places to eat, play and stay, plus a wide variety of planning tools, including searches for flights, hotels, restaurants and vacation rentals.

There are also many free or inexpensive cell phones apps that help travelers save money, too. Check user reviews before downloading, and some travel websites (tripadvisor.com) and companies offer free mobile apps.

Social media is great for getting current travel advice. From photos to tweets on great-and-not-so-great deals, insiders dish about lodging, food and attractions. One of the oldest is virtualltourist.com.

Other handy sites for travel deals include affordabletours.com, restaurants.com, hotels.com, and ecruises.com.

How to Buy an Energy-Efficient Appliance



Source - Samsung

You go shopping for a new refrigerator, and you're on a budget. The best buy is the one with the lowest sales price, right?

Not necessarily. If you buy the lowest-priced refrigerator, you may end up spending more than if you buy a more expensive one. The reason? The cost of owning a home appliance has three components: the initial purchase price, the cost of repairs and maintenance, and the cost to operate it.

To figure out how much you'll spend over the appliance's lifetime, you have to weigh all these factors. The appliance with the lowest initial price, or even the one with the best repair record, isn't necessarily the one that costs the least to operate. Here's an example of how an appliance's energy consumption can affect your wallet.

Suppose you're in the market for a new refrigerator-freezer. Different refrigerator models with the same capacity can vary dramatically in the amount of electricity they use. For one popular size and configuration, for example, the annual electricity consumption varies across models from a low of about 600 kilowatt-hours (kWh) to a high of more than 800 kWh, per year. Based on national average electricity prices, that means the annual cost to operate this refrigerator can range from about \$50 to \$70, depending on which model you buy.

A \$20 difference in annual operating costs may not sound like much, but remember

that you will enjoy these savings year after year for the appliance lifetime, while you must pay any difference in purchase price only once. As a result, you may actually save money by buying the more expensive, more energy-efficient model.

You can learn about the energy use and efficiency of an appliance (determined in independent laboratory tests) from the yellow-and-black EnergyGuide® label. The Federal Trade Commission's Appliance Labeling Rule requires appliance manufacturers to put these labels on refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers, TVs, water heaters, furnaces, boilers, central air conditioners, room air conditioners, heat pumps, and pool heaters.

When you shop in a dealer's showroom, you should find the labels hanging on the inside of an appliance or secured to the outside. The law requires that the labels specify:

- The capacity of the particular model;
- For refrigerators, freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers and water heaters, the model's estimated annual energy consumption.

■ For air conditioners, heat pumps, furnaces, boilers and pool heaters, the energy efficiency rating.

■ The range of estimated annual energy consumption, or energy efficiency ratings, of comparable appliances.

Some appliances may also feature the Energy Star® logo, which means it is significantly more energy efficient than the average comparable model.

The Energy Star program also provides a number of rebate opportunities when you purchase qualifying products and appliances, including ceiling fans, compact fluorescent lightbulb fixtures, light-emitting diode (LED) fixtures, smart power strips, room air conditioners, dehumidifiers, clothes washers and dryers, dishwashers, refrigerators and low-flow aerator kits. Before buying a new appliance, check out available rebates through Midwest Energy Cooperative's Energy Optimization Program (see details below).

— Sources: Federal Trade Commission;
U.S. Dept. of Energy

Appliance Aid

Federal tax credits for appliances expired at the end of 2011, but some Michigan utilities provide rebates and appliance loan programs. Check michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for available rebates and programs through Alger Delta Electric Co-op's Energy Optimization Program. These programs and incentives are applicable in Michigan service locations only, and other restrictions may apply.

Heat Pump Magic

Magicians may pull rabbits from hats, but many homeowners perform their own magic by taking natural heat and cooling power from the air and earth and transforming it into conditioned comfort. This act, however, doesn't require any trickery: it simply requires a heat pump.

Heat pumps move heat in during the winter and out in the summer, trimming heating and cooling costs by as much as 40 percent, notes the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE). In a national study, the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), revealed 11 percent of homes use a heat pump as their main heating/cooling system. For all-electric homes this jumps to 29 percent.

Different heat pumps succeed in specific regions. Air-source heat pumps work well in warmer climates, and geothermal heat pumps shine in more northerly areas because their heat source stays shielded—the top 10 feet of earth consistently measures between 50 to 60 degrees Fahrenheit.

A heat pump system delivers value if the model used matches your region and is installed properly. Here's three different types.

Geothermal

Since the earth's temperature is steady year-round, it can be harnessed to make homes comfortable. The DOE reports that geothermal heat pumps offer energy savings between 30 and 60 percent annually when compared to conventional baseboard or radiant heating units, and are typically the most efficient heat pump option.

Geothermal units move a liquid or water through pipes buried in the ground, then into a home. Also called ground-source heat pumps, there are two types: a groundwater (open-loop) system uses well or pond water, while an earth-coupled (closed-loop) model uses a water and antifreeze solution. Systems can be installed horizontally or vertically, depending on space.

Geothermal efficiency depends on climate, soil and water conditions, and landscaping. For example, soil that transfers heat easily requires less piping. Rocky terrain may require a vertical loop system instead of a more economical horizontal system.

When considering geothermal, compare the coefficient of performance (COP) for heating, and the energy efficiency ratio (EER) for cooling. Energy Star®-qualified models must provide a rating of at least 2.8 COP and 13 EER.

Air-Source Units

Air-source heat pumps use coils to evaporate a refrigerant that also draws heat away from a home, cooling the air. In winter, the magic reverses to heating with the flip of a valve.

Air source heat pumps deliver up to three times more heat energy than electricity consumed, but are not perfect. These units often do not fare well in regions with sub-zero temperatures.

A back-up system of electric resistance coils kicks-in when air temperatures dip below 40 degrees F, but this heating method isn't energy efficient, so it costs more to operate than traditional units. Some air-source units, notably reverse cycle chillers (RCC), offer heating alternatives to keep homes efficiently comfortable at lower temperatures by storing heat in an insulated tank of water. Others include gas-fired backup furnaces, which increases winter efficiency.

When buying an air-source unit, compare the seasonal energy efficiency rating (SEER) for cooling, and heating seasonal performance factor (HSPF) for compressor and heating element strength. Energy Star models guarantee a SEER of 12 or more and a HSPF of 7 or more. For warmer climates, SEER is more important than HSPF; in colder climates, find a unit with a high HSPF.

Ductless/Mini-Split

Ductwork that funnels conditioned air to different rooms can cause some air to “disappear,”—wasting 15 to 20 percent of the energy used to heat or cool it. While sealing air ducts and proper insulation helps, another option is to bypass ducts with a ductless version of an air-source heat pump (DHP), called a “mini-split” heat pump.

Small and versatile, these units have two main parts: an outdoor compressor/condenser and one or more indoor air-handling units that are linked by a cable (refrigerant line). Many offer up to four indoor units to condi-

tion different rooms, and some have wireless remotes or wall-mounted control units.

These devices use about 50 to 60 percent less energy than traditional heating forms, CRN reports. DHPs are ideal for room additions where ductwork isn't possible, or for homes with “non-ducted” air conditioning (i.e., window units). Indoor models can be mounted in the ceiling, hung on the wall, or placed on the floor.

But DHPs cost 30 percent more than traditional central air units (not including ductwork), and installation can be tricky. If a system is too big for the space, energy will

be wasted and the correct temperature may not be reached.

Innovation Boosts Efficiency

Geothermal has been used since the 1940s, but innovations are improving performance and efficiency.

Dual-source heat pumps combine geothermal and air-source technologies. While not as efficient as geo-

thermal, this unit costs less and avoids some of the air-source's pitfalls.

Another advancement, two-speed compressors, condition the desired amount of air (heating or cooling) needed at different times (standard compressors only operate at full capacity). Having this option reduces compressor wear and saves energy.

With all heat pumps, compressor design enhances performance—a scroll compressor offers quieter operation and provides 10 to 15 degrees F of warmer air compared to units with traditional piston-driven compressors.

Some heat pumps offer variable-speed or dual-speed motors for fans (indoor and outdoor) which minimizes drafts and keeps air flowing at a comfortable rate.

Saving on Systems

Heat pumps cost more than traditional air conditioning, but a federal tax credit equal to 30 percent of geothermal materials and installation costs, with no total expense limit, applies through Dec. 31, 2016 (see energystar.gov/taxcredits). Check the Database of State Incentives for Renewables and Efficiency at dsireusa.org for credits and rebates by state.

Since heat pump success depends on region, contact your electric co-op to see which system might work for you.



GE Ductless Split System Air Conditioner



block air flow.

Switch off the circuit breaker to the unit and remove the outdoor cabinet. Clean out any debris that has accumulated inside it, which may block the coils. You don't have to make it spotless, though. If fins have been

Clean leaves and other debris from the top of the central air conditioner or heat pump, even though many will blow away by themselves when the unit starts.

bent over in spots, try to straighten them out enough so more air gets through.

It is important that all the screws holding the cabinet sections together are

tight when you reinstall the cabinet. Even if it is clean and you do not remove the cabinet, check all the screws. If they are loose, leaks will draw air in gaps instead of through the coils as designed.

Just as the proper amount of air flow is important through the outdoor coils, it is also important through the indoor coils. With the circuit breaker still switched off, remove the side cover on the indoor unit to expose the evaporator coils and the blower. When you reinstall the cover, make sure to tighten the screws.

Quite a bit of dirt can accumulate on the indoor coils, blocking air flow and insulating them from the air. This is because the coils get damp when the air conditioner is running and dirt sticks to it. Wipe the coils and then use the brush attachment on your vacuum cleaner to clean them and the blower.

Even though everyone has heard about changing the blower filter regularly, most people don't do it. At the beginning of the cooling season, change the filter whether you think it is dirty or not. A dirty filter increases air flow resistance, which reduces efficiency. Also, check the joints in the ducts for any air leaks, and seal them with aluminum tape or black Gorilla duct tape.

If you have a question for Jim, please email 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.

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



Central Air Conditioner Upkeep

Q: *I want my old air conditioner to run as efficiently as possible. If my cooling costs are still too high, I will think about replacing it. Other than a professional service call, what can I do to tune it up myself?*

A: It is wise to make sure your existing central air conditioner is running as efficiently as possible to reduce your electric bills. Because actual cooling costs depend upon weather conditions, they can vary significantly from year to year, making accurate comparisons difficult.

The easiest way to determine the savings from installing a new central air conditioner is to compare the SEER (seasonal energy efficiency ratio) of your existing model to a new model. You can be pretty sure your existing unit is not operating more efficiently than when it was brand new, so the savings from this comparison will be on the conservative side.

There are additional savings from installing a more efficient model. Electric utility companies have to provide enough electricity generation capacity to meet peak demand even though it is not needed that often. If peak electricity demand can be decreased by homes running newer, higher-efficiency air conditioners, then fewer power plants may have to be built.

There are some things you can do yourself to keep your central air unit running as efficiently as possible. This does not preclude having regular professional service calls, however. Technicians have special equipment and

pressure gauges to check the system's internal components, which is impossible for a homeowner to do on his or her own. Regular service calls can also extend the unit's life.

It also helps to have an understanding of how an air conditioner works. It operates on a delicate balance of air flow rates over the indoor and outdoor coils, and proper pressures of the refrigerant. The compressor compresses the refrigerant to make it very hot. This hot liquid is hotter than the outdoor air, so it loses heat to the outdoor air through the condenser coils.

The cooler refrigerant then goes through an evaporator, which makes it very cold. This is similar to how your skin cools off when perspiration evaporates. This cold refrigerant flows through the indoor coil. The blower moves indoor air over these cold coils, which cools your house air. At the same time, water condenses on the cold coils so the indoor air is both cooled and dehumidified.

As you can see, getting adequate air flow through the outdoor condenser coils is important for efficiency so the refrigerant will be colder when it gets indoors. It can really help efficiency to make sure weeds and shrubs have not grown too close to the outdoor unit and impede air flow. Also, don't rest rakes or other items against it which may

Treat Do-It-Yourself Wiring Projects Carefully

If spring sends you into remodeling mode, consider checking with professionals before migrating to the nearest hardware store. While do-it-yourself (DIY) projects can be very satisfying to complete, they pose risks when it comes to electricity.

“Mistakes can be costly—or even deadly,” warns John Drengenberg, consumer affairs manager for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., (UL), a Chicago-based nonprofit firm that tests and sets minimum standards for electric products. “The first and best safety tip is to call in an expert rather than be your own electrician.”

An ongoing study by the Fire Protection Research Foundation has given UL engineers a better understanding of typical DIY wiring mistakes. The most common are:

Working With a Live Wire

It may seem obvious, but thousands of do-it-yourselfers get electric shock injuries each year. To avoid becoming a statistic, always turn off the circuit breaker (or remove the fuse) before working on or replacing electrical equipment. If you have a pre-1940s home, you probably have more than one breaker box, or panel board, as electricians call them.

Using the Wrong Lightbulb

Most lighting fixtures have a sticker on the socket that tells you the proper type and maximum lightbulb wattage to use. Installing a different type of bulb, or one with higher wattage, will not only make the room brighter, but could damage the lights and cause a fire. The higher the wattage, the hotter the bulb, and the hotter the wire that goes to the lighting fixture.

Not Being Grounded

For optimal safety, receptacles should be wired with the proper grounding and polarity. Generally, three-pronged outlets signify an effective ground path in the circuit. However, homes built before the mid-1960s probably don't have a grounding path, and simply replacing the existing outlet with a three-pronged outlet won't give you one.

“You see instances of this in homes with older wiring,” Drengenberg says. “It's no

worse than if you plug your two-pronged device into a two-pronged outlet. But it does give the homeowner a false sense of security.”

Wiring with a grounding path usually has a copper grounding wire with the cable. If you are uncertain whether your home's wiring is grounded, inexpensive UL-listed outlet circuit testers are available to check for proper grounding and polarity. If your outlet is improperly grounded, call an electrician before moving forward in any project.

Splicing, Splicing, Splicing

Always make sure your wiring size and type match. Splicing wires by simply twisting them together and covering them with electrical tape is rarely a good idea. Instead, use wiring suitable to your home's wiring and place wiring connections in metal or plastic boxes to decrease fire risk.

Also keep in mind that circuits protected by 15-amp fuses or breakers should be wired with No. 14 AWG copper wire minimum. For 20 amps, use No. 12 AWG minimum size copper wire. Other guidelines apply, so seek professional help before you begin.

Hooking New Lights to Old Wires

Most light fixtures are marked with instructions for supply connections, such as “Use wire rated for at least 90C,” which refers to the maximum temperature—90 degrees Celsius or about 200 degrees Fahrenheit—under which a wire's insulation can safely be used safely. Again, if you have an older home (pre-1984, in this case), wiring may have a lower temperature rating than a new luminaire.

“This isn't something most DIYers even think to consider,” Drengenberg cautions. “It probably won't burst into flame immediately, but it does increase the risk of a fire.” To avoid that risk, check your wire rating first, and either upgrade it or buy fixtures within the supply connection range.

Other Electrical Clues

Electrical upgrades often require a professional who knows what inspections and permits are needed. Following are a few other clues to help you find out if your home's electric network needs a professional switch.



Source—Electrical Safety Foundation International

Be careful not to install new lighting to old, inferior wires. To avoid this fire hazard, check your wire rating first, and either upgrade it or buy fixtures within the supply connection range.

- **Type of wiring.** Modern wiring is insulated, meaning covered in plastic. Older homes may have copper or aluminum wiring. Copper wiring can work just as well as modern wiring if it is still in good condition and has not been altered or improperly installed. However, fire risk also increases in homes with both copper and aluminum wiring. Corrosion to aluminum from copper can lead to loose connections causing fires. Use only aluminum-approved switches, outlets, and other accessories if your home has aluminum wiring.

- **Plugs fall out of outlets easily.** Loose plugs are a high fire danger. Older outlets that have lost their grip need to be replaced.

- **Not enough outlets.** The increasing use of chargers for phones and electronic devices means outlets are in high demand, especially in older homes where outlets are not as plentiful. This can result in overuse of extension cords and power strips. Be sure to use quality, 14-gauge or thicker cords that are approved by Underwriters Laboratories (UL). Never overload an outlet. Overloading can cause heat, leading to fire risk. Consider hiring a licensed electrician to add outlets to your home.

- **Danger in wet areas.** GFCI (ground fault circuit interrupter) outlets are now required in areas around water like near a kitchen or bathroom sink or outdoors. But in older homes, GFCIs may not have been installed. It is fairly simple to replace old receptacles with GFCIs; hire a professional to upgrade outlets near water.

- **Wind causes lights to blink.** If you notice your lights blinking on windy days, it may be due to worn wiring in the weatherhead (where overhead lines enter your home). Contact your electric co-op to check weatherhead wiring.

Sources: *This Old House*, Underwriters Laboratories, Kelly Trapnell

Out With the Old...For Real

Alger Delta Co-op offers recycling for refrigerators and freezers.

Over the past two years, many consumers received federal rebates when purchasing a new refrigerator, water heater, or other household appliance. About 1.7 million rebates were redeemed, and the U.S. Department of Energy estimates these appliances will cut \$65 million from electric bills every year. Around \$48 million of that chunk will be saved mainly by consumers who bought energy-efficient refrigerators, clothes washers, and dishwashers.

Great news, right? But suppose you just bought a new refrigerator or freezer, what did you do with your old one? Kick it to the curb? Move it out to the garage? Recycle it? The reason we ask isn't to make you feel guilty, but to point out that recycling old appliances isn't the first thing most of us think about.

In fact, a lot of us are still using our old refrigerator and the new one. A national survey from the Cooperative Research Network, a branch of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, reported that 19 percent of U.S. homes have two refrigera-

tors running at all times. Another 2 percent of U.S. households operate three or more refrigerators at the same time.

So much for the adage, "Out with the old and in with the new."

One Is Best

The problem with keeping an old refrigerator or freezer is simple: It costs you money. By continuing to use these "energy hogs" in your basement or garage, your energy bills may be \$100-200 higher per year than necessary.

The older your refrigerator or freezer is, the more energy it wastes. For example, a modern refrigerator costs 60 percent less to use than a 1970s-era unit. In addition, a new refrigerator is about 20 percent larger than the 1970s avocado green or blaze orange

versions, making it easier for most families to have just one fridge.

Energy Optimization Appliance Recycling

As your energy provider, we want to help you really save energy when you buy a new Energy Star® or energy-efficient refrigerator or freezer. That's why we're proud of our refrigerator recycling program.

How you benefit:

- \$30 rebate on each recycled refrigerator or freezer. Appliance must be in working condition. (Limit 2)
- Convenient door-to-door pick up
- Ongoing savings on your electric bills

Bonus rebate alert

You know every dollar counts. So, if you're in the market to buy a new refrigerator or freezer, be sure to check out rebates that may be available through Alger Delta's Energy Optimization program for Energy Star appliances.

Call 877.296.4319 or visit Michigan-energy.org to schedule a pick-up of your old refrigerator.



Get \$30 for your old refrigerator or freezer.

Have an extra working refrigerator or freezer? Don't let it sit there wasting energy. Turn it in. You'll receive a \$30 rebate from the Energy Optimization (EO) Appliance Recycling program and we'll recycle it. Schedule your FREE pick-up today.

recycle it

ENERGY TIP: Shopping for new appliances? Take advantage of EO rebates on ENERGY STAR models.

Online: michigan-energy.org Phone: 877.296.4319



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.

Never Trust A Fire

Remember that week of midsummer weather in March, when Michigan skipped spring and went right to shorts and sandals weather, and we all said, “Global warming isn’t all that bad,” and decided to get a jump-start on cleaning up our yards?

That was the week I became the pinup boy for Smokey Bear’s first principle: “Only you can prevent wildfires.” (When did it change from “forest fires” to “wildfires”?)

Those of us who live in the country don’t have a service that picks up yard debris, so we get rid of it by burning, when permitted. A yard full of trees and plants creates a heck of a lot of combustible stuff.

Burn permit in hand, I collected dried tall grasses and dead tree limbs and burned them over several days, along with a tangle of tree and brush limbs cut during the past year. The yard was looking good. I was way ahead of any other year in memory.

The day was hot, again in the 80s, with a slight breeze. The under layer of fallen leaves was still damp from a previous rain. A fire I had tried to start in the back “forgotten” corner of our almost-acre just wouldn’t take, because of the dampness. So I went in the house for lunch. Big mistake.

Within an hour, our neighbor Randy was yelling at our door. When I got outside, he was behind our house using a rake to beat out flames that had spread in a 50-foot radius around that wouldn’t-start fire. Flames were licking at the bases of white pine, maple and dead ash trees, following a trail of dead leaves through the under-story and threatening to enter a particularly dense thicket of dead and dry brush. We rigged up hoses to get water to the fire and sprayed for more than an hour before getting the fire under control. My heart was beating faster than for any medical stress test. I was ready to call in the fire department, but Randy said, “We’ve got this.”

And we did, thanks to him and his son, Alex, who was the first to notice the smoke. But for them, this would have been a disaster. I thank them mightily.

Was I careful? I thought so. Was I care-

ful enough? Apparently not. The thing about fire is that you can’t be too careful. Fire experts say every wildfire starts from just a spark or by creeping into dry vegetation. There is always the possibility of it going awry. And possibility turns to likelihood when you leave a fire alone.

That happens a lot, and more so this year, when you consider the Michigan wildfire count posted by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR). The DNR website (michigan.gov/dnr, also a good place to find out about burn permits) breaks down the causes of wildfires and compares year-to-year occurrences. As of April 8, the state has seen 104 wildfires and 463 acres burned this year, an eight times increase over the same period in 2011, with 43 percent caused by debris burning, just like I was doing.

So I’m not alone, but I knew that because others have told me about their own fire mishaps.

A few years ago at an annual meeting of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, from which I’m retired, I used the space between speakers to provide a humorous tale, and a teaching moment, of another fire mishap. That time I left a small bed of embers to die-out while I went in the house for dinner. A half-hour later, my son Jon looked to the back lot and saw flames shooting up the 25-foot dead trunk of a once-mighty oak. Since this happened on a windless evening, with the tree trunk 20 feet from the fire, I suspect a rock in the fire exploded in the heat, sending embers to the base of the trunk.

With help from our friend Dave, we strung hoses together to reach the fire with water and doused the trunk base with buckets of water from our pool. Once the flames were gone, the inside of the tree smoldered for days. I stayed up all night watching and spraying and continued periodic spraying for days after. On



I should read the Smokey Bear pledge every time I burn. You can find it—and the Smokey mask—at smokeybear.com.

the fifth day, I came home for lunch and found the inside smoldering again. Only a heavy rain the next day put that fire out for good.

After I recounted the tale, along with pictures, several people let me know that I wasn’t alone in my stupidity. They also had dealt with wildfires of their own making, some quite stunning. Their secrets are safe with me.

But I’m a repeat offender. Apparently I’m not to be trusted with matches, or around fire, or even anything combustible.

My brother Tom is a firefighter. He puts fires out. He’d be handy to have close by, but he lives in Minnesota.

My dad warned me about fires when I was about five and had been “playing with matches” in an empty lot behind our house. I managed to get that fire out, too. Coincidentally, my dad died two days before my last fire fiasco. He would have said, “I warned you.”

And I warn you, too. Never trust a fire.

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



THIS ^{is} Designer METAL ROOFING!

Can we use your home
in our ads?

Extra Savings Available.*

Call for details:

888-221-1869

Place your
house here!

FREE **DIY** Seminars

DO it YOURSELF and SAVE!

Call 888-221-1869 to register or
go to AmericanMetalRoofs.com

Next Classes:

6/6 & 7/14 @Charlotte Showroom

5/19, 6/23 & 7/28 @ Flint Showroom

***Showcase
homes WANTED**

*We would like to use your home to showcase a beautiful American Metal Roof. Qualified homes can earn big discounts off the price of an American. Call today to see if your home qualifies. Call Jenn at:

1-888-221-1869

Note: Not all homes will qualify.



American Metal Roofs
Made in America


See our Photo Gallery and Watch the Snow Sliding Video at
www.AmericanMetalRoofs.com

Visit the American Metal Roofs Showrooms at

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

888-221-1869

 Follow us on Twitter
[@AMRmichigan](https://twitter.com/AMRmichigan)

 Find us on Facebook
fb.me/AMRmichigan



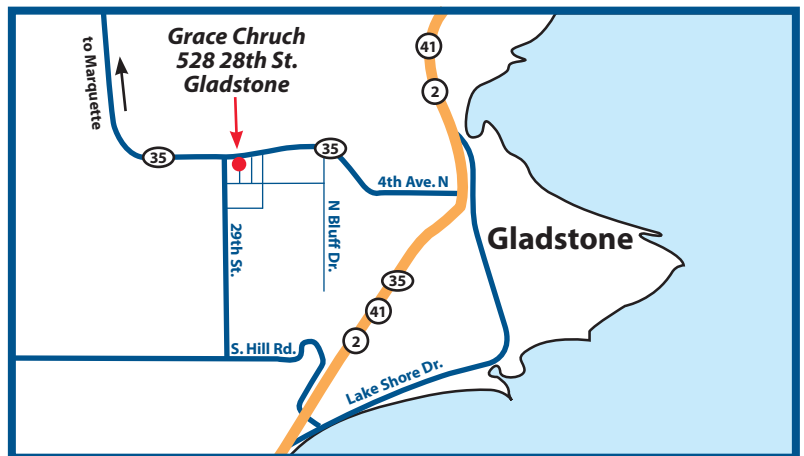
Don't Miss Alger Delta's 2012 Annual Membership Meeting June 20

Free Meal ~ Door Prizes ~ Prize Drawings



Don't miss our special guest speaker, **JERRY APPS**, a celebrated presenter on rural life (see p. 5). His books include, "Humor From The Country" and "Country Ways And Days."

- ▶ **Wed., June 20, 2012**
- ▶ **Meal served 5:30 – 6 p.m. (EST)**
- ▶ **Business Meeting – 6:15 p.m.**
- ▶ **Seating is limited. You must reserve your place in advance. Call 906-428-4141 to RSVP.**



From RAPID RIVER: Take U.S. 2 & 41 west/south. Turn west (right) on M-35. Go to the top of the hill. Turn south (left) into parking lot just before traffic light. **From PERKINS:** Take M-35 south toward Gladstone. Pass Gladstone High School on east side of M-35 and follow curve to the east. Go through traffic light and turn south (right) into parking lot. **From ESCANABA:** Take US 2 & 41 east / north. Turn west (left) on M-35. Go to top of the hill. Turn south (left) into parking lot just before traffic light.

**Remove this full page,
complete the form, and
redeem for a free gift when
you attend the
Annual Meeting.**

Name (please print) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____ Phone # _____