

Michigan COUNTRY LINES

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on

25 x 2025

P. 11



Mud, Sweat & Tears

*Extreme Sports
Are Big*

4 True Costs Of Your
Electric Service

9 Co-op Member Builds
Wind, Solar Units

20 Preventing Trees From
Causing Outages



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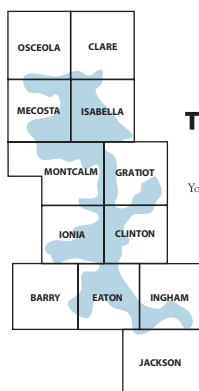
On the Cover

Andrew Rickauer of Marquette clears the second of two 17-inch wooden barriers positioned at the base of a steep climb in the 2011 Keweenaw Cup cyclocross race in Copper Harbor, MI.

Photo - Chris Schmidt

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Cooperatives
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Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC

Sharing the True Costs of Service

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members often ask, “What is this ‘availability charge’ on my monthly bill?” This charge helps cover the fixed costs of making power available to you whenever you need it. Poles, wires, transformers, bucket trucks and employees exist to provide you with electricity, and the availability charge is needed to recover those costs, regardless of how much electricity you use.

An infrastructure charge like this, whatever it’s called, is in place at most utilities nationwide. Large or small, we all have similar fixed costs, based on published cost-of-service studies.

Many small utilities, like electric co-ops, have been steadily increasing their monthly service charge. In Michigan, several co-ops charge \$18 to \$25 monthly.

Our recent cost-of-service study, performed by an independent professional engineering firm, shows us that if every one of our residential and general service members paid the true cost of having electric service, the monthly availability charge would be \$36.96. (In comparison, the current monthly charge is \$12 for residential accounts and \$20 for general service.)

The breakdown looks like this:

Primary line, transformer, meter	\$21.40
Customer support	\$ 9.92
Property taxes, other fixed costs	\$ 5.64

The first line includes depreciation of purchase costs, interest, installation and maintenance, and other administrative costs, such as insurance.

Since we are a not-for-profit electric cooperative, our rates should be based on our actual costs of serving you. If we were to increase the availability charge to the full cost of service, we would then be able to reduce the cost per kilowatt-hour of the energy you use—by about 20 to 25 percent—to its actual cost.

We believe, as a cooperative, that the cost-causers should be the cost-payers. In an ideal world, each of us would pay our exact share of the costs, and no member would pay more to subsidize another’s rates.

Towards that end, your board of directors has established a rate policy that would direct future rate increases into the monthly availability charge because this method reduces the subsidies paid by those who use more energy. This policy also benefits HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative. Even though HomeWorks operates on a nonprofit basis, to remain financially strong we need a margin, or profit. These days, members are purchasing less energy, whether it’s because of Energy Optimization or other energy conservation measures, net metering with renewable energy sources, or distributed generation (power generated at or near the point of use, such as emergency generators or small wind turbines). We believe this trend will only continue. Your cooperative cannot maintain a reliable system by attempting to recover costs from ever-decreasing kilowatt-hour sales. That’s why this is one of the agenda items at a Special Open Member Meeting on Sept. 24.

A common response when rates increase is that we are penalizing those who use less energy. Not at all. Making sure service is available to you, whenever you want it, costs your cooperative the same whether you use 10 kilowatt-hours a month, or 10,000. However much energy you use, you should pay your share of the costs, and not expect your neighbor to pay more so you can pay less.



Tom Manting

Tom Manting

Tom Manting

Chief Financial Officer

Certified Cooperative Financial Professional



Join the conversation at
facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

(Parts) Still Working After All These Years



Photos – Kevin VanDePerre



HomeWorks Tri-County crews recently did preventive maintenance on a section of the system that was built in 1938 and is still serving our members.

Part of this action included installing an air-break switch (above), which includes the crossbars and insulators attached to the utility pole, at the corner of Blanchard and Woodruff roads. The switch was used to tie the Weidman and Crawford, or Weidman and Altona substations together.

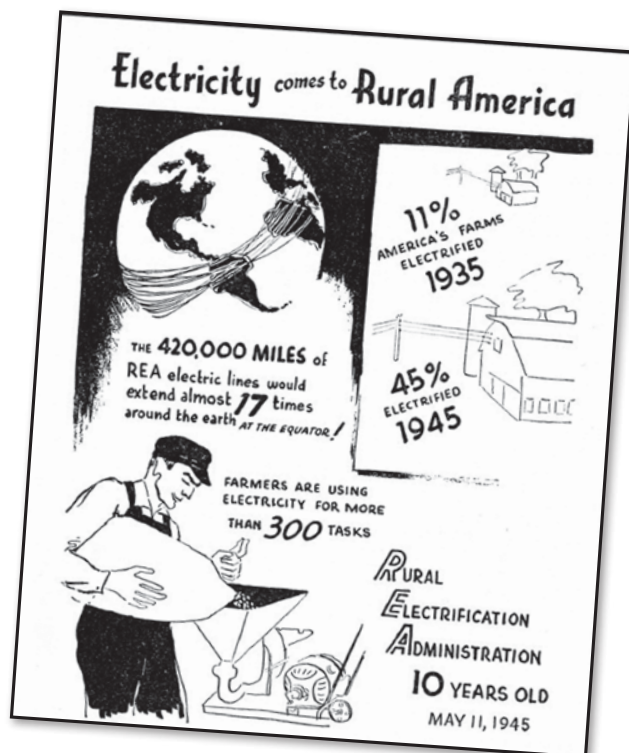
An air-break switch is a disconnecting mechanism that provides a crucial point of isolation on an overhead power line in case of a fault occurring, or if maintenance work needs to be done.

According to Kevin VanDePerre, operations supervisor at Blanchard, the old switch was worn out and the insulating bells starting to fail. It was last used for the tie operation about 18 months ago.

The new switch will work more easily and efficiently, and we hope it will last for another 74 years.



Photos – (Top, left) Jeremy McVeigh works on removing the old air-break switch and is joined by Dan Fredricks (right) in a second bucket. Left, one of the insulating bells taken from the old air-break switch. Besides being stamped with its manufacture date, Kevin VanDePerre notes, "All of the parts we removed were proudly stamped 'MADE IN USA!'"



Letters & More

The "Ramblings" column (Mike Buda) about collecting "Too Much Stuff", reverse cycle chillers (a new type of high efficiency heat pump), July-August Mystery Photo winner, Asian carp update and financial help for businesses affected by the drought... It's all here in your readers' pages.

Too Much Stuff

Having just celebrated our 50th Anniversary of collecting stuff, we can relate to Mike Buda's "Ramblings" column (July-Aug.). He may want to consider our method of relieving the guilt of leaving it for our son to sort out.

We have recently written a "family history" (which is a whole other story). At the end of our memoir, we have listed "things in our house you might like to know the history about." We have stipulated that the information should not make him think he can't throw any of it away, but it's rather a guideline to help him make educated decisions when sorting things to give away, sell and keep. The list is divided by rooms with comments like:

"The teapot on the fireplace hearth was from my Grandma. She said it was on her farm when she was a girl, which makes it over 100 years old. It was never used for tea, but to store their money made from selling eggs."

The high chair was used by my grandpa (1888), mom (1914), sister, me (1940s), and you when you visited my parents. The doll in the chair belonged to your dad's mom."

Another suggestion...put your broken wood chipper in a garage sale!

— Mary Ellen Wynes

When we retired and moved from Traverse City, we were faced with similar [too much stuff] dilemmas. A guy at our church, an undertaker, had given a wonderful presentation of his life's work. He mentioned that often the survivors don't have suitable clothes for the deceased, so with males, he would use his own suits, then remove them before burial. We all 'eeuuued' at this, and took note of the suit he was wearing and wondered if it had seen duty. (He said he always washed it!)

When we moved we gave him my husband's suits, shirts and old ties. We saw him a year or so later and he had already used most of them! If you are so inclined, you might consider this service.

Good luck with the sifting, it is so easy to collect and so hard to get rid of what we don't need.

We enjoy your column.

— Linda Fisher

Reverse Cycle Chiller

I live in the Kalamazoo area and am interested in a reverse

cycle chiller as described in your article ["Hot Water Can Heat Your Home"] in the July/August issue of *Country Lines*. I have contacted a couple of local contractors and they aren't familiar with this application. Do you know of a contractor in southwest Michigan that has any experience with this system? Your help would be appreciated.

— Eric Goetzinger

From Art Thayer, energy efficiency programs director, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association:

The more common manufacturers of reverse cycle chillers are York, Coleman, and Aqua Products. Begin your search in the yellow pages under the York and Coleman headings in the Heating & Cooling section.

You may also want to contact some WaterFurnace Dealers in your area (E.M. Sergeant Company, 269-343-1363, and Metzgers Inc., 269-385-3562, in Kalamazoo, or Geostar Mechanical, 269-484-0444, in Galesburg), as they may have access to the Aqua Product line. See the ad on p. 2 of Country Lines, visit waterfurnace.com, or call 800-436-7283 for dealers in other areas.

Drought Disaster Loans Available

The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) says loans from its Economic Injury Disaster Program are available to small businesses (including aquaculture), small agricultural cooperatives, and most Michigan private nonprofit organizations as a result of a drought that began July 17, 2012. Covered counties include Berrien, Branch, Calhoun, Cass, Hillsdale, Jackson, Kalamazoo, Lenawee, Saint Joseph and Van Buren.

Loans are available to farm and non-farm-related entities, including nurseries, that suffered financial losses as a direct result of the drought. Except for aquaculture, the SBA notes it cannot provide disaster loans to agricultural producers, farmers or ranchers.

Loan amounts and terms can be up to \$2 million and 30 years, with 3 percent interest for private nonprofits and 4 percent for small businesses. Eligibility is based on applicant size, activity, and financial resources/condition. Loans may be used to pay fixed debts, payroll, accounts payable, and other bills that could've been paid if the disaster had not occurred. They are not intended to replace lost sales or profits.

Applications (at sba.gov or 800-659-2955; 800-877-8339 for deaf) must be received by 3/25/2013.



DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

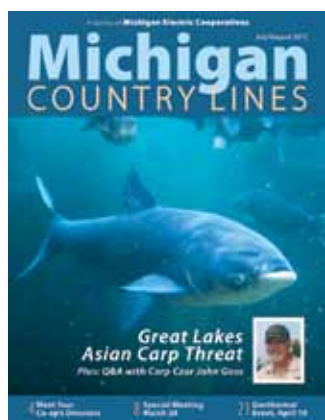
Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Oct. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric cooperative.

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 November/December 2012 issue.

The July/August contest winner is David Miller of Vero Beach, FL, who correctly identified the photo as being on Elder Road north of Bliss.



July/Aug. photo



Asian Carp Update

The threat of Asian carp entering the Great Lakes was our July-August *Country Lines* cover story (see countrylines.com). Since then, Congress passed and President Obama signed the Stop Invasive Species Act, which speeds up creation of a plan to stop this invasive species from destroying the Lakes' ecosystem.

Written by U.S. Rep. Dave Camp (R-Midland) and U.S. Sen. Debbie Stabenow (D-Lansing), the law requires the Corps of Engineers to make a federal action plan by 2013 to stop Asian carp from entering the Great Lakes through a number of rivers and

tributaries. The Act also directs the Corps consider a plan that would permanently separate Lake Michigan from Chicago's waterway system.

The Asian carp issue has huge implications for fishing, shipping and recreation. "We're finally moving toward an actionable plan to permanently prevent Asian carp from destroying the Great Lakes and the \$7 billion fishing industry and 800,000 jobs they support," Camp said. A major concern is that the carp, which are about 50 miles from Lake Michigan, will breach the electronic barriers already in the Chicago Sanitary and Ship

Canal and invade the Great Lakes. There are also other possible entry points.

The Asian carp is a threat because its voracious eating habits (averages 30-40 pounds, with some reaching 100) could threaten the ecosystem and food for other species. It's also a safety issue because when startled, such as by motorboats, or even kayaks, it jumps out of the water and has injured boaters and fisherman.

John Goss, federal Asian carp director, says that Canada has recently joined a regional effort among Great Lakes states partnering to solve the problem.

Asian carp evidence was also recently found in the Ohio River, which connects to Lake Erie.

Cougar Photographed in Marquette County

The Michigan Wildlife Conservancy (MWC), a nonprofit organization near Lansing, recently confirmed the presence of a cougar in southern Marquette County. The cougar was photographed by a cased and padlocked trail camera on private property on June 1.

Patrick Rusz, the Conservancy's Wildlife Programs director, and Michael Zuidema, a retired DNR forester, verified the camera's location on a well-worn wildlife trail. The camera has also recorded wolves, coyotes, fishers and numerous other species over a four-year period.

The MWC believes this photograph may be the best, clearest one of a wild Michigan cougar ever taken, Rusz said. Rusz says Zuidema has also recorded over 20 credible cougar sightings in the same area since the 1970s, several within a few miles of the trail camera.

"The long history of sighting reports in the area indicates the cougar photographed on June 1 may be part of a resident population rather than a wandering cat from a Western state," Rusz says. Rusz has studied cougars for the Conservancy for 14 years and is co-author of a peer-reviewed study that confirmed cougars in both Michigan peninsulas by analyses of DNA in droppings. He has also identified a long list of additional physical evidence dating back to 1966, and notes that Michigan State College zoologist Richard Manville documented several cougar sightings or incidents when he inventoried the fauna of Marquette County's Huron Mountains from 1939 to 1942.

Recent Michigan evidence includes 17 Michigan Department of Natural Resources (MDNR) confirmations since the agency formed a "cougar team" of specially-trained biologists in 2008. The most recent MDNR confirmation occurred last May when a cougar was photographed with a hand-held camera near Skanee in Baraga County. That photo was taken about 50 miles north of the



The cougar photograph from the trail camera is shown above. To compare it with photos of a wolf, coyote, raccoon and porcupine taken by the same camera in the same location, visit the Conservancy's home page at miwildlife.org.

Marquette County trail camera location.

"The MDNR cougar team should now look at the very good evidence of a remnant cougar population collected before 2008," says Bill Taylor, MWC president. "They could still easily verify cougar photos taken in the 1990s in Alcona and Oscoda counties in the Lower Peninsula and some others. The vegetation and other landmarks needed to confirm the photos are still there."

Taylor's comment reflects a recent *Lansing State Journal* story (Aug. 26, lsj.com) which noted that the MDNR cougar team doesn't believe there is enough evidence to show that cougars exist in the Lower Peninsula (L.P.). Cougar team member Adam Bump said some L.P. sightings they investigated were accompanied by physical evidence, but none provided significant, documentable proof, and they also haven't verified any breeding activity in the state.

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Special Member Meeting is set for Sept. 24, 9 a.m., at the cooperative's Portland office.

The board of directors will consider several changes to the cooperative's rates and tariffs at its meeting on Sept. 24, 2012, to be held at the cooperative office at 7973 Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI. The meeting will start at 9 a.m. and is open to all members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

The session will begin with an opportunity for members to provide direct input to the board of directors, without filing a formal request under cooperative policy. Members are asked to come to the lobby by 9 a.m. and request to speak to the board; staff will direct interested members to the meeting room. Time constraints on each member's comments will be at the discretion of the board president, but members are asked to keep comments to less than 5 minutes.

The following items will be considered:

1) Establish the 2013 Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor, to be applied to the cooperative's retail member-customers' monthly kilowatt-hour use. The Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor represents the power supply costs as established by the cooperative in conjunction with Wolverine Power Cooperative. The factor is established annually, and reviewed monthly.

2) Revise the cooperative's rates to meet current and future financial needs, based on an independent Cost of Service study.

3) Revise the cooperative's Requirements for Pole Attachments tariff sheet to change the annual pole attachment rate per pole.

Under the tariff, the cooperative may permit a cable television company or other attaching party to make attachments to its poles, ducts or conduits pursuant to a contract between the cooperative and the attaching party.

4) Revise the cooperative's Aid-to-Construction fee schedule to reflect cost increases. If approved, these changes will affect member-customers who have electric service built to a new location, or request a change in service at their current location.

5) Revise the cooperative's miscellaneous billing fees and charges.

Notice of changes or additions to the cooperative's rates or service rules shall be sent to all members, as required by P.A. 167, by publication in *Michigan Country Lines* at least 30 days prior to their effective date.

Participation: Any interested member may attend and participate. The location of the board meeting site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 800-562-8232 a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance. Comments may also be made before the meeting date by calling General Manager Mark Kappler at 517-647-1281, or by email at mkappler@homeworks.org.

Notice of the board meeting shall be sent to all members, as required by P.A. 167, by publication in *Michigan Country Lines*.

People Fund Helps Stock Food Pantries

The Tri-County Electric People Fund made four grants totaling \$5,000 at the June 20 meeting, including:

- \$2,000 to Project Starburst in Big Rapids, to purchase food pantry items;
- \$1,200 to Gratiot Isabella RSD, for the Dolly Parton Imagination Library program;
- \$1,000 to the Montabella Ministerial Association for their food and personal items assistance program; and
- \$800 to an Isabella County family to buy a refrigerator.

How To Apply For a Grant

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI 48875. We'll send you an application form, grant guidelines, and other helpful information. You'll also find details and application forms at homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by Oct. 22 for the Oct. 30 board meeting; and by Dec. 4 for the Dec. 12 board meeting.

Co-op Students Tour Washington, D.C.

Becca Kirby, left, of Edmore, and Blake Warchuck of Six Lakes represented HomeWorks Tri-County Electric and Michigan during the National Rural Electric Youth Tour, held in June in the nation's capital.



Member Builds Wind, Solar Units For Home

You have to conserve for a project like this to work,” Jack Wilber says of his home-engineered alternative energy supply. He has built two windmills and a 25-panel solar collector that help power his Mecosta County home.

He began his renewable energy project in the late 90s, after California deregulated its electricity market and blackouts started occurring—he wanted to be prepared if that happened in Michigan.

Jack and his wife Carolyn lived off the grid, in their fifth wheel RV, for almost 10 years. Since power wasn’t always available where they traveled, they set up their hauler with renewable energy sources so they could produce power no matter where they were. The hauler is a semi-trailer truck they bought and set up to handle solar panels, and they added a retractable tower to handle the windmill.

While the solar and wind generators were originally set up to be portable, Jack is now making their installation permanent as they settle down near Canadian Lakes.

“It was a lot of work, but well worth it,” Jack says of his entirely self-installed project. The project now includes two windmills, one



Jack Wilber, far right, shows off one set of solar panels he developed for his RV lifestyle. The panels, along with those attached to the hauler above, are now becoming a permanent installation at the Wilber home in Mecosta County.

at 1 kilowatt (kW) and one at 900 watts. The solar panels have a combined output of 1.8 kW. With a total possible output of around 3.7 kW, it’s enough to reduce his electric bill by about one-half, depending on the weather. At the time of installation, Jack estimated the payback to be roughly 12 years.

There is minimal maintenance to the system, such as greasing the windmill bearings,



This meter tells Jack how much energy is being produced at the moment.

or realigning the solar panels. The inverter, a fairly expensive component which converts the generated energy into usable household power, was damaged earlier this year by a nearby lightning strike, he adds.

To get the biggest benefit from his system, he has taken a number of conservation measures, such as remodeling the house with proper insulation and air sealing; using appliances that are 120 volt or propane-fueled; and replacing all his lights with LED versions. “They’re expensive, but they pay for themselves in the long run,” he says.

He can still watch TV when he wants, but says he is much more aware of turning things off when they’re not in use.

Through HomeWorks’ net metering rate, the co-op will pay you for any extra electricity your home produces, if you choose to invest in a project like Jack Wilber’s. We don’t have many people on this rate, but nobody knows what the future will hold in the world of renewables.

Save at Local Businesses With Your Co-op Connections Card

More local businesses now offer you discounts on their products and services. Simply show your Co-op Connections card at the business to receive the discount.



● **Bert’s Glass**, 310 Cleveland St., Ionia; 616-527-4280. 10% cardholder discount.

● **ESI Heating and Cooling**, 1218 E. Grand River Ave., Portland, 517-647-6906. Present card at time of service to receive a \$15 discount on service calls, or a 5% discount on qualifying installations. Service hours are Monday-Friday, 7 a.m.–5 p.m.

● **Looking Grand Cafe**, 117 E. Grand River Ave., Portland; 517-647-4990. Receive a 10% card discount on whole desserts.

● **New Look Computer & Data**, 510 E. State St., Suite A, St. Johns, 989-224-9000. With card, receive 10% off any service, other

than telephone or internet.

● **Central Michigan Transmission & Repair**, 55 W. Remus Rd., Mt. Pleasant, 989-772-8768. Present your card to save \$50 off a full transmission rebuild.

To search for local and national businesses currently offering discounts on everything from fitness to furniture repair to hair care, visit Connections.coop, or visit homeworks.org and click on the card logo to go directly to our local listings.

Your card can be used when you travel, too, as several motel chains across the country participate in the program. There are also discounts for points of interest such as museums and gardens.

Nick Rusnell is
HomeWorks
Tri-County Electric
Cooperative’s
Energy Advisor



The Speed of Light(ing)

Co-ops help blaze trails for efficient lighting technology.

Spurred by tighter energy efficiency standards, lighting technology is leaping forward, with light-emitting diodes (LEDs) leading the charge. And despite a bit of price shock on some lighting products, electric co-op members—especially large commercial and industrials—are working with their nonprofit co-ops to see how lighting options can curb rising costs.

Shifting Standards

Emerging options like LEDs promise to help consumers adapt to changing federal efficiency standards for lightbulbs. New rules that took effect this year mandate that those using between 40 and 100 watts must use at least 28 percent less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. This will save Americans about \$6 billion to \$10 billion in lighting costs annually. Lightbulbs must become 70 percent more efficient by 2020.

In addition, 100-watt incandescents will disappear from stores this year, 75-watt versions will be gone as of Jan. 1, 2013, and 40- and 60-watt versions will vanish Jan. 1, 2014.

'Solid' Lighting

So, how do LEDs deliver more energy-efficient light? Incandescents create light using a delicate wire inside a glass bulb. Most convert only 10 percent of the energy they consume into light; the remaining 90 percent produces heat.

In contrast, LEDs are at the forefront by using small electronic chips (diodes) that each hold two conductive materials together. As electricity passes through a diode, energy is released in the form of cooler light.

By 2030, the U.S. Department of Energy estimates these technologies could reduce the amount of electricity used for lighting by one-half, saving up to \$30 billion a year.

Helping Co-op Members Save

In Michigan, electric co-ops are helping their members save money and energy with rebates and information through their Energy Optimization (EO) programs. Help is available in several categories, with lighting being one of the most popular for homes and businesses.

For example, Brad Essenmacher, member

services and marketing manager for Thumb Electric Co-op (Uby), says most factories, small businesses and farms in their area are switching from HID (high intensity discharge) bulbs to more efficient T8 or T5 fluorescents. "This allows them to exchange fixtures that use 400 watts for ones that use



Odawa Casino, a member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, plans to convert over 400 slot machines from fluorescent bulbs to LEDs.

as little as 150 watts and get the same amount of light," Essenmacher explains.

Joel Kiehl, a farm owner and Thumb Electric member from Bad Axe, built a workshop this spring using energy efficient geothermal heating/cooling and the T8 fluorescent bulbs.

"We were going to use halide bulbs, but the T8s give way better light," Kiehl says. "They're bright and light right up, whereas the metal halides took 20 minutes." He also got a bulb rebate for over \$1,150 through Thumb's EO program, and figures he now saves about one-half on annual lighting costs.

Another co-op, Great Lakes Energy (Boyne City), is also helping members—Arbre Farms and Odawa Casino—save on energy costs. "Both members have already replaced and retrofitted older, less-efficient lighting with new technology, including more efficient lighting and control systems to further increase energy savings," says Scott Blecke, GLE key accounts manager.

Arbre Farms (Walkerville) realized savings by changing high-bay lights (typical ceiling height of 25 feet+) in their cold storage freezer to an LED system on motion sensors, Blecke explains. "LED lighting will not emit the heat that the old high-bay

lighting system did, thereby reducing the energy that the chillers use."

The Odawa Casino in Petoskey, which Blecke says is an energy-saving leader among the co-op's commercial members, has an estimated reduction of over 2 million kilowatt hours (kWh) annually since 2008. "This amounts to a reduction in our energy use of about 16 to 17 percent," says Dave Heinz, Odawa's lead electrician.

The Casino's efficiencies have come mostly through an employee energy reduction committee that includes kitchen, maintenance, HVAC team and other department staff. "Forming the committee was actually our first step when we started working on being more energy efficient, and Great Lakes Energy began offering rebates through its Energy Optimization plan," Heinz says. And, they've produced good ideas, such as posting signs that encourage everyone to use the stairs. This has cut the number of elevator rides (costs about 2 cents per ride) from 50,000 to 20,000 monthly.

In the Casino's massive kitchen, the chef doesn't turn ovens or other equipment on until it's needed. "We have reduced kitchen energy costs by \$14,000 to \$17,000 per year," Heinz says, and saved \$2,600 annually just by turning off lights, computers and other equipment nightly. "We have 600 employees, and when you get them involved, it helps."

As a Native American business, concern for the environment is huge, Heinz adds, noting that the Casino has reduced its carbon footprint in the whole building. They also hosted a free energy fair with Great Lakes Energy that drew nearly 700 people.

Future actions include their first LED project, which means changing over 10,000 ambient lights from 5-watt incandescents to ½-watt LEDs. The estimated annual savings is \$38,600, Heinz says, and they have EO approval for a \$26,000 rebate. They already have rebates this year for Energy Star® TVs, LED Christmas lights, and are considering LEDS for the parking garage, but Heinz says they're just not there yet in terms of the brightness needed.

Since starting their efforts, the Casino has earned over \$60,000 in energy rebates, he adds. "We're only a five-year-old building, so those energy savings have been huge for us. If you can do that with a new building, just think what you can do with an old one!"

For details about your electric co-op's EO programs for a home or business, call 877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org.

**CHOOSE REASONABLE
VOTE NO on 25 x 2025**

The Choice is Clear

In the coming weeks, electric co-op members throughout the state will be bombarded with print, radio and TV advertisements on the initiatives that will appear on the Nov. 6 general election ballot. It will probably be an election season “media barrage” like we have never seen in Michigan.

My sense is that this barrage of advertising will be relentless, confusing and frustrating for most of us. However, there is one ballot initiative that your electric co-op is particularly interested in, and strongly opposes. You will be able to learn more about it in coming issues of this magazine, but mostly, you should be aware that this proposal is simply bad for Michigan. Let me explain.

The November ballot will, barring some last minute legal maneuvers, include a proposal referred to as the “Michigan Energy, Michigan Jobs” (or “25 x 2025 Mandate”) that would amend the Michigan Constitution to raise the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) to 25 percent. If passed, this means all Michigan electric utilities would be required to obtain 25 percent of their electric supplies from renewable sources, such as wind and solar, by 2025.

I believe it is critically important to point out that we already have a 2008 RPS that requires all Michigan electric utilities to obtain 10 percent of their generation supply from renewable resources by 2015. Michigan’s electric co-ops support that initiative and have already begun meeting its requirements.

Additionally, it is important to point out that the costs of constructing the renewable resources that would be required by the new proposal are expected to exceed \$12 billion. This figure does not include the costs of additional high-voltage transmission lines that would be needed to move this renewable energy to the marketplace or, in the case of wind power, the new natural gas generating plants that would

need to be built in Michigan to “back up” this new, intermittent wind supply.

Most importantly, the Michigan Constitution is *not* the place to enact energy policy. That is the Michigan Legislature’s job.

Former Michigan Attorney General Frank Kelley recently wrote a guest editorial that appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* in which he stated, “The Constitution is not to be used for passing independent laws for enriching special interest groups by granting them controlled power. Take it from me, ‘25 by 25’ is a power grab, and against our interests. It should be opposed by every thoughtful citizen.”

Michigan’s electric co-ops concur with Mr. Kelley’s statements. We believe in achieving clean, affordable, renewable energy responsibly, we support Michigan’s current 10 percent by 2015 RPS, and believe the Constitution should not be amended to enact special interest energy policy proposals.

In upcoming issues of *Michigan Country Lines*, your electric co-op will provide further, detailed information on this “power grab” that is largely being financially supported by outstate special interest groups and foundations from California and Colorado. In the interim, I would encourage you to visit the CARE (Clean Affordable Renewable Energy) website at CAREformich.com for more information.

The Nov. 6 elections are as important as any in recent memory. Please do your part by learning more about this and the many other Michigan ballot initiatives between now and Election Day.

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



Mud, Sweat & Tears

Extreme sports are big in Michigan and across the nation.

When Chris Schmidt puts on his helmet on Oct. 20, the 44-year-old technical translator and bike racer will have only one thing in mind: going fast and all-out. Schmidt will be one of 50 competitors at the two-day Keweenaw Cup in Copper Harbor, which is part of the UPCROSS race series culminating with the U.P. Cyclocross Championships in Marquette in December.

Schmidt is a Class A racer, an expert in a sport thought to originate in the early 1900s in France. He and other competitors will race to see who “has the stuff”—the ability to ride fastest over undulating grassy and dirt terrain, weaving in and out of the trees while negotiating barriers along the route.

“On a road-bike race, you may spend quite bit of time taking it easy for a half-hour of pain and suffering,” says Schmidt, a competitive cyclist since high school. “But in cyclocross racing, you are in pain all the time. You are going all-out.”

Schmidt lives in Houghton with his wife, Rhiannon, and their 3-year-old daughter. He pushes himself for the fun of it and enjoys the opportunity to get out and ride with friends, the 14 other members of the Red Jacket Cycling Team. The team is a group of Houghton area cyclists who compete in a variety of endurance events from 12- and 24-hour mountain bike races to a 160-mile gravel road race.

“Cyclocross racing is one of the hardest things I’ve ever done in bike racing, but the nice thing is it’s over pretty quickly,” adds James Bialas, of Pelkie, a member of the Ontonagon County REA electric co-op,



Photo - Chris Schmidt

Christina Bennett (Marquette) on a “run-up,” which is a short hill in cyclocross racing that is too steep to ride.

and another of the Red Jacket Cycling Team.

“You go out and suffer for a half-hour or 45 minutes and then it’s done and you go and cheer your friends,” Bialas says.

That thrill of competition and a love for physical challenge, sometimes even a bit of the absurd, has fueled the growing popularity of cycling and adventure and extreme races around the U.S. and Michigan.

extreme, like the “Xtreme Muck Ruck” (extrememuckruck.com) that debuts Sept. 8 in Copemish. Chest-deep mud and large boulders are among the obstacles that runners confront. The 5K race course was designed for big, mud-running trucks.

“Runners face 26 different obstacles,” explains Paul Derby, the Muck Ruck coordinator. “They crawl, climb, swing, balance on tippy-toes, and jump to get over things. When runners cross the finish line they are

“Runners face 26 different obstacles... They crawl, climb, swing, balance on tippy-toes, and jump to get over things.”

There are 19 events on the fall calendar in Michigan. Some are lengthy endurance races running 12 to 30 hours. They require competitors to run, paddle and bike while navigating in the woods with a map and compass. Others are shorter but more

covered from head to toe with mud and dirty water, but with smiles on their faces.

“This form of racing has been around in the U.S. for close to six to seven years, but it’s grown in the last two or three, drawing huge crowds of fans and spectators.”

Running, jogging and trail running are followed by bicycling and triathlons as the top three favorite outdoor activities for American adults according to a 2012 study by the Outdoor Industry Association. Adventure racing grew by 16 percent between 2008 and 2011, and over 1 million Americans participated in 2011.

Derby expects 500 to 700 people at the Muck Ruck event. He got interested in this sort of racing after participating in the Warrior Dash (warriordash.com), an extreme event that first came to Michigan in 2010. The Warrior Dash is now staged in over 36

Running, jogging and trail running is followed by bicycling and triathlons as the top three favorite outdoor activities for American adults.

states, each drawing thousands of spectators and participants. The competitors run through mud and fire and deal with challenging obstacles.

"I am not one to run the entire course. I run and jog and even cry a little," Derby says. "Adventure racing is typically running, swimming, kayaking and bicycling. I haven't done any of that. I am more of a mud racer."

One of the more unusual races planned for this fall is the 5K Zombie Dash on Halloween weekend (Oct. 27) in downtown Grand Rapids (thezombiedash.com). Organized by Michigan Adventure Racing, it started last spring in a commercial orchard just outside of town.

"We had 600 runners and 200 zombies waiting in the trees. It's like a haunted house format," says Mark VanTongeren, of Ada, co-owner of Michigan Adventure Racing.

VanTongeren's company is holding 11 races this year, including the Grand Rapids Urban Adventure Race, which drew 750 people in its first year. The turnout far exceeded VanTongeren's expectations.

"It was a hit," he says. "There was nothing quite like it out there. We knew we had something good, and I left my corporate job to put these events on full-time."

VanTongeren is personally an adventure race purist. Having participated in many over

the years, he prefers the longer, more traditional race format that stresses orienteering, mountain biking, canoeing and trail running.

"You have to pace yourself to get through the night. What I like about it is the challenge of finding certain points in the woods. It's like an adult Easter-egg hunt," VanTongeren says.

The pinnacle of Michigan adventure races can take 15 to 30 hours to complete. They aren't as popular as the six to 10-hour variety, according to Zac Chisholm, of Manistee, the race director for Infiterra Sports. His company organizes a variety of challenging

races, including the 10th annual 28-Hour Adventure Rage (infiterrasports.com) set for Sept. 7-9 in Cadillac. Participants will test their endurance and skills using map and compass, walking and running, canoeing, biking and climbing fixed ropes.

"This kind of adventure racing is not a popular mass spectator event," Chisholm adds. "We typically get more males than females and they are usually 30 to 40 years old. But it draws people from urban and rural backgrounds, typically all people who like to go out in the woods and have fun."



Photo - Adam Griffith

Chris Schmidt, a member of the Red Jacket Cycling Team, runs while carrying his bike over a barrier in the 2011 Keweenaw Cup. This year's race is Oct. 20-21 (keweenawcup.com and upcross.net). Find other Michigan cyclocross and adventures races online by searching this topic.



Photo - Chris Schmidt

John Gershenson (Chassell), clears a hill during the U.P. State Cyclocross Championships.



Photo - Andy Gregg/Marquette Photo

Lindsey Bean loses a shoe to the mud at the Choco-X Cyclocross Race in Marquette.



Maureen and George Potvin are the owners of this one-of-a-kind gift shop with many treasures—from hand-forged knives to locally-crafted pottery, jewelry, and much more.

You could say that George Potvin has metalsmithing in his blood. The U.P. farm owned by his great-grandfather had a blacksmith shop, and George says, “I used to snoop around the old buildings when I was a kid—my dad had really good stories to tell about everything there.” Intrigued by the old blacksmithing tools, George began to teach himself metal-working by trial-and-error, and at age 16 created his first knife from an old file. “The first thing that you could call any kind of a knife,” he laughs.

Today, George runs his own metal forge shop, and with his wife Maureen, operates the Ten Mile Creek Forge, Pottery & Lighting Gift Shop, near Escanaba. As the name implies, there’s a little something for nearly every wanderer who seeks out this secluded business—a brimming gift shop, watching metal being forged into art and tools, and maybe some fascinating stories about local history, the intricacies of metallurgy, and Irish folklore.

Maureen’s Irish and Celtic-themed country store displays George’s hand-forged metal items and high quality works from over 30 artists, including jade and dolomite lamps, regional wood carvings, multi-media works, raku pottery and

jewelry. The shop smells of the handmade soaps and candles, and brims with vividly colored glass art and collectibles.

On the other side of the driveway, George’s rustic workshop smells of wood smoke and old metal; the coal-fired forge hisses and flames, and rows of wood and steel tools

“resting,” and then “tested” and “shaped.” Each material has individual properties that enhance whatever project he is imagining; from fine jewelry to one of his unique knives with an ornate handle.

Each knife is handcrafted—from metal selection and blade design to many choices for handle materials: bleached deer bone (with hand-carved scrimshaw), moose antler, spalted beech, and exotic woods from Africa. The custom sheaths are handmade from vegetable-tanned leather.

George especially enjoys the challenge of joining old steel—especially a meaningful item owned by a customer—with something new, such as a piece of antler from a trophy hunt. Such as the custom hinges and old-fashioned door latches he’s making for Tom Stitt’s summer cabin. Stitt, who is a member of Great Lakes Energy and Alger Delta electric co-ops and nominated the Potvins for this story, adds, “George can make just about anything in metal.”

“It’s an art,” Maureen says about her husband’s unique knives.

“When you have someone punching out a [pre-formed] blade, it’s not the same. These are shaped and formed individually.” More than 40 years of blacksmithing experience shapes George’s personality-filled creations.



In his metal forging workshop (in Bark River, MI), George Potvin crafts custom art and tools, including door knockers, knives, and fireplace tools. Visit superiorsights.com or call 906-466-2276.



await their tasks. When he talks about “working the steel” used to form custom knives, fireplace tools, door knockers and other items, he speaks of the metal as if it’s alive: it is “quenched,” “stressed,” “hardened,” and



Gilda's Club Healing Gardens

Remember when nerd Todd (Bill Murray) would get his girlfriend Lisa (Gilda Radner) in a headlock and give her a noogie on "Saturday Night Live"? You couldn't help but smile. Well, visiting Gilda's Club Grand Rapids (gildasclubgr.org), a cancer and grief support community named after Radner, who died of ovarian cancer, has that same effect.

Pull up the winding driveway to Gilda's Club and as you get out of your car, listen to the birds singing in the tree canopy. As you near the clubhouse entrance, hear the fountain tumble water onto the pond's surface and stop to smell the surrounding herb bed. Already you start to feel better.

"That's what this place is all about," says John Brott, the Club's facilities director, as he sweeps his arm toward the fountain and other gardens. "The concept behind Gilda's Club is to feel like you've come to your best friend's house. No need to pretend, just come as you are." Brott points to an evergreen tree near the entrance that isn't doing well. "Our gardens aren't perfect, neither is life. We show people how to care for plants, and by doing that they can start to care for themselves." It's gardening as metaphor...by bringing plants that are hurting back to life you can learn how to bring parts of yourself that are hurting back to life. "Healing is all about getting the body, mind and spirit together," Brott explains.

Gilda's Club offers 200 free programs to the 650 people who come through each week, serving 15,000 people every year. There are

22 full-time staff with over 800 volunteers. "We strive to be community owned and driven. We survive completely on donations, serving people from 30 different counties. The clubhouse is 15,000 square feet, and the organization spent \$1 million renovating the 120 year-old house when they bought the property 13 years ago.

"When we started to install our gardens about five years ago, we wanted them to be an extension of the clubhouse. We have 11 garden areas on six acres," Brott adds. In addition to the entrance pond, the grounds include a labyrinth, living wall, orchard, and the following types of gardens: rain, kids, evergreen, waterfall, butterfly and berry, plus a raised-bed teaching garden.

Brott, with a background in landscaping, had three goals when he planned the gardens: they would be for people of all ages, used to teach gardening skills, and reflect the club's multicultural members. He also wanted to provide a variety of outdoor spaces where people could find comfort. Some people are drawn to the soothing sounds of the waterfall garden, others find solace in the quiet of the multi-textured evergreen garden.

For those coming off chemotherapy, there is a brightly flowered area with a bench just a few steps from the parking lot. In this spot, Brott was insistent about keeping the large, dead, oak tree silhouetted against the cool green woodland garden. He drilled holes in the bare limbs to attract woodpeckers and sapsuckers...yet another metaphor for life taking on new forms after death.



Photos: (Top left) Hear the fountain and smell the fragrant herb bed as you approach Gilda's Club through the Entrance Garden. (Inset) Labyrinth and Garden sign with a caricature of Gilda Radner. (Top right) The Club offers a program in contemplation called Labyrinth Walk. (Bottom right) The Water Garden is one of 11 soothing gardens on the six-acre grounds.

To create your own healing garden, he recommends making a list of four to six core plants that make you feel happy and centered. For example, choose your grandfather's hollyhocks or lavender because you love the scent, or the yellow roses your mother cherished. Then ponder what you want to do in your garden: meditate, get lost in a variety of plants (like one woman who created an English country garden with different plants reminding her of people in her life) or, be inundated with scents by adding herbs and scented flowers. Brott advises Club members on creating their own gardens by helping with plant selection and instruction on gardening basics.

A healing garden can be as small as a container of favorite annuals, or large enough to sit in. Chemo treatment or getting the news that you have cancer, or losing a loved one to it, can be devastating, and Gilda's Club and gardens helps you find your way through these tough times.

Rita Henehan is an author, freelance writer and photographer. Visit her website at michigangardenerscompanion.com for more information on healing gardens.



Babysitting Co-ops: *The Sitter Solution*

As a parent, your calendar is likely filled with field trips, soccer games, dance recitals, music lessons, pizza parties, and more. How come your kids get to have all the fun? Well, finding a qualified sitter isn't an easy task for most parents. Teens are busier these days with their own jobs and social networking. And, if you're lucky enough to find a good one, there's always the expense. By the time you pay for a sitter, and maybe dinner and a movie, you're easily looking at \$70 or more.

childcare provided to our children by responsible adults who are also parents."

Her co-op also hosts monthly family-friendly events like going to a petting zoo or park, a "mom's night out," and couples events. The one-time \$20 membership fee covers the expense of these events.

Anne Yambor, director of Drayton Avenue Babysitting Co-op in Ferndale, and mother of two, shares the same enthusiasm about her co-op. "The babysitting co-op is so much more than babysitting," she explains. "When

relatively close, the kids are likely to attend the same school and have a core group of friends to lean on and grow with as they get older.

Many Hands Make Light Work

A babysitting co-op involves a lot of organization to run smoothly. The Huntington Woods Co-op elects officers each year, but the bookkeeper changes every month. Since there are around 30 families in the co-op, a mom only has to serve as bookkeeper once every two- and one-half years. Each book-



Four-year-olds Elliott and Max pet a chick.



Max and Tabitha on the monkey bars.



Max and Elliott doing crafts.

Photos - Anne Yambor

Wouldn't it be wonderful to have a core group of responsible parents willing to trade babysitting hours?

Sense of Community

Consider joining a babysitting co-op, where no money is exchanged. Moms (and dads can, too) sit for each other's children for points. When you watch another parent's kids you earn points and when you need a parent to sit for your own, points are deducted from your balance. A babysitting co-op's appeal may be free babysitting, but co-ops can be so much more.

Cynthia Sullivan of Hunting Woods can't stop singing the praises of the one she belongs to. The group must have the right formula for success, as it's been in existence for over 38 years and includes second-generation families.

Getting free, reliable babysitting isn't even the best thing about a co-op according to Sullivan. "We love our Huntington Woods Babysitting Co-op for numerous reasons, but ultimately we love the sense of community it has provided for our family. We have made so many wonderful friends and acquaintances, all while receiving the benefits of having free

I needed something like a double stroller, I put it out via email to the group, and when I have things to pass along, I offer it to the group. We have "mom only" patio parties, play dates for the kids, and even a toy swap in December."

For Yambor and Sullivan, the co-op provides a sense of community. Parents support and encourage each other, and life-long friendships are created between them and among the kids, too. Because they all live

keeper has the co-op laptop to keep track of things, and the directory of parents and kids is updated monthly. Likes, dislikes, food allergies, medical conditions and other important details for each child and family are kept in the system.

Monthly meetings keep everyone informed of upcoming events and any issues that need to be addressed. New families must have a face-to-face interview and for safety reasons, background checks.

Can't find a BABYSITTING CO-OP near you? Start your own!

If you can't find a babysitting co-op, think about starting one yourself. It's easier than you think, says Gary Meyers, who was so impressed with the co-op his family was in, he shared the idea with other parents and wrote the widely utilized "Smart Mom's Babysitting Co-op Handbook," and created babysittingcoop.com.

Some of Meyers' tips to get started include:

- Start with three friends who are within about 15 minutes of each other.
- Current members should all agree on any new parents before offering memberships. Safety is a priority, so personal referrals are ideal.
- Parenting styles should be similar. If a potential new member doesn't share the same style, offer to help them start their own co-op.



DNR Change Allows Younger Kids To Hunt With Mentors

Bob Walker has been taking his eight-year-old grandson Hugh with him on hunting adventures since the lad could keep up.

“He’s hunted with us since he’s been tiny,” says Walker, a Kingston resident, Thumb Electric Co-op member, and life-long sportsman.

Walker said he could hardly wait until the boy was 10 and old enough to carry a firearm and fully participate in the hunt with him. Then, all of a sudden, he didn’t have to wait any longer. A change in Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) policy did away with minimum age requirements for first-time hunters and replaced it with a “Mentored Youth Hunter Program,” which allows youngsters to hunt under the tutelage of an experienced, licensed, adult sportsman.

The state’s Natural Resources Commission approved the policy change in February, and after school on opening day of the spring season, young Hugh became a successful turkey hunter, bagging a young gobbler from a blind in the Thumb area while sitting beside his grandpa.

The elder Walker said he was “ecstatic” about Hugh’s bird, much more excited than he was when he killed the best gobbler of his life a few days later.

Needless to say, Walker’s sold on the program.

“The way I look at it, kids are going to get involved in something and the sooner we can get them involved in the outdoors the better,” he said. “This gave him two more early years.”

Though somewhat controversial when first proposed, this mentored hunting program recognizes that parents—and in this case, grandparents—know more about the abilities and maturity of youngsters than some subjective judgment based on age alone. Walker agrees.

“I’ve heard all the arguments against it, but it has little to do with age,” he explains. “It’s about how you’re brought up and trained. Hugh was ready.”

This new program is the third step the DNR has taken in recent years to eliminate barriers to recruiting new hunters, as the number of hunters has fallen precipitously in the last



Hugh with his Grandpa Bob after Hugh shot his spring turkey this year.

decade. First, the DNR lowered the minimum hunting age—from 12 for small game and 14 for deer—to 10 and 12 respectively. Then, it began offering apprentice licenses, which allows newcomers 10 years old or older to take advantage of a hunting opportunity even if they hadn’t completed hunter safety training.

And while both moves provided opportunity to add more hunters to the fraternity, the mentored program opened the floodgates. The DNR has received dozens of testimonials from proud parents, uncles and other adults, about successful adventures with young, first-time hunters.

The program is simple. Youths must be accompanied by an adult, 21 years or older, with hunting experience and a valid and appropriate Michigan hunting license. The mentor is limited to two hunting devices—firearm, crossbow or bow—while in the field and must keep the youngster within arm’s length whenever the youth is handling the hunting device. Mentors are responsible for making sure the device is appropriate, properly fitted, and for the youth’s behavior afield.

The DNR sells mentored youth licenses for \$7.50, which allows them to hunt small game, turkey and deer, fish for all species, and trap furbearers. Mentors are also required to

buy a \$1 DNR Sportcard for the youngsters, which gives each an identification number that allows them to buy a license. (Adults use their driver’s licenses to buy hunting and fishing licenses.) And unlike adults, who must apply for specific hunt periods in specific turkey management areas, mentored youths were allowed to hunt in any area during any time period when turkey hunting was open.

When deer season arrives, the regulations will be a bit more restrictive. Youngsters under 10 years old will be restricted to private land only if they hunt with a firearm, but will be allowed to hunt public land with archery gear or a crossbow.

The DNR is happy with how the program is working.

“Philosophically, the department decided it was better for parents to make the judgment on when a youngster was ready to hunt than for us to make it,” explains Dennis Fox, who heads the hunter retention and recruitment efforts. “They’re the ones who raised them. They’re the ones who know them.”

Whether the program will be the key to reversing declining hunter numbers remains to be seen. But in the meantime, there are plenty of youngsters—and adults—who are grateful for the change.



Vegetarian Burritos

MULTI-MEAL

Recipes

Otherwise known as “planned leftovers”, these dishes are designed to last in your fridge for at least a couple of days, or be converted into other meals to keep things interesting. Save yourself money and trips to the grocery store by planning ahead.

Vegetarian Burritos

2 T. olive oil
3 garlic cloves, finely chopped
1/2 of one small onion, diced
1 red bell pepper, sliced
1 15-oz. can diced tomatoes
1 small can green chilis
1/2 c. corn
1 15-oz. can black beans
1 c. brown rice
1/4 c. water
1 pkg. McCormick burrito seasoning
2 T. chopped fresh cilantro
Mexican cheese
flour tortillas

Preheat oven to 400°. Heat oil in skillet on medium heat. Add garlic, onion and red pepper; cook until pepper starts to brown. Add tomatoes, green chilies, corn, beans and rice. Add water and burrito seasoning. Simmer on low until heated through. Remove from heat and add cilantro. Roll up tortillas in foil and place in oven until heated (about 10 min). Place filling mixture in each tortilla, add desired amount of cheese, and roll tightly. Place seam-side down. Serve with guacamole, salsa and sour cream. Serves 5-6.

Second meal: Use the mixture the next day as a topping for taco salad or nachos, or with eggs for breakfast (pictured above). Delicious!

Christin McKamey

Frittata

6 eggs
1/4 c. onion, chopped
1 clove garlic, chopped
1 T. butter
1/2 c. chopped, cooked vegetables
1/2 c. chopped, cooked meat
1/4 c. shredded cheese
salt, pepper, oregano to taste

Beat eggs. In a 10-inch skillet, cook onion and garlic in butter until tender. Add vegetables, meat, and heat through. Pour in egg mixture; cook over medium heat. As mixture sets, run a spatula around the edge of the skillet, lifting egg mixture to allow uncooked egg to flow underneath. Continue cooking and lifting edges till almost set (surface will be moist). Remove skillet from heat; cover and let stand 3 to 4 minutes until top sets. Sprinkle with cheese and season to taste. Cut into wedges. Serves 3-4.

Jennifer Sylvester, Sand Lake

Lasagna Rolls

12 lasagna noodles
olive oil
3 T. butter
5 t. flour
1 c. milk
salt and pepper, to taste
1/4 t. nutmeg
1 16-oz. pkg. frozen spinach, thawed;
squeeze out excess water
1 16-oz. container ricotta cheese
1 egg or egg white

1/2 c. parmesan cheese
1/2 c. chopped, fresh basil
salt and pepper, to taste
1 c. shredded mozzarella cheese
1 16-oz. container marinara sauce

Preheat oven to 450°. Cook noodles in boiling water with olive oil until almost done (slightly firm). Drain and rinse with cold water. Heat butter in saucepan over medium heat; add flour and whisk for a couple minutes; add milk and spices and increase heat to medium high; stir until thick and creamy. Spread on bottom of large lasagna pan. Mix spinach, ricotta, egg, parmesan cheese, 1/2 cup mozzarella cheese, basil, salt and pepper. On a flat surface, take each lasagna noodle and spread 2 tablespoons of mixture over noodle. Roll up and place in pan. Continue until all noodles and mixture is gone. Scoop 1 tablespoon marinara on each lasagna roll. Sprinkle remaining mozzarella over top. Bake covered with foil for 20 min. Remove foil and bake 10 more minutes. Serve with extra sauce on the side with bread or salad. Makes about 10 rolls. Great leftovers.

Christin McKamey

Reuben Casserole

2 slices of bread, cut into 1/2-inch cubes
2 T. of butter
garlic powder
2 cans cream of chicken soup
3 T. yellow mustard
1/2 c. onion, finely chopped
1 1/3 c. milk

Photography by: 831 Creative

2 16-oz. cans sauerkraut, drained
 2 c. uncooked noodles
 4 3-oz. pkgs. sliced corned beef lunch meat
 (or 1 1/4 c. of leftover corned beef brisket,
 cubed)
 2 c. of shredded swiss cheese

Place cubed bread inside plastic bag. Melt butter and drizzle over bread cubes and shake well until cubes are coated. Spread out on cookie sheet and brown at 350° until crispy and golden brown (10-15 min.); remove from oven and sprinkle with garlic powder. Mix together soup, mustard, onion and milk. Spray a 9x13-inch casserole dish with cooking spray and put drained sauerkraut in bottom. Layer uncooked noodles over sauerkraut. Pour soup/milk mixture over noodles and sauerkraut. Cut stack of corned beef lunch meat slices into 1/2-inch cubes and sprinkle corned beef evenly over the top, separating the pieces as you go. Top with the swiss cheese and bread cubes. Cover with tin foil and bake at 350° for 1 hour, 15 min.

Leanne Walling, Munising

Cherry Chutney Chicken

8 chicken breast halves, skin on, bone in
 fine sea salt
 freshly ground black pepper
 1/8 c. jarred dark sweet cherry chutney
 1/8 c. red currant jelly

Preheat grill for indirect grilling (meat is not directly over heat source). Lightly season chicken breasts with salt and pepper and place on grill grate over indirect medium heat (325° to 350°), breast side up. Grill, covered, for 15 minutes; turn and grill 10 minutes more, or until chicken is nearly done. Meanwhile, place chutney in small bowl and mash large pieces with a fork. Place in small saucepan and add jelly; cook over low heat, stirring until jelly melts. Brush chicken breasts with chutney glaze and continue cooking until chicken is cooked through, brushing with glaze often and turning chicken once or twice. Remove chicken to platter; let rest 5 minutes. Serve 4 breasts for **first meal**. Wrap and refrigerate the remaining 4 breasts for **second meal** (next recipe).

Cherry Chicken Waldorf Salad

Salad Dressing:

1/8 c. jarred dark sweet cherry chutney
 1/8 c. red currant jelly
 1/2 c. salad vegetable oil
 3 T. red wine vinegar
 2 T. water
 small pinch fine sea salt

Salad:

8 c. mixed salad greens

1 small red onion, sliced, separate into rings
 1/2 c. dried cherries
 4 cooked cherry chutney chicken breasts,
 sliced into strips
 1/2 c. pecan halves, toasted
 4 3/4-oz. wedges low-fat creamy swiss cheese,
 unwrapped

In a blender, combine all salad dressing ingredients. Cover and puree until blended. Set aside. Arrange salad greens among four plates. Place onion over greens; arrange chicken strips on top; then scatter with cherries and pecans. Place a cheese wedge on side of each plate. Drizzle with salad dressing. Serves 4.

Marilyn Partington Frame, Traverse City

Uncle John's Chili (Lasts almost a week!)

2 1/2 lb. hamburger
 1 t. kosher salt
 1 t. pepper
 1 c. chopped onions
 chili powder, to taste
 1 28-oz. can diced tomatoes with chilies
 1 c. ketchup
 1/2 c. relish
 1 15-oz. can chili beans
 3 15-oz. cans dark red kidney beans

Brown hamburger, drain off fat and break into chunks; add salt, pepper, onions and chili powder; set aside. In a large kettle,

combine tomatoes, ketchup, relish and beans and cook; stir in meat mixture and simmer 10-15 minutes.

First meal: serve with crackers. **Second meal:** reheat in microwave and add 1/2 cup chopped celery and 1/2 cup chopped hot, sweet red peppers. **Third meal:** reheat in microwave and add mozzarella or cheddar cheese. **Fourth meal:** serve over corn muffins. **Fifth meal:** add 1 cup cooked, drained macaroni and serve with toasted garlic bread. Freezing leftovers in one meal portions provides a quick meal without eating the same thing meal after meal.

Deborah Black, Sandusky

Chicken and Spaghetti

1/2 c. butter
 1 pint heavy cream
 2 T. cream cheese
 3/4 c. parmesan cheese
 1 t. garlic powder
 salt and pepper to taste
 leftover chicken breasts, cut into pieces
 8 oz. cooked spaghetti

In a medium saucepan on low heat, combine butter, cream and cream cheese; stir until well combined. Add parmesan cheese, seasonings and chicken; simmer on low for 15 minutes. Pour over cooked spaghetti.

Bonnie Gauld, Fife Lake



Reuben Casserole

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 **TAKE-ALONG DISHES** by Sept. 10 and **SALAD RECIPES** by Oct. 10. Mail to: *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email recipes@countrylines.com.



HomeWorks Tri-County contracts with Asplundh Tree Service to clear trees from our electric rights-of-way. Here, Joe Miller (in bucket) trims limbs from a dead ash before he and Rod Heikkila (on ground) take it down.

Preventing Trees from Causing Power Outages

The single most effective thing we can do to reduce power outages is to clear trees away from our power lines. That's why we invest a large part of our budget each year into right-of-way clearing.

Not only do we mechanically clear 300-plus miles of line annually, we have also begun a program that goes back a year or so later to spot-spray fast growing saplings and tall brush. This prevents re-growth and extends the life of our right-of-way clearing cycle.

A recent problem has been dead and dying ash trees. These trees can grow to 60 or 80 feet, or more, before being infected and killed by emerald ash borers, and they pose a danger to people, property and power lines.

When dead or dying trees are found outside our right-of-way, which extends 25 feet on either side of the power line, our tree crews

are instructed to cut them to a safe height, or remove them entirely.

Our policy during circuit clearing is to clean up tree removal from our right-of-way when it takes place in a developed area. Logs in manageable lengths will be left in the right-of-way for the property owner, and wood chips may be available, although they will include leaves and other debris.

In undeveloped areas, brush is wind-rowed to provide animal habitat.

When any dead, dying or otherwise dangerous tree is cleared from outside the right-of-way, it is the property owner's responsibility to remove the debris. This is also our policy when a landowner requests a tree be removed, or during storm clean-up, as it is most effective to keep our tree crews clearing trees to help with power restoration.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland June 25 and Blanchard July 23, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the continued attendance growth at district membership meetings, and told staff to continue encouraging member attendance at these meetings.
- Authorized staff to adjust the budget to allow for 100 additional miles of right-of-way clearing in 2012, since the clearing crews have been very productive in the milder weather so far.
- Went over the 2012 update of the cooperative's 10-year financial forecast.
- Approved the draft Form 990, required by the IRS of non-profit organizations.
- Reviewed the Cost of Service Study prepared by Power Systems Engineering, and discussed the need to adjust the cooperative's rates to assure needed income and fairness between rate classes.
- Went over results of the recently completed member survey, noting member satisfaction is very high, at 93 percent.
- Learned extended heat caused June's peak demand to be the fourth highest month recorded by the co-op; new peak demand and kilowatt-hour sales records were also set.
- Heard an update on statewide issues including energy optimization, property tax factors, the MPSC's smart meter report, and the 25 x 2025 initiative, from MECA CEO Craig Borr.
- Read and approved "Board Policies 313 – Use of Personal Communications Devices"; "504 – Economic and Community Development"; and "505 – Cooperative Purchasing."
- Reviewed proposed changes to Articles VII-VIII of the cooperative's bylaws.
- Learned there were 116 new members for May, and 103 in June.
- Acknowledged the May-June safety reports.

Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting are available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject. Upcoming board meetings are set for **Sept. 24 at Portland** and **Oct. 22 at Blanchard**. Members who need directions to either office, or who wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

Fuel Mix Report

The environmental characteristics of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 6/30/12.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used

Your co-op's fuel mix

FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	66.3%	64.7%
Oil	0.2%	0.4%
Gas	7.4%	7.1%
Hydroelectric	1.0%	0.7%
Nuclear	20.0%	24.0%
Renewable Fuels	5.1%	3.1%
Biofuel	0.2%	0.1%
Biomass	0.1%	0.4%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.2%	0.4%
Wind	4.5%	1.7%
Wood	0.2%	0.4%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas, and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix.

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Avg. Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	6.0	8.2
Carbon Dioxide	1,757	2,186
Oxides of Nitrogen	2.0	2.0
High-level nuclear waste	0.0069	0.0083

*Regional average fuel mix data was compiled from Michigan, Illinois, Indiana, Ohio and Wisconsin.

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Cooperative, which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.



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Wolverine Members Set New Energy Records

Wolverine Power Cooperative recorded the highest peak energy demand to date for its distribution member-cooperatives in early July. These members include:

- **Cherryland Electric Cooperative**
- **Great Lakes Energy**
- **HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative**
- **Midwest Energy Cooperative**
- **Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op**

The five co-ops reached the new record of 658 megawatts (MW) on Friday, July 6, between the hours of 3 p.m. and 4 p.m. A new peak demand record of 833 MW was also set that same day for all seven Wolverine members. This record reflects the additional loads of Wolverine Power Marketing Cooperative and Spartan Renewable Energy.

“The Midwest Independent Transmission System Operator (MISO) issued a hot weather alert and maximum generation emergency warning the afternoon of July 6,” said Tim Martin, power supply portfolio manager for Wolverine. “We dispatched our available generators as a result, and they performed well.”

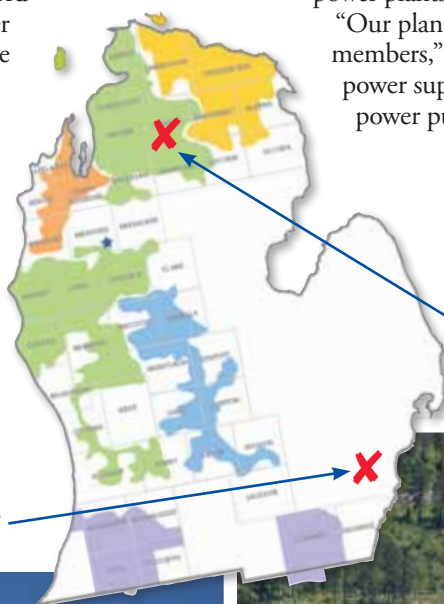
Wolverine owns six peaking power plants

located throughout the Lower Peninsula. Peaking plants typically operate on hot summer days when demand for electricity is high and additional power supply is needed for short periods of time. Wolverine’s plants are located in Belleville, Burnips, Gaylord, Hersey, Tower and Vestaburg. Combined, these facilities are capable of generating 565 megawatts of electricity.

“By July of this year, output for our peaking plant near Belleville exceeded its total annual production from 2011,” Martin said. “Operators at all six plants have done an excellent job meeting Wolverine’s mission to deliver reliable power supply to its members at a competitive price.”

MISO issued weather alerts and generation warnings again in mid-July due to high temperatures and humidity, and Wolverine’s power plants were again called into service.

“Our plants play a key role in supplying power to our members,” Martin explained. “They fill gaps in our power supply portfolio and allow us to avoid short-term power purchases in the market when prices are high.”



Wolverine's Sumpter power plant near Belleville.

Wolverine's Gaylord power plant.



Assessing Home Energy Use

Calculating how much electricity you consume can help you decide which energy efficiency measures to take.

Q: *I want to make my house more energy efficient, but am unsure what improvements it needs, and I don't want to invest in a professional energy audit. What do I need, and how can I do my own energy audit?*

A: Most homes, unless they were built with energy efficiency in mind, can benefit from improvements. The older your house is, the more likely you can significantly reduce your utility bills. Compared to most other forms of investment today, home efficiency improvements can provide a favorable financial return.

First, check with your local electric co-op to see if it has a low- or no-cost energy audit program. You may be able to get professional advice as a benefit of co-op membership, and many co-ops also offer free online home energy audit tools. Use the free Home Energy Optimizer at michigan-energy.org to get a comprehensive analysis of your home's energy use, and find some cost-saving opportunities.

If your co-op doesn't offer an audit program, first do a quick, simple analysis to determine how energy efficient your house is by calculating all the energy it uses throughout the entire year.

Keep in mind, this does not take into account the number of people living in the household or other factors that can significantly affect your energy use. For instance, if you have a small business in a home office, you need to have computers, printers and other electronics running the majority of the daytime, and often on most weekends.

To determine how much energy your house consumes annually, check your utility bills or other receipts. The calculation will be based on total British thermal units (Btus) of energy used. A Btu is about the amount of heat given off by burning a wooden kitchen match.

To convert various amounts of energy consumed into equivalent Btus, use the following factors:

1 kilowatt-hour of electricity 3,414 Btus
1 cubic foot of natural gas 1,025 Btus
1 gallon of propane 91,000 Btus
1 gallon of fuel oil 138,700 Btus
1 cord of wood 19 million Btus

After calculating the total annual Btus, divide this number by the annual sum of the cooling and heating degree days for your

area—for the current year, not a historical average—which you can find via your local weather service. Finally, divide this number by the square footage of your house.

The number for most homes falls between 10 and 20, which means a variety of energy efficiency improvements will be beneficial. Greater than 20 means your house is very inefficient, and almost any improvement will help a lot. A number less than 10 means significant improvements will be difficult to achieve without serious investment.

Every house is unique, but indoor air leakage typically accounts for 35 percent of annual energy use. Check windows and doors for leaky gaps and joints, and check for gaps where the walls rest on top of the foundation, called the "sill." Heat loss (or gain, during summer) through the walls and ceiling accounts for about 30 percent more. The remaining energy used is for other things such as lighting, water heating, cooking and electronics.

Holding a lighted stick of incense near the walls, windows and doors and observing the smoke trail can identify leaky spots. Move the incense around the edge and any place there is weather stripping or a caulked joint. It's best to test this on a windy day. Also check for leaks at the ductwork seams.

If you have an all-electric house, turn on all the vent fans to create negative pressure indoors and then do the incense test. *Do not use this method if you have gas, oil or any combustion appliances* because backdrafting, in which depressurization will pull dangerous gases back into the home, can occur.

If you want to check for specific hot and cold wall areas that indicate air leaks or lack of

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.

Visit dulley.com for more home improvement and do-it-yourself tips.



Check for gaps and air leaks where the sill plate rests on the top of the foundation.



Seal seams in the ductwork where there are visible gaps or you can feel heated or cooled air leakage.

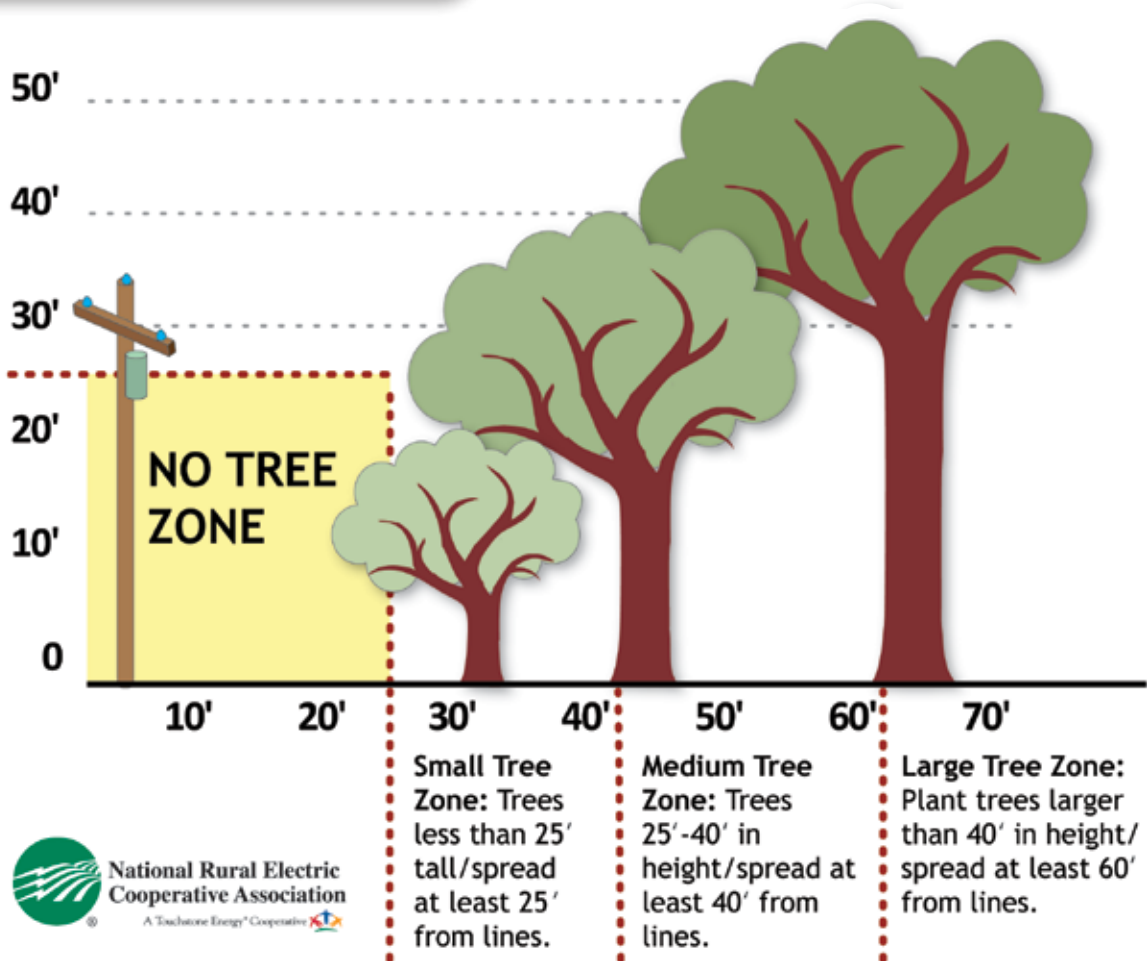
insulation, Black & Decker offers a Thermal Leak Detector for about \$40 (call 800-555-1212 or visit blackanddecker.com). It uses infrared technology, similar to professional models, to sense warm and cold areas. The sensor beam turns red on hot spots and blue on cold spots.

Check the accuracy of your central furnace/air conditioner thermostat by taping a bulb thermometer next to it on the wall. You may find the thermostat is inaccurate, and you're actually keeping the house warmer or cooler than you think.

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



Tree Planting Guide



The Right Tree in the Right Place

The Arbor Day Foundation encourages thoughtful practices that help preserve community trees while also benefiting electric co-op consumers.

Trees can help cool your home and neighborhood, break cold winds to lower heating costs, and provide food for wildlife. Properly placed trees can lower line clearance costs for utility companies, reduce tree mortality, and result in healthier community forests.

Tall trees surrounding your home, such as maple, oak, pine and spruce, provide summer shade to lower cooling costs and keep out cold winter winds. Medium trees, 40 feet or less in mature height, might include Washington hawthorne and golden raintree, while smaller trees suitable for planting beneath utility lines might include redbud, dogwood and crabapple. When planting near utility lines, consider a 25-foot maximum mature height and a 20-foot spread.

To learn more about which trees work best in your yard, visit arborday.org.


Schafers Celebrate Centennial Farm



Members of the Schafer family gathered near Westphalia recently to mark recognition of their farm as a Michigan Centennial Farm.

Shown from left are Allison, Stephanie, Leroy, Kyle, Keith, Eugene and Margaret Schafer.

The farm was originally purchased in 1846 by Theodore and Catharine Schafer, the great-great-great grandparents of current owners Leroy and Stephanie.




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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.

Reunion & Loss

This is a tough column to write. It was supposed to be easy. It was supposed to be about my high school reunion in early July, the first time our class has gotten together since graduation in 1962.

But the pleasure of that reunion was tempered by the death of a dear friend at the end of the month.

It got me thinking about the rhythms of our lives—how we change and the world changes around us. How friendships endure over time even without much cultivation, and how death does not end them.

Ours was a small class—only 22 students—in the long-since-gone Catholic high school in Ironwood. Most of us had not seen the others in 50 years. We kept up through Christmas cards, gossip, visits to Ironwood, the *Ironwood Daily Globe* website, and Facebook, that boon to older folks with time to spare.

Seventeen class members made it to the reunion. Three couldn't make it, and two died. Over three days we caught up on parents, children, grandchildren, education, jobs, travels, marriages and illnesses. We reminisced about Ironwood's vibrancy in the '50s (its population of 5,400 now is one-third its size then), the St. Ambrose High School building (a ramshackle three-story wood box that shook in the wind), and the nuns we tormented, who repaid us with a fine education.

We had pasties and beer the first night we gathered, a good ol' U.P. fish fry the next, and then joined the all-class reunion as the featured class on Saturday night.

It was a good class. We were the children of doctors, miners and small business owners. (There was not a web designer, engineer or computer programmer among them.) Most made it through college on their own

or learned a trade. Two had owned bakeries, several were educators, a few were in business, sales and health care, and an uncommon number became writers—probably because the toughest nun we had, Sister Maurice,

new editor and communications director for the Alabama Rural Electric Association, the same job I had in Michigan.

Darryl and I became good friends. We had much in common: two sons, of roughly the same ages; a love for the outdoors; an appreciation for many of the same authors, music and movies. He had family in Michigan and I once bought a car in Mobile, AL.

We managed to get in a few hikes after meetings—outside of Vegas, above L.A., even in Washington, D.C., many good meals, a few drinks, and coffee and beignets in New Orleans. We met Minnesota Fats (so he said, as we paid him for the picture we had taken)



The Ironwood St. Ambrose High School Class of 1962. Mike Buda is at lower right.

made us writers.

Our successes were made possible by our education, because of our parents' hard work (all the parents knew each other) and the community's commitment to educate its young.

Our classes were small, and that's a big deal. I think there are some basic truths that still apply in education: 1) more teacher-time per student enhances learning, and 2) technology doesn't make you smarter or more educated, it just makes you more productive (there is a difference).

So that blissful weekend, when we became young-at-heart, it felt as though we had never lost touch. There was joy and comfort in being back with my class. I highly recommend it.

My dear friend Darryl Gates could have been part of that class. He was one of those friends you make later in life, when you're a little more certain of who you are. But it felt like we'd known each other since grade school.

I met him in Las Vegas, at the 1984 National Rural Electric Cooperative Association annual meeting. Darryl was there as the

in a pool hall bar in Nashville, TN. Martha, Darryl's wife and constant companion, also became our good friend.

We really loved working on magazines, and we talked often about how to make them better. Darryl was dedicated to the co-op idea, and he set an example for all co-op editors across the country.

He was diagnosed with lung cancer last November, and after chemo treatments didn't help he resigned himself to living as well as he could with the disease.

He died a week before his 62nd birthday. A few days before, I left a voicemail message telling him I was returning from a fly-fishing trip on the Manistee River. I read "Calico Joe," a John Grisham book he recommended, on the river bank while my dog slept nearby. He would have liked that image.

And, I like that I can still call Darryl and every one of my old classmates "friend."

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



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