

Michigan COUNTRY LINES

CLEAR CHOICE:

VOTE NO

on

25 x 2025

P. 11



Mud, Sweat & Tears

*Extreme Sports
Are Big*

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Member Regulation

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Rate Increase

25 Heating & Cooling
Buying Tips



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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 for nonmembers 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 517-913-3531. 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.

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



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Photo - 831creative.com

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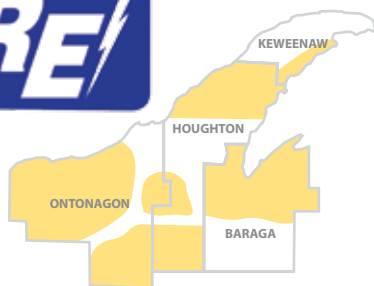
On the Cover

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

Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com





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OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation: Sept. 30, 1937

Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31

countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

MANAGER'S MESSAGE

Ontonagon Board Approves Member Regulation

At a special meeting on Aug. 6, 2012, the board of directors unanimously approved a proposal that will make Ontonagon County REA a member-regulated cooperative by the end of November (see minutes of the meeting on p. 5).

Member regulation was made possible by Public Act 167 of 2008, giving electric cooperatives the authority to make changes regarding rates and charges, billing practices, and accounting standards. Michigan electric cooperatives had actually been member-regulated until the 1960s, when they agreed to become regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission in exchange for territorial protection of their service areas.

The Ontonagon board of directors will now have the responsibility of making decisions regarding issues that will directly impact you, as a co-op member and owner. The board will give at least 10 days notice to all co-op members of the time and place of any board meeting at which an increase in rates affecting at least 5 percent of the members or substantive changes in billing practices

and service rules, terms or conditions are to be discussed and voted on. Notice can also be sent by first-class mail to all members or may be published in *Michigan Country Lines*.

Any proposed changes in rates, charges, billing practices and accounting standards will also be published in accordance with the procedures established by P.A. 167, at least 30 days prior to the effective date of the change.

The co-op will save about \$30,000 annually in legal and public utility assessment fees upon becoming member-regulated.

Member regulation will also allow the board of directors, elected by you as a co-op member, to make decisions regarding rates and fees that will also affect the price they pay for electricity. The directors will approve rates and fees that reflect the actual cost of providing service. And, because we are a cooperative, any margins (profits) are allocated back to the members. There is no incentive to authorize rates that will generate more revenue than is needed to cover our expenses. That is the co-op way.



Debbie Miles
 General Manager

Co-op Requests Rate Increase

A co-op's financial health is measured by its Times Interest Earned Ratio (TIER), and in 1981 the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) formed a TIER mechanism for determining electric rates. This mechanism is used to periodically review a co-op's revenues and decide whether revisions are necessary to maintain designated TIER levels. As refined and revised in subsequent MPSC rate making orders, if the calculated TIER is between 1.7 and 2.3, there need be no adjustment in rates. If the calculated TIER is below 1.7, we must determine what revenue increase is necessary to bring the TIER back to 2.0. Based on our TIER for year-ended Dec. 31, 2011, we will need a \$353,000 increase in revenues to obtain a 2.00 TIER. Therefore, on April 27, 2012, we filed a petition with the MPSC asking for a 7 percent rate increase (a public comment notice appeared in the July-August *Country Lines*, p. 8).

The 7 percent increase equals an increase of \$14.09 monthly for 1,000 kilowatt-hours of electricity usage.

The largest impact on our 2011 TIER was the weather. We experienced several severe snow and wind storms resulting in increased labor costs. To put this in perspective, the Cooperative Response Center, which is our after-hours call center, released 2011 statistics stating that their busy season (April-August) call volumes were up 37 percent from the all-time record highs for each of those months. Ontonagon's average outage hours more than doubled in 2011.

The rate increase will not be effective until after the MPSC audits our expenses and purchased power costs and gives final approval.

This rate increase request was based on keeping your co-op financially strong for its members. The co-op way of doing business is an important way to keep costs more manageable because we operate at cost.

Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association BOARD OF DIRECTORS SPECIAL MEETING

August 6, 2012

On Monday, August 6, 2012, a special meeting of the Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association board of directors was held at the cooperative's offices at 500 J. K. Paul Street, Ontonagon, Michigan at 7:00 P.M. The purpose of the special meeting was to seek member input prior to board consideration of member regulation as authorized under 2008 Public Act 167 (P.A. 167).

The meeting was called to order by President Wiideman. In attendance were the following members of the board of directors: Myrhen, Calvin Koski, Heikkinen, Paul Koski, Rajala and Wiideman, constituting a quorum. Also in attendance was the General Manager Deborah Miles.

MEMBER REGULATION

General Manager Miles presented information on Public Act 167 of 2008: The Electric Cooperative Member Regulation Act (P.A. 167).

For the record, there were no guests/members in attendance.

Per motion by Calvin Koski, seconded by Myhren, the board approved the proposal for the Cooperative to become member regulated. Following discussion, a roll call vote is required with 2/3 of the directors voting in support of the proposal. A roll call vote was taken with 6 votes in the affirmative. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Myhren and seconded by Rajala to adjourn the meeting. There being no further business to come before the board, President Wiideman declared the meeting adjourned at 7:45 P.M.

– Randy Myhren, Secretary

Filling Up on VALUE

Electricity continues to be a bargain, especially when compared to other consumer goods. Imagine if your electric bill fluctuated as much as prices at the pump. On average, over the past decade gas prices have risen almost 11 percent annually, while electricity prices rose less than 4 percent.



Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics; Mainstream Graphics

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 'eueued' 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?

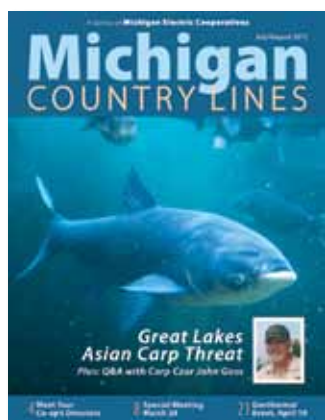
Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Oct. 10** will be entered in a drawing for a \$50 credit for electricity from their electric cooperative.

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.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF CLOVERLAND ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE, ONTONAGON COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ASSOCIATION, PRESQUE ISLE ELECTRIC & GAS CO-OP, and THUMB ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CASES NUMBERS U-16744, U-16746, U-16747, U-16748 and U-16749

- Cloverland Electric Cooperative, Midwest Energy Cooperative, Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-Op, and Thumb Electric Cooperative (the Cooperatives) request Michigan Public Service Commission approval to reconcile their individual Energy Optimization (EO) plan expenditures and revenues collected for their EO plans, for the period ended December 31, 2011.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write the Cooperatives' attorney, Mr. Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933, Phone: 517.374.9100 for a free copy of the application. Any person may review the application at Dykema's offices or at the respective offices of the Cooperatives.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: September 26, 2012, at 9:30 a.m. This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Theresa A. Sheets

LOCATION: Constitution Hall, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider the Cooperatives July 2, 2012, joint application for Commission approval to reconcile their individual EO plans for the period ended December 31, 2011. The Cooperatives are requesting authorization to reconcile their EO expenditures and revenues for the period ended December 31, 2011.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscedockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the case shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by September 19, 2012. (Interested persons may elect to file using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon the Cooperatives' attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

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

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

A copy of the Cooperatives' request may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets, and at the office of Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI; or at the respective Cooperatives' offices. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq., and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

July 27, 2012

What Causes Blinking Lights?

A blink is an outage that usually lasts 1 to 2 seconds. Ontonagon County REA members may experience more than one blink in a short period of time, depending on weather conditions and other factors.

Your lights may blink for several reasons. The power line device that causes the lights to blink is an oil circuit recloser (OCR), designed to automatically shut the power off for 1 or 2 seconds when a problem exists. OCRs help shorten outage times because most blinks are the result of temporary problems, including the following:

Trees – A tree branch brushes the line. The branch may only make contact when the wind blows from a certain direction, or it may be growing into the line.

Lightning – Lightning injects a large amount of current into the lines that normally lasts a very short time. When lightning strikes a line, a surge arrester typically “takes the charge” and the OCR blinks.

Animals – Squirrels and birds are the usual culprits. They sometimes touch the energized lines and cause a short circuit, which may

cause the OCR to blink.

Failing Equipment – Infrequently, equipment on the power line distribution system will begin to malfunction, but will not completely fail. These are the most difficult problems to track down and remedy. An example would be a cracked or damaged insulator that may only cause problems when damp or wet conditions exist.

Distribution Automation

Equipment – Automated equipment restores power quickly, preventing many members from experiencing a much longer outage. Power may be off for only seconds while the equipment is operating. Located within a substation, a distribution automation device can detect and confirm an outage and radio commands to switching equipment. Smart grid-enabled devices open and close on the main lines and redirect power from a neighboring substation to the outage area. This automated switching technology saves time during an outage because it limits the need for crews to travel to various locations on our system and perform the switching operations themselves.



Actual Outages – Normally, a full outage at one location will cause the lights to blink for a larger group of members in neighboring areas. This usually occurs when a tree falls on the line. The OCR likely will blink several times before the fuse protecting the line blows. The blinks generally affect a larger group of members than those subsequently affected by the outage.

How many blinks are normal?

It's normal to experience up to three or four blinks a month. If there is one every other day, that is not normal. If you do experience frequent, non-weather related blinks, please contact the Ontonagon office at 906-884-4151. We will log the information and relay it to our line crew.

Please remember that blinking often can be expected when lightning, major winds, ice storms and other severe weather conditions exist.



Photo - iStockphoto.com

*Staying safe
around power tools
is a must!*

Treat Power Tools with Care

Before you fire up that power tool for your next do-it-yourself home project, remember that these electrical devices must be treated with care. Even though many tools are equipped with safety mechanisms, it's still important to heed precautions. Keep in mind these tips from the U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration (OSHA) when using power tools:

- ▶ Do not carry tools by their cords.
- ▶ Pull the cord out of the outlet by the plug, not by pulling on the cord.
- ▶ Do not use in wet or damp job sites, unless the tool is specifically approved for those conditions. Store them in a dry place when not being used.
- ▶ While carrying a tool, do not touch the switch or trigger that operates it to avoid accidental starts.
- ▶ Ensure your work area is well-lit.
- ▶ Unplug tools when cleaning or fixing, while changing other parts of the tool such as blades or bits, and when not in use.
- ▶ Ensure that all extension cords are not worn or frayed.
- ▶ Wear proper clothing—no ties, jewelry, or other loose items that could get caught.

Whether you're on the job or working at home, staying safe around power tools is a must. Following a few rules could mean the difference between a successful project and an accident.

Source: U.S. Occupational Safety & Health Administration

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 (Ubyly), 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 ambiance 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.

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE, ONTONAGON COUNTY RURAL ELECTRIFICATION ASSOCIATION, PRESQUE ISLE ELECTRIC & GAS CO-OP, AND THUMB ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE CASES NUMBERS. U-16665, U-16666, U-16667, and U-16668

- Midwest Energy Cooperative, Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, and Thumb Electric Cooperative (the Cooperatives) request Michigan Public Service Commission approval to reconcile their respective Renewable Energy Plan (REP) revenues and expenditures for their respective REP plans for the period ended December 31, 2011.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write the Cooperatives' attorney, Mr. Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933, Phone: 517-374-9100 for a free copy of the applications. Any person may review the applications at Dykema's offices or at the respective offices of the Cooperatives.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE/TIME: September 26, 2012, at 9:00 a.m. This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

BEFORE: Administrative Law Judge Dennis W. Mack

LOCATION: Constitution Hall, 525 West Allegan, Lansing, Michigan

PARTICIPATION: Any interested person may attend and participate. The hearing site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact the Commission's Executive Secretary at (517) 241-6160 in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider the Cooperatives' July 30, 2012 and July 31, 2012 respective applications for Commission approval to reconcile their respective REP plans for the period ended December 31, 2011. The Cooperatives' represent that their REP filings included no request for a renewable energy surcharge, no surcharge was approved and none was charged to their member-customers in 2011. The Cooperatives further represent that there are neither revenues nor expenditures to reconcile.

All documents filed in this case shall be submitted electronically through the Commission's E-Dockets website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets. Requirements and instructions for filing can be found in the User Manual on the E-Dockets help page. Documents may also be submitted, in Word or PDF format, as an attachment to an email sent to: mpscedockets@michigan.gov. If you require assistance prior to e-filing, contact Commission staff at (517) 241-6180 or by email at: mpscedockets@michigan.gov.

Any person wishing to intervene and become a party to the cases shall electronically file a petition to intervene with this Commission by September 19, 2012. (Petitions to intervene may also be filed using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon the Cooperatives' attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, Michigan 48933.

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

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

A copy of the Cooperatives' requests may be reviewed on the Commission's website at: michigan.gov/mpscedockets, and at the office of Dykema Gossett PLLC, Capitol View, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI; or at the respective Cooperatives' offices. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at (517) 241-6180.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.54 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; 2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001 et seq., and the Commission's Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

August 23, 2012

Fuel Mix Report

The environmental characteristics of Ontonagon County REA 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	62.2%	64.7%
Oil	0.1%	0.4%
Gas	5.1%	7.1%
Hydroelectric	4.6%	0.7%
Nuclear	25.2%	24.0%
Renewable Fuels	2.9%	3.1%
Biofuel	0.0%	0.1%
Biomass	0.1%	0.4%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.2%	0.4%
Wind	2.5%	1.7%
Wood	0.1%	0.4%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas.

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	1.9	8.2
Carbon Dioxide	1,585	2,186
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.1	2.0
High-level nuclear waste	0.0000	0.0083

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

Figures for Ontonagon County REA are based on those of its principle power suppliers, WPS and We Energies.



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Water heating ranks as one of the top three energy-related expenses in your home. Save energy and money by installing a water heater blanket, using low-flow showerheads and faucets, and lowering the thermostat on your water heater to 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Learn more at EnergySavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



Public Act 295: The Clean Renewable and Energy Efficient Act

Annual Energy Optimization Report

Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

MPSC Case Number U-15819

Ontonagon County REA contracted with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) to administer Energy Optimization efforts in order to comply with P.A. 295. MECA filed a 2½-year Energy Optimization plan with the MPSC on Feb. 18, 2009, as required by P.A. 295. This EO plan was approved by the MPSC on May 12, 2009, and we began launching Energy Optimization programs in June 2009. CLEAResult Consulting, Great Lakes LLC, was selected to implement the Residential, Commercial Industrial Programs, and the Energy Optimization (EO) website michigan-energy.org. CLEAResult has sub-contracted with Franklin Energy, JACO, Enercom, and the Michigan Community Action Agency Association to assist with EO program delivery.

In 2011, Ontonagon County REA collected \$56,515 through the Energy Optimization Surcharge and spent \$52,892, resulting in an over-collection of \$3,623 which will be applied towards 2012 EO Program delivery expenses and goal achievement. Ontonagon County REA achieved 211.8 MWh of energy savings in 2011. The full report can be obtained at michigan-energy.org or at michigan.gov/mpsc.

Notice of Member Access To Rules And Rates

This notice of *Access to Rules and Rates* is published pursuant to the rules established by the Michigan Public Service Commission as set forth in the Consumer Standards and Billing Practices for Electric and Gas Residential Service, R460-2146.

As a member-customer (member) of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association, please be advised that the following information is available to you from the cooperative, upon request:

- 1.) Complete rate schedules;
- 2.) Clear and concise explanation of all rates the member may be eligible to receive; and
- 3.) Assistance from the cooperative in determining the most appropriate rate for a member when the member is eligible to receive service under more than one rate.

What to Look for In an HVAC Contractor

It's no secret that replacing your heating and cooling system can be a headache. When's the right time? What kind of system is best? Where can I find a reliable contractor?

Because the right contractor remains the critical cog in this process—for determining the type and size of the unit needed, explaining your options, and proper installation—consider these tips before making a selection.

Ask Around

What are the contractor's licensing and qualifications? Is the contractor a member of state and national contractor associations, such as the Air Conditioning Contractors of America? Is he or she adequately insured?

"Most people don't realize that almost 70 percent of their energy bill comes from an HVAC [heating, ventilation and air conditioning] system," explains Art Thayer, director of energy efficiency programs for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. "It's important to have the right person put in and maintain the equipment."

Word of mouth provides a valuable resource, so ask neighbors and friends if they can recommend a good contractor—or if there's someone you should avoid. And remember to check on what a prospective contractor guarantees and whether any follow-up services, such as a maintenance agreement, are offered.

"It's important to have these conversations before work begins," Thayer stresses. "That way, if there are any surprises after installation, you know what to expect."

What the Contractor and You Should Do

After you ask these questions, a good contractor should start by inspecting your home and old system, and then explain your options.

Be sure to get the estimated annual operating cost of the proposed HVAC system at different efficiency levels, as recommended by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR® program. Air conditioners are measured by Seasonal Energy Efficiency Ratio (SEER) and Energy Efficiency Ratio (EER) ratings. The SEER is calculated by



Photo — Delta-Montrose Electric Association

A knowledgeable and trustworthy contractor is a must when choosing a new heating and cooling system because he or she will install and maintain your unit for many years. Here, contractors install a geothermal heat pump "loop" system.

...the best value may not come from whoever offers the lowest price...

dividing the amount of cooling provided during a normal year by the energy used—the higher the SEER, the more efficient the unit. The EER rating helps if you want to know how a system operates at a specific temperature. This will help you to determine the total cost over its lifetime.

Thayer also advises asking for three written estimates of the work: what is being done, what equipment is being provided, and when installation will begin and be completed.

"A contractor should explain what is included—the best value may not come from whoever offers the lowest price," Thayer warns.

NATE Certification

Finally, consider looking for someone who is NATE (North American Technician Excel-

lence) certified. Remember, though, because NATE is a voluntary process, a contractor isn't necessarily a bad installer if he or she doesn't have the credentials, explains Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager specializing in energy efficiency for the Cooperative Research Network, an arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

"NATE-certified contractors will have gone through the steps to prove they have the skills necessary for their job, although it isn't a guarantee that they are good," he cautions. "But it does provide some extra evidence to help consumers know that the person they're hiring has been tested." — Madeline Keimig

Sources: U.S. Department of Energy, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Touchstone Energy® Cooperatives

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.

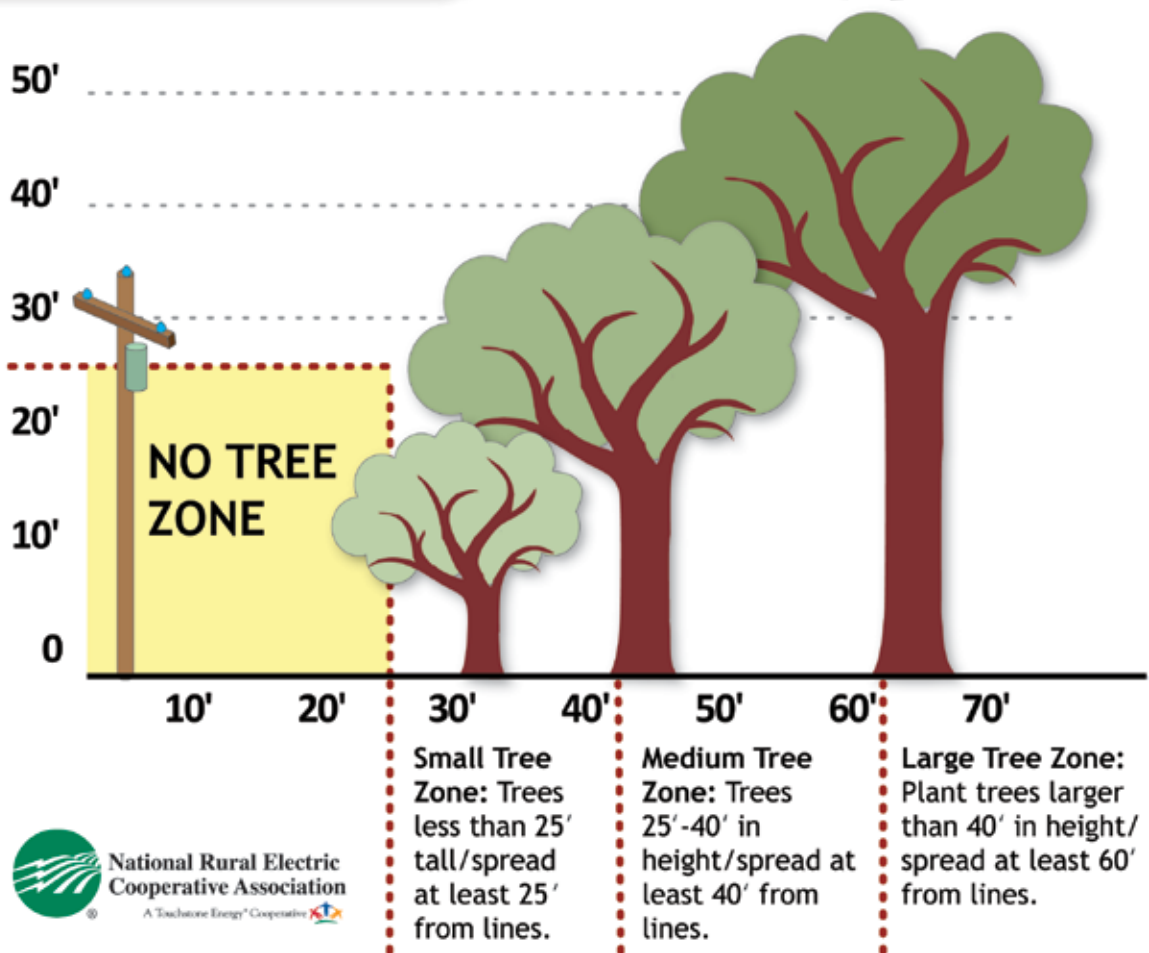
insulation, Black & Decker offers a Thermal Leak Detector for about \$40 (call 800-555-1212 or visit blackanddecker.com). It uses infrared technology, similar to professional models, to sense warm and cold areas. The sensor beam turns red on hot spots and blue on cold spots.

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 near 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.

Heat It Up, Cool It Down

In Michigan, you can expect 70 percent of your home's energy use to come from heating & cooling.
— U.S. Department of Energy

How do you know if it's time to replace your heating, ventilation or air conditioning (HVAC) system? Answer the following questions to find out.

- 1. Does your furnace or air conditioner struggle to keep your home comfortable?.....Yes / No
- 2. Is your HVAC system more than 15 years old?.....Yes / No
- 3. In the last two years, has your equipment required frequent repairs?.....Yes / No
- 4. Have you noticed significantly higher energy bills?.....Yes / No
- 5. Are these systems loud or annoying?.....Yes / No

Priority 1: Energy Efficiency

If you answered yes to any of these questions, it's time to look for a new HVAC system. Even if your system passes this test, it doesn't hurt to explore your options now so that you're ready if it acts up in the future. One of the most important things to look for in a new system is energy efficiency.

ENERGY STAR® furnaces are up to 16 percent more efficient than standard models and can save you as much as \$94 per year. An ENERGY STAR-qualified central air conditioner can cut cooling costs by 30 percent. These savings add up year after year, helping to offset the purchase price.

Buying Tips:

- ◆ Ask a reputable HVAC contractor if installing an electronically commutated motor (ECM) in your furnace would deliver decent energy savings.
- ◆ Replace your heating and cooling equipment at the same time. The two pieces work together, so it makes sense for them to be equal in performance and model year.
- ◆ Get a deal (see rebates, right).
- ◆ Opt for the highest annual fuel utilization efficiency (AFUE) rating


you can find—some furnaces now have a 97 percent AFUE.

Rebates Through the Energy Optimization (EO) program, your electric co-op provides rebates on energy efficient equipment, including HVAC components.

Manufacturers and retailers may also offer other rebates and discounts on qualifying energy efficient products. Ask a sales representative for details.

It Pays To Save The bottom line is, when you buy a new HVAC system make sure it's energy efficient. For more ways to save, check Ontonagon REA's other EO programs (see ad below for website, phone). Visit the Michigan Saves program (michigansaves.org) for potential financing.

SAMPLE ENERGY EFFICIENCY PRODUCTS	REBATE
Room Air Conditioner	\$20
Programmable Thermostat	\$20
ECM Furnace Blower Motor	\$150
Electric Water Heater (.93 efficiency factor (EF) or higher)	\$50
Pipe Wrap Insulation (installed on electric water heater outlet).....	\$4
Heat Pump Water Heater (2.0 EF or higher)	\$100





Need a new furnace? Get a \$150 Rebate!

Expect the unexpected. Your older furnace, thermostat or water heater could fail at any time. Ontonagon County REA helps you plan for the unexpected with Energy Optimization rebates on qualified energy efficient heating and cooling equipment.

HEAT UP

ENERGY TIP: Heating and cooling accounts for 70% of your home's energy use. Be sure to choose energy efficient equipment.

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.

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.



American Energy?

It's right under your feet.



Bosch Geothermal systems use the energy from the earth to efficiently and cost effectively heat and cool your home. You can save up to 70% on energy bills and with a 30% Federal Tax Credit, it's more affordable than ever. Now, when you register your Bosch Geothermal Heat Pump online, you're eligible to win a free Bosch ENERGY STAR® rated dishwasher! Visit www.geothermalenergymi.com.



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Ontonagon County Rural
Electrification Association



Can You Keep a Secret?

With long distance from Ontonagon County REA, you can share all your secrets without the worries of spending a lot of money. You get affordable rates and reliable service. So, pick up the phone, and start talking!

Get these great benefits:

- Great Rates - long distance as low as 9.3* cents per minute!
- Reliability - no dropped calls!
- Trustworthy - backed by a name you know!
- Convenient billing options!
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