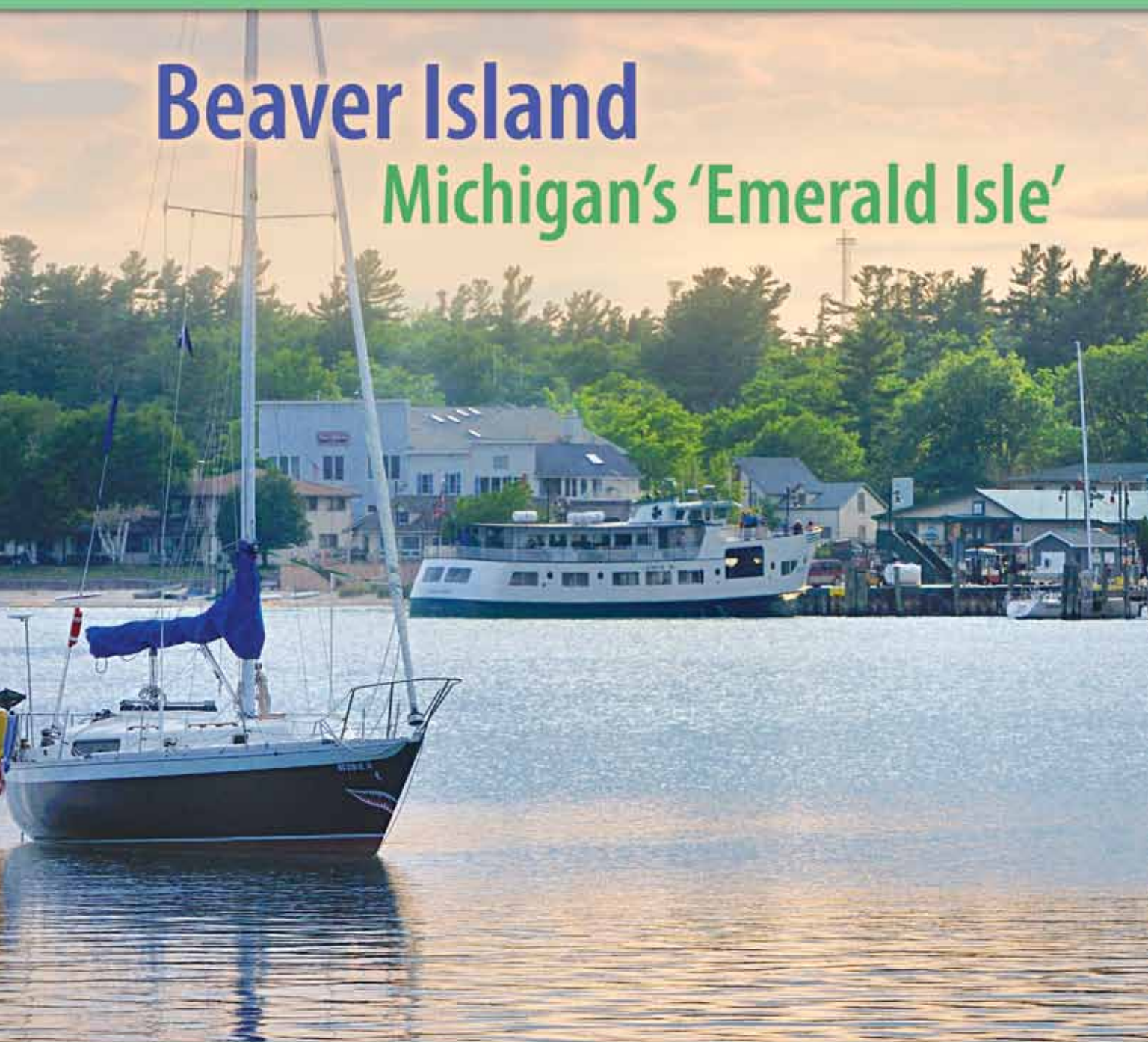


Michigan COUNTRY LINES

Beaver Island

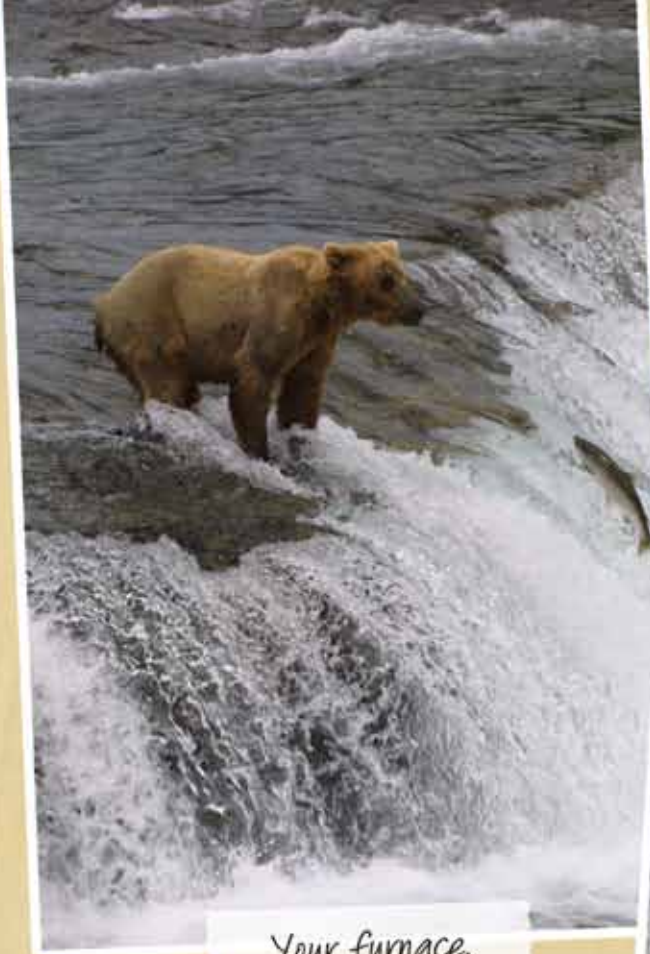
Michigan's 'Emerald Isle'



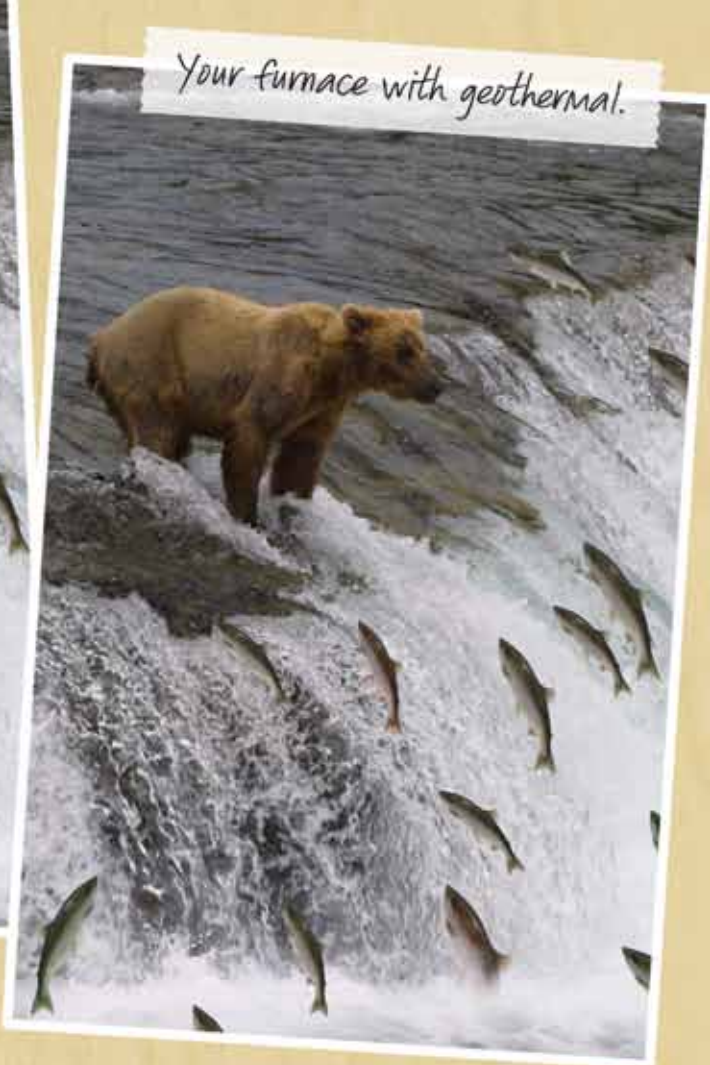
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Share Your Opinions

3 Get Social
With Midwest

7 Bringing Stories
To Life



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*Not in all editions

On the Cover

This serene shot of Beaver Island's Paradise Bay also shows the *Beaver Islander*, a smaller, older ferry boat, at her berth where she is most of the time because the newer *Emerald Isle* carries the majority of passengers.

Photo – Jeffrey Cashman, Island Design



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com

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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Letters to the editor should be sent to Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. 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.

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

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

Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 2 for contact information.



Let's Banter

Creating relevance beyond the poles and wires.

Some would argue that I'm strongly opinionated; I would suggest that I love a good dialog on just about any topic. Not much is off limits if you are a willing participant in active and meaningful banter.

Dialog is the one thing I requested of participants at our 2013 member meetings. We can very effectively deliver electricity from our substations to your home or business, with an occasional hiccup related to a variety of factors. But we want to be more than just a utility. We want to be relevant beyond the delivery system, and relevance is clearly in the eye of the beholder. Depending on the day and person, it can be legislative advocacy, education, community service, communication, and delivery of other products and services.

Some will just always view us as "the utility." That's okay, but pretty status quo if you ask me. A successful and committed business owner strives to do everything he or she can to make the business better and stronger.

You are a business owner, and this cooperative is your business. Granted, it's a very different model than most businesses, but your input is key. Meaningful, productive, ongoing stakeholder dialog is a critical step to creating a road map leading to relevance and success.

This is the stuff beyond billing questions, usage concerns, and reliability issues. Those are important and must be addressed, but there are processes and very capable individuals that can assist you with those concerns. We invite you to think bigger and broader. What do we do well and how could we do it even better? Where are the holes? What role could/should we play as a locally-owned business to make our community strong? How can we take what we are today and mold it into something even better for tomorrow?

We had a major outage in March when

transmission was lost to four substations. It was not our transmission line, and the provider was anything but helpful and forthcoming with information about the cause of the outage and what people could reasonably expect in terms of restoration. Our members were understandably frustrated, as they could not make well-informed decisions about how to provide for their homes and families, and our staff was frustrated because we had nothing meaningful to offer.

This outage became the primary focus of conversation at one of our district meetings as we talked about how and when we communicate. We didn't come away with definite answers, but we did come away with meaningful feedback and ideas that our team is now evaluating.

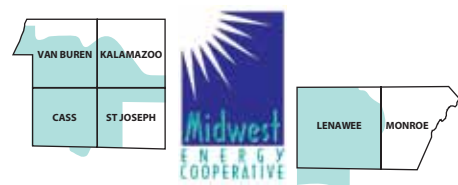
We can't promise that we will act on every idea; we have to make decisions based on the benefit of the entire membership. However, when you engage with us in a meaningful and productive way, we promise to listen and evaluate and act in

We want to be relevant beyond the delivery system, and relevance is clearly in the eye of the beholder.

the best interests of the whole.

We offer a number of platforms through which you can engage. Again, for specific account issues related to billing or service, please start with our customer care team. For bigger and broader dialog that can help define and create relevance and success, we extend an open invitation through various platforms at TeamMidwest.com. "Let's Banter" is my blog where I will share an occasional thought, attempt to educate, or issue a challenge. Please drop by and banter back. Our website is also the place to read about what's going on in your co-op, and to quickly access social media platforms where dialog is both welcomed and encouraged.

You are an owner and can help shape a better future for your business. Engage!



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Robert Hance

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Feeling Social?

Join us in a variety of ways through links at TeamMidwest.com.

Midwest Energy Cooperative is feeling social, and we encourage you to join us.

It wasn't long ago that Michigan electric co-ops depended primarily on *Country Lines* to share information with members about co-op news, programs and services. Today, information is available through a number of different platforms, allowing us to "meet members where they are" as it relates to the life of their electric co-op.

Some prefer traditional methods of communication, like talking to a live person to ask a question or report an outage or flipping through the pages of an actual magazine to read the latest and greatest news and information. These methods are not going away, but are being supplemented by online and mobile media as a way for members to learn and be informed, take action, and engage.

Our goal is to stay on top of emerging technologies to provide outlets that make sense and provide what is needed to meet the different needs of our membership.

If you're interested in knowing more about how to stay engaged with Midwest through online and mobile technology, the best place to start is TeamMidwest.com. Our website provides an array of information and tools, as well as immediate access to a variety of social media platforms where you can engage and interact.

The upper right corner of the homepage has links to our various social media platforms, including Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, LinkedIn, Flickr and Pinterest. So if you want to get an update on a major outage, view energy efficiency videos, see who's who at Midwest or view pictures from various community events and activities, we offer



Stay current with all the happenings at your electric co-op—including links to relevant social media platforms—at **TeamMidwest.com**. You can "live chat" about your bill, stay updated when outages may occur, learn helpful energy efficiency tips, access your account and much more.

easy, immediate access. Also, as mentioned in this month's CEO column on page 2, we invite you to banter and share your thoughts and opinions on our CEO blog, also accessible from the homepage.

Our team is always evaluating new ways to keep you informed. Please continue to watch the pages of our magazine, or view updates through social media, to see the latest and greatest in our effort to keep you informed and engaged.

Ways to Pay Your Monthly Bill

SmartHub The power of information and convenience is in your hands with Midwest's SmartHub app. By clicking on the "Pay Your Bill" link at TeamMidwest.com, you can access your account and make a secure, one-time payment with a credit card or checking account, review a current or previous bill, see payment and billing history, and even view charts showing monthly and/or average costs and usage data. You can also do all of that using a mobile device. First time users of SmartHub will have to sign up for account access with a few simple steps.

Automatic Bill Payment For simplified bill paying, we offer "Easy Ways to Pay." You

can sign up to have your bill automatically deducted from a designated bank account or charged to your credit card every month. It's easy and secure. You continue to receive a bill indicating your payment amount and the date on which it will be paid. You can sign up for this option through SmartHub at TeamMidwest.com, or by calling our office.

District Service Centers Midwest members can stop to make payments or speak with a customer care representative at any of our service centers. There is also an office in White Cloud for propane customers in that region (please call ahead at 1-800-492-5989). All offices are equipped to take both electric and propane payments. Drop boxes are also available at each. Payments left after-hours are posted during the next business day. (See district service center locations on pg. 2.)

Phone You can make a one-time payment by credit card (Visa, MasterCard or Discover) or check 24 hours a day, seven days a week by calling our Customer Care Center at 1-800-492-5989. Phone options include the ability to talk with a representative or handle your transaction using the automated attendant system.

Mail Payments may be sent by mail to:
Midwest Energy Cooperative
P.O. Box 127
Cassopolis, MI 49031

Please send a check or money order. *Do not send cash* through the mail. To help us credit your payment correctly, please include the bill stub and write the account number on your check. Allow at least five days before the due date for the payment to reach our office.

Letters & More

Reader letters, electricity is a good value, Mystery Photo, energy efficiency in churches, and more. It's all here on your Reader's Pages.



Mystery Photos

Well done magazine. Excellent regarding co-op and energy issues, and even more so, it has introduced us to info on unknown gems of people, places, things in this (shhhhh...) One-of-a-Kind(!) state.

Some of the best discoveries are from our reading more about any Mystery Photos that we're unaware of. But, I've missed some over the years and wonder if there is an archive of them or if there could be? Would be wonderful to have an online source to look back

at past years of "Mysteries." It takes us to places we might not know or might be just around the corner, but waiting to be discovered. Thanks again for a great resource.

— Verjean Mirrieles, Shelby
Great Lakes Energy Co-op

Editor's Note: *Thanks for reading with us. At countrylines.com Mystery Photos can be seen in archived issues back through 2010.*

Fish Decoy Carver

A perfect time to stop by Dave Kober's wood shop [April issue/Michigan Made products series], heading to McGuire's for my husband's plumbing inspector's seminar.

Dave greeted us at the door [of his Wooden Fish Gallery] and showed us his awesome fish carvings and his room of collectable fishing lures. He was so kind and we saw how proud he is of his carving talent in his conversation.

As we left on a snowy and icy day in late April, I even got a nice picture of Dave and I — well worth the stop!

— Tom & Jill Katich, Waterford
Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

Costs for Consumer Goods Climbs

Popular demand and short supply drives the cost of everyday necessities higher. Some price tag changes—like the cost to fill your car's gas tank—are obvious to anyone driving down the road. Other increases at the grocery store are more subtle but still impact your family's bottom line. Compare the average price increase of a few household expenses to see how the rising cost of electricity stacks up.

The cost for a gallon of unleaded gasoline shot up 11.1 percent on average every year between 2002 and

2012, according to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. Eggs don't go over easy—the cost for a dozen eggs increased 7.8 percent. Bakers watched the price of flour rise 5.7 percent, and apples felt the crunch with a jump of 4.8 percent—every year.

The cost of electricity grew at a slower pace—3.2 percent a year, on average. The U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) reports homeowners across the nation pay an average of 11.7 cents per kilowatt-hour (kWh). In Michigan, electric cooperatives also keep costs affordable—the

Electricity Remains a Good Value

The cost of powering your home rises at a slower pace than expenses like gas and groceries. Compare the average price increase of these expenses each year over the span of a decade, and the value of electricity shines.



HOW TO SEND A LETTER Readers are encouraged to submit thoughtful, courteously-worded letters, and we print as many as possible in the space and time allowed.

Country Lines reserves the right to print letters at the publisher's discretion, based on length, space and content, and to edit slightly for space and facts. Please limit comments to 240 words or less. Submit by posting online at countrylines.com, email gknudtson@meca.coop, or mail to: Editor, Country Lines, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864.

HOW TO CHANGE YOUR MAILING ADDRESS

Contact your electric co-op—they maintain the mailing list. See page 2 for your co-op's contact information.



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

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

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone! Email mysteryphoto@countrylines.com, or send by mail to Country Lines Mystery Photo, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, 48864. Include your name, address, phone number and name of your co-op. Only those sending complete information will be entered in the drawing. The winner will be announced in the July/August 2013 issue.

The March contest winner is Judy Schaefer of Jackson, who correctly identified the photo from McCourtie Park in Sommerset Center, Mich.



March photo

average price for power is 13.3 cents per kilowatt-hour.

Unlike eggs or apples, electricity is a 24-hour-a-day commodity. Despite energy efficiency advancements, the average household uses more electronic gadgets—and needs more power to operate them—every year.

In the past 30 years, the amount of residential electricity used by appliances and electronics has increased from 17 percent to 31 percent according to the Residential Energy Consumption Survey by EIA. More homes than ever have major appliances and central air conditioning. Digital video recorders (DVRs), computers, and multiple TVs are common.

Your local electric cooperative works hard to keep your electricity safe, reliable and affordable. But you also play a role in the price of your power. Just as you might cut back on eggs if your budget is tight, we can work with you to cut your monthly electric bill. See how little changes add up at TogetherWeSave.com.

— Sources: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Energy Information Administration

Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Properly installed shades can be one of the most effective ways to improve windows' energy efficiency. Lower them during summer; in winter, raise during the day and lower at night on south-facing windows. Dual shades, with reflective white coating on one side and a heat-absorbing dark color on the other, can be reversed with the seasons and save even more energy. Learn more at EnergySavers.gov.

Source: U.S. Department of Energy



Interfaith Group Helps Churches 'See the Light' of Energy Efficiency

Can the city of Detroit be saved? That is a difficult question, but there are a number of people and organizations trying to make that happen, and I want to tell you about one of them.

I am vice president of Michigan Interfaith Power and Light (IPL). This is an organization that promotes energy efficiency and renewable energy to houses of worship all over Michigan. We currently have about 200 churches that are members with over 150,000 people in their congregations. Our board has a priest, imam, nun, Jew, Quaker, Hindu, and non-believer on it. Michigan was the third state in the U.S. with an IPL, and today there are now over 40 states with IPLs.

In 2011, we received a grant from Detroit Edison to improve churches in downtown Detroit. In the past, we have done a number of energy audits for churches, but when we went back two years later, we found that none of the recommendations were done. Churches were too busy with other matters or didn't have the funds to make the suggested energy efficiency improvements. Organizations in Michigan have done thousands of these audits, but an energy audit itself has never saved one penny on a utility bill—only implementing the audit recommendations can save money on the bill.

Therefore, we used a different model. In the updated program, Michigan IPL not only performed the audits, but subcontracted out the improvements and monitored the results. Basically, we provided a full-service program from soup to nuts. The churches' only job was

Photo, from left: Frank Wilhelme, Michigan Interfaith Power and Light advisory board member; Temple Kol Ami members David Henig, Rhonda Kotzen, Kineret Gable, Rabbi Ariana Silverman and Sara Kravitz; and Larry Kaufman, Michigan Interfaith Power & Light vice president. The Temple received an award from IPL for their energy efficiency efforts.

to join Michigan IPL and provide us with utility bills to monitor the results.

A year later, the results are stunning. The \$40,000 investment in the 50 churches has resulted in over \$108,000 in energy savings in the first year. That is money the churches can use to feed the poor and help the needy, and this savings will continue every year as long as the churches are open.

We have also received a number of thank-you letters from these churches, as the lighting is now improved and the comfort increased, and it has been a huge customer satisfaction measure for a minimal investment.

Another sidebar is that Michigan is now ranked No. 1 in the country for the most houses of worship that are Energy Star® certified. That's one more step to moving Michigan forward.

Michigan IPL provides a number of services to churches all over the state, including the Upper Peninsula (visit miipl.org or contact me at energyczar@sbcglobal.net). So, keep the faith—there is help out there.

— Larry Kaufman, Executive Director
Michigan Geothermal Energy Association

Preferred Contractors Meet Co-op Quality Standards

Choosing qualified and reputable contractors can be difficult. As a service to our members, we have compiled a list of Midwest Energy Cooperative preferred electrical contractors. As part of the qualification process, we researched, interviewed and checked references on a regional pool of contractors, and included on our final list only those that we feel confident will provide the level of service that you have come to know and expect from your co-op.

Please feel free to contact any of these contractors with confidence if you are interested in more information about their services.

Southwest Michigan:

Bender Electric

19636 Allegheny
Cassopolis, MI 49031

269-445-3260

Residential & commercial, repairs, trenching, bucket truck

Byler Electric, Inc.

550 Florence Rd., P.O. Box 86
Constantine, MI 49042

269-435-7156

Industrial, commercial, residential & agricultural; new construction; service upgrades; bucket truck; trenching; Guardian/Generac generator dealer & service

Edison Electric

31158 56th Avenue
Paw Paw, MI 49079

269-657-6955

Industrial, commercial & residential; electrical construction & maintenance

Esper Electric, LTD

7775 North 6th St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

269-342-6909

Full service electrical contractor for residential, commercial & industrial

Hi-Tech Electric Co.

839 Lenox Avenue
Portage, MI 49024

269-323-1111

Industrial, commercial & residential; data & communications systems; access controls; service & lighting upgrades; generator sales & service

Jones & Son Electrical Contractors, Inc.

23482 CR 4, Elkhart, IN 46514
574-206-9465

Residential & commercial services

Kerwin Electric, Inc.

7930 S. 8th St.
Kalamazoo, MI 49009

269-375-6543

Residential, commercial, industrial & agricultural; generators; crane service; solar & wind power

Ketelhut Electric

7445 Territorial
Watervliet, MI 49098

269-468-5341

Commercial & residential, all electrical & cabling needs

Kusmack Electric, Inc.

39560 72nd Ave.
Decatur, MI 49045

269-720-3821

Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling & service upgrades, troubleshooting, generator installations

Midway Electric Inc.

51433 63rd Ave.

Lawrence, MI 49064

269-674-3213

Residential, commercial, & industrial; data & communications systems wiring

Peterson's Electric, Inc.

2010 West W Ave.

Schoolcraft, MI 49087

269-679-4797

Commercial & residential service & repair

Wolverine Electrical Contracting, Inc.

2700 Old US-31 North
Niles, MI 49120

269-683-4850

Commercial, industrial & residential; bucket truck; trenching; data & communication systems wiring; Generac generators sales & service; electric thermal storage heating sales & service

Southeast Michigan:

Creighton Electric L.L.C.

260 Westfield Dr.
Archbold, OH 43502

419-445-2223

Commercial, industrial & residential; full service electrical contractor; high voltage work; excavation work; Generac sales & installation

Ford Electric L.L.C.

8442 Brooks Hwy., Onsted, MI 49265
517-467-4133

Residential & commercial, new construction, remodeling, repairs, troubleshooting, generator systems

MTC Electric

P.O. Box 39, Tecumseh, MI 49286
517-260-1664

Residential, commercial & small industrial; troubleshooting

Neil's Electric, Inc.

2366 Carleton Rd.
Adrian, MI 49221

517-265-4459

Residential & commercial electrical installation and service

Sexton Electric

6035 U.S. Hwy. 223
Addison, MI 49220

517-252-5187

Residential & light commercial electrical

Snyr Electric

8380 Round Lake Hwy.
Manitou Beach, MI 49253

517-270-7777

Residential, commercial & industrial; underground wire locator; trenching; aerial bucket truck; generator installation & repair

Staying Safe With Portable Generators

CARBON MONOXIDE HAZARDS:

- Always use generators outdoors. **Never** use them in homes, garages, basements, or enclosed areas, even with ventilation.
- Install battery-operated or plug-in (with battery backup) carbon monoxide (CO) alarms in your home, and follow manufacturer instructions. Test alarms often and replace batteries when needed.

ELECTRICAL HAZARDS:

- Plug appliances directly into generator or use a heavy-duty outdoor-rated extension cord.
- **Never** plug a generator into a wall outlet or connect it to your home's wiring. If whole-house use is required, have a licensed electrician install the equipment to safely connect emergency generators.

Contact Midwest Energy at 1-800-492-5989 with any questions about using your generator safely!

Why We Send You Country Lines

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

And, sending *Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its basic principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members.

The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Country Lines* on your behalf at a cost of \$4.61 per year, paid as part of your electric bill. The current magazine cost is 46 cents per copy, the cost of a first-class stamp.

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



Midwest in the Community



Giving back to our communities is one of the core values of Midwest Energy. We believe in doing what we can, individually and as a family of employees, to strengthen and support the communities in which we live, work and serve. In March, we took to local classrooms to help stories come to life for southwest Michigan area students. A group of volunteers from Team Midwest joined over 200 other business and community leaders for the United Way Annual Reading Day of Action. Equipped with their own favorite stories, volunteers visited 347 pre-K through fifth grade classrooms throughout Berrien and Cass counties.

Midwest volunteer reader Sara Hartsell (left), passed out bookmarks to celebrate reading with kindergarten students at Edwardsburg Primary. After hearing a classic favorite, "The Monster at the End of this Book," Heather Vineyard (below, right) and her kindergarten students at Marcellus Elementary, along with Midwest readers Lori Ruff (below, left) and Jennifer Gilliam, offered up their best monster faces for a special class memory.



Scan this with your QR reader to visit our online photo album and see more photos from these and other "Midwest in the Community" events.

Midwest Energy offices will be **CLOSED FOR MEMORIAL DAY** on Monday, May 27.

Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.

From our family to yours, have a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend!



Colorful Beaver Island America's 'E



Photo – Jeffrey Cashman

Beaver Island's draw for most visitors is its remoteness. They say it can snap a vacationer from the real world in just a few minutes.

"You really feel like you've left the mainland and that you're on 'island time,' says Linda Gallagher, a frequent visitor. "Islanders make you feel like an old friend instead of a visitor."

One of the best ways to reach Beaver Island is the two hour-and-15-minute ferry ride from Charlevoix to St. James. The leisurely ride allows you to chat with islanders that call it home. They love to talk about their island and its relaxed way of life, and it's a great way to learn about interesting spots to visit.

You can also fly over in about 15 minutes (from Charlevoix) on Island Airways or Fresh Air Aviation, if you're in a hurry to slow down.

The Great Lakes' third largest island is home to about 650 year-round residents, many whose Irish immigrant ancestors made it a bustling 19th century fishing port.

The Irish were the first to arrive and settle at Whiskey Point, but in 1848, James Jesse Strang, a Mormon Church leader, brought his followers here after a split in the church, and Brigham Young took his followers to Utah.

Strang claimed that an angel visited and told him to seek a place surrounded by water with great forests. Beaver fit the bill, and the Irish were forced off the island when the "War of Whiskey Point" confrontation was won

by Mormons firing a cannon at an unruly gang gathered at the trading post.

Strang won a seat in the fledgling Michigan Senate and declared himself "King" of the island. But his reign was short-lived, as a revolt in 1856 left him dead. Some say it was sparked by jealous husbands when he began taking additional wives. When word of the revolt and Strang's death spread to the mainland, the Irish quickly returned and drove the leaderless Mormons off.

During their eight-year occupancy, however, the Mormons left it for the better, according to Steve West, head of the Beaver Island Chamber.

"They cleared and cultivated ground, built roads, farms, houses, and changed it from a wilderness to a civilized outpost, but never got to reap the benefits. Today, it's the Irish heritage that's celebrated on the island."

Beaver was blessed to be near some of the Great Lakes' best fishing grounds, and the Irish wrote to family and friends back home about America's "Emerald Isle." The population grew to over 1,000 by the early 1880s, and the island became the largest freshwater fish supplier in the U.S. By the mid-1890s, overfishing caused the harvest to decline drastically and provided the impetus for

Michigan to start a hatcheries program and close fishing seasons during fall spawning.

"Fishing and timber made Beaver Island one of the most important ports on the Great Lakes around the turn of the last century," West explains. "As commercial fishing dwindled and shipping entered the modern era bypassing the island, the population reached a low of 150 residents in the 1960s."

A visit today to the Mormon Print Shop Museum provides a vivid account of those times. It's located on Main Street in St. James, the only village, which gently curves around Paradise Bay, the largest natural harbor on the Great Lakes.

Take a stroll along the quiet harbor roads to a handful of other shops and galleries, or relax in the colorful Shamrock Pub (an island tradition) or hike to nearby windswept Whiskey Point to admire the 19th century lighthouse (today, the island gets its electric lighting from service provided by Great Lakes Energy Cooperative).

Whitefish dinners at the Beaver Island Lodge at sunset are a must, where a wall of windows frames Lake Michigan and distant islands.

Visitors don't need a car, but having wheels makes it easier to visit the undeveloped one-third of the island, which is mostly state-owned. "Gravel and sand roads lead through thick sugar maple forests along inland lakes and the Lake Michigan shoreline on the south end," West says. There are over 100 miles of roads, but only eight miles leading

Emerald Isle'



out of St. James is paved.

"You'll see flocks of sandhill cranes, admire Fox Lake where beavers are reported to reach 60 pounds, and stop to climb Beaver Head Lighthouse on the southern tip. The lighthouse climb yields an impressive view of many of the smaller islands that form an archipelago around Beaver," he adds.

You can rent vehicles on the island, and West advises this for quick visits of a day or two, "but more than that, it's probably more economical to bring your own vehicle over on the ferry."

Bicycles (mountain style is best for the clay-gravel roads) are also popular, and easy to bring over on the ferry or plane. Riding from St. James, where most lodging is found, around the south end and back is about 40 miles. There are also a few campgrounds popular with cyclists—one on the north end and another half-way down the east side.

A shorter ride from the village to Donegal Bay, about 12 miles, is one of Keith Seeloff's favorites.

"You pass by old Irish homesteads with wooden and stone fence lines, century-old wooden cabins along dirt roads with names like Paid een Og's, Donnell Mor's Lane, Barney's Lane and Sloptown Road," says the mainlander. "Some of these lanes are lined by beautiful old oak trees, and Donegal Bay is a beautiful Cape Cod-like bay with white sand beaches and cottages tucked into dunes."

Following Kuebler Trail from Sloptown Road brings you to McCauley's Point, a state preserve with panoramic views of High Island. Hike the shoreline through low dunes to Mt. Pisgah, a towering sand dune rising 150 feet above the bay. It's along Donegal Bay Road on the way back to the village, and is one of the highest points.

"Climb up the dune for a nice view of the

bay and islands nestled off-coast. Looking inland, treetops stretch as far as the eye can see, and it's a great place to watch a sunset!" Seeloff exclaims.

Other preserves to hike are Barney's Lake, Erber, Miller Marsh and Little Sand Bay, which is closest to St. James. A long trail and boardwalk traverses various wetlands and streams before arriving at a beautiful deserted sand beach. Knotted trillium, a rare sight on the mainland, lines the boardwalk.

The island has long been known for its smallmouth bass, but fly-fishing for giant carp along the flats has really taken off, says Kevin Morlock, of Indigo Guides Charters. It's been popularized as "golden bone fishing" by outdoor writers, and fly-fishers from California and Texas have made the pilgrimage.

"It's challenging. That's why it has become so popular," Morlock explains. "Bone fish are about 8 pounds, and you might get about 20 shots at catching one on a typical Florida outing. Carp weigh 20 to 30 pounds, put up quite a fight, and you'll get around 200 shots at hooking one on a typical Beaver outing. Europeans consider carp a prized game fish and we are starting to catch on."

After a trip to the island, Kirk Deeter wrote on his *Field & Stream* magazine blog, "Beaver Island is home to some remarkable smallmouth bass fishing. But, we were there to explore the flats fishing. And—I kid you not—I would rate the flats action on Beaver with any other flats experience in America. Yes, that also includes Florida, Louisiana, Texas, Nantucket and Hawaii. It's absolutely insane around Beaver Island."

Go, relax, and enjoy the experience, because after all, you're on "island time."

For more about Beaver Island, places to stay and all its amenities, click on beaverisland.org.

PHOTOS: 1) An aerial view of Whiskey Point, at the entrance to Paradise Bay/Beaver Harbor. In the background is Garden Island, second largest in the archipelago. 2) Catching golden bonefish (carp family) on a fly rod is very popular around Beaver Island. This one is over 30 pounds. 3) From McCauley's Point, on South Donegal Bay, you can see panoramic views of High Island, 4 miles west. 4) St. Patrick's Day on the island includes events such as a frozen fish toss. 5) A full *Emerald Isle* ferry makes an unusual early evening arrival on Beaver Island.

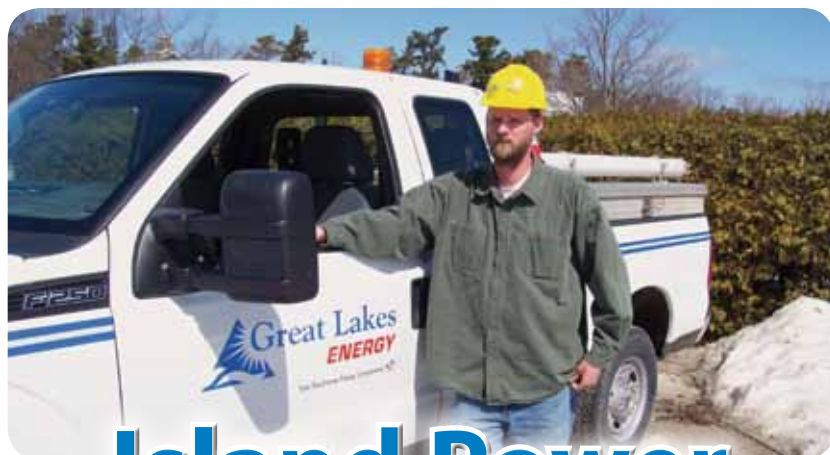


Photo: Steve West

Island Power

Keeping Beaver Island plugged in. **Howard Meyerson**

When the power goes out in the middle of the night on Beaver Island, Mike McDonough is the one who climbs out of bed. No matter that a blizzard may be raging over Lake Michigan on this remote island 32 miles offshore from Charlevoix.

McDonough (pictured above), a 27-year old Island native, will pull on winter clothes and head out to his truck at any hour. He is the Great Lakes Energy Cooperative lineworker tasked with making things right by keeping electricity flowing to 500 year-round residents, a population that swells to over 3,000 in the summer.

"I enjoy the work and seeing things get done," says McDonough, a fifth-generation Islander. "This year we had a rough time. The winter storms were hard and we had a half-dozen or more households that were without power for over a day.

"You can spend 16 to 18 hours a day working on lines and restoring power. It's a lot of work, but after it's over, everyone is really appreciative. They realize it's not the easiest thing to do."

Winter storms dumped an extra load of heavy ice and snow on the Island this season, toppling trees that in turn fell on power lines. The area gets its electricity from the mainland, but there is a backup generator just in case of an on-shore problem, or on the lake bottom, where three 27-mile long cables carry electricity to the Island's harbor.

Along with causing darkened homes and businesses, downed power lines present additional problems. Beaver Island is covered by thick forests, and is 13 miles long and about 6 miles across at its widest point. So, line repairs—especially this ferocious winter—were made all the more difficult

when trees fell across roads and blocked access to areas needing a power line fix.

"This was one of the worst times we have seen over here," says McDonough, who began working for the co-op in 2006 and later spent three years on the mainland as an apprentice training to become a lineman, a job that he started four years ago.

"He's the guy who does the day-to-day things like maintaining the lines on the Island," adds Dave Matz, operations director for Great Lakes Energy, which is based in Boyne City. Matz began his 32-year career with the company as a lineman, so he knows the job well.

"It's not a job for everyone," he says. "You learn how to climb poles and to respect electricity. When the weather gets nasty, these guys are out working. They're a special breed."

Mainland power was first extended to Beaver Island in the 1970s, but the system has since been upgraded. The latest underwater cables were installed in 1999, and the Island's 3-megawatt backup power plant was built in 2000. Three 20,000-gallon fuel tanks are also maintained to run the backup generators. Once winter arrives and Lake Michigan freezes, there is little chance of getting a fuel delivery, Matz explains.

Despite these preparations, other events also happen to cause occasional outages, such as squirrels chewing on things they shouldn't in the summer, Matz adds.

McDonough says he has the job covered, though.

"In the middle of the night you are on your own," he says confidently. "But if it happens early in the day, I hit the gas station and stock up on junk food; beef jerky and Mountain Dew get me through the day."

Getting Comfortable with Home Energy

Melanie wants her home to be comfortable and bright. Winter gusts send her to the thermostat to fight the chill, and in summer she nudges the temperature down to keep cool.

Meanwhile, Melanie's husband Scott finds comfort in lower utility bills, so he frowns on tweaking the dial and walks through their home, turning off lights.

Fortunately, a comfortable middle ground is both affordable and available. Energy-saving products combined with efficient design trends and building techniques are revolutionizing home energy use.

Regardless of location or residence type, people like Melanie and Scott are finding that being energy efficient brings comfort as well as positively impacting their wallets and the world.

"If you're concerned about the environment, being energy efficient is a priority," says Brian Sloboda, a senior program manager for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). "But efficient energy use is also important for other reasons. First,

If you can do things to reduce the cost of energy, you'll have more money to spend on other things.

you save money. Second, you save energy, which leads back to saving money."

It's easy to ignore being wise with our energy consumption. After all, electricity is a good value. Unlike other energy sources, electricity is very flexible—we can use it for everything from cooking and cleaning to powering entertainment devices and even automobiles. Regardless, it makes sense (and cents) to be more energy efficient in all areas.

"Energy efficiency is a pocketbook issue," adds Alan Shedd, residential/commercial energy director for NRECA's Touchstone Energy Home program. "If you can do things to reduce energy costs, you'll have more money to spend on other things." Sure, we can't control all energy costs (gasoline, for example), but we can make a difference in

Portable With Efficiency

our own homes.

But *how* do we make that difference? Experts say future home construction and remodeling will focus even more on energy efficiency—especially proper sealing.

The best time to focus on energy savings, however, is at construction. “We’ve got to do a better job of sealing penetrations and gaps between the conditioned space—areas of the home that we heat and cool—and unconditioned spaces,” explains Art Thayer, energy efficiency programs director for the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. “Find and seal gaps, cracks and penetrations near plumbing, cables, utilities, furnace runs, fireplace installations, and electrical wiring—anything that may allow air to move from one space to another.” When these gaps are sealed in a typical home, energy costs can drop between 20 and 40 percent.

Doing Detective Work

Home energy audits can help identify energy-loss areas, and audit professionals use special tools to identify potential improvements.

After a quick safety check on gas appliances, an energy audit expert will place a blower door on an exterior door. The device pressurizes the home, making air leaks easier to find. “The door simulates a 20-mile-per-hour wind coming at the house from all sides,” Thayer explains. “It creates a negative



Photo - John Lowrey

Experts predict that future homes and remodeling will focus even more on energy efficiency, including designs that take advantage of natural light and ventilation, as well as water conservation design and products. The windows above are installed in a demonstration solar home built by University of Illinois students (<http://2009.solardecathlon.illinois.edu>) and are Optiwins® triple-paned thermally broken, argon-filled, wood windows with cork interiors.

pressure so we can find out what the biggest problems are when it comes to comfort and energy. When we fix the comfort problem, we save energy, too.”

An energy auditor can also picture the home through an infrared camera to spot energy leaks, which most often occur in the attic. “Air escapes from places like the flue and chimney chase, plumbing stacks, electrical penetrations, and around kitchen and bathroom soffits,” Thayer says.

But trouble spots can’t be fixed just by rolling out more insulation. Specific spaces need to be sealed first. “Insulation is not air-sealing,” Thayer says, noting that many states require the blower test on new construction.

Electric co-ops are also willing to help their consumer-members learn about energy

efficiency, and this varies by co-op from providing Energy Optimization programs (see story and ad in this issue offering free recycling and appliance rebates) to *Country Lines* articles and holding educational seminars. Other co-ops sell highly efficient water heaters and provide low-interest financing for energy efficiency improvements.

As an example, Midwest Energy Cooperative (Cassopolis) has an “Energy Express” demonstration trailer it uses at fairs, festivals, trade shows and other community events. “It’s an interactive educational tool that helps people understand some simple and inexpensive ways to increase home energy efficiency and maximize energy dollars,” says Patty Nowlin, communications director for Midwest.

“Finding efficiencies house-by-house or business-by-business, is a good thing,” Thayer adds.

Designed to Save

Older homes were built to a different standard, when energy was less expensive and efficiency less important, and some leak like sieves, Thayer continues. And, while these concerns are key for both remodeling and new home construction, it’s especially important in new homes where it’s a one-time decision about insulation, caulking and weather stripping. “With a little up-front investment you build-in lower overall operating costs,” he says.

Energy efficiency can also come from a home’s appliances, and many are

Continued on page 12

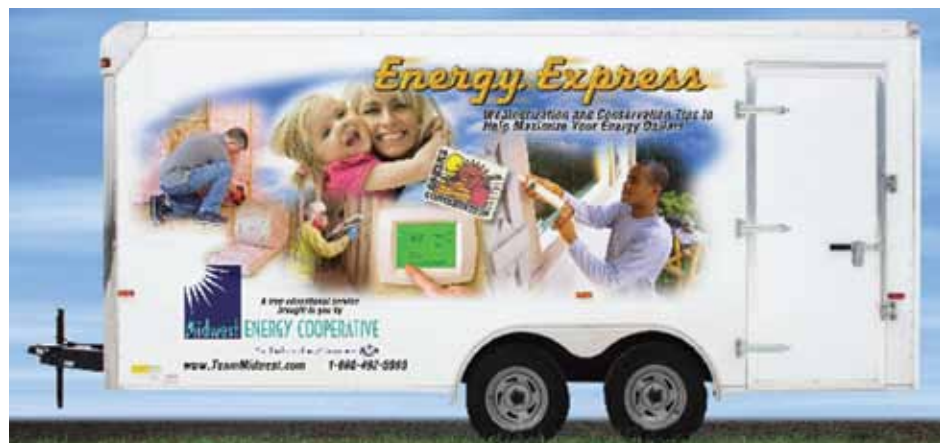


Photo - Midwest Energy Cooperative

Midwest Energy Cooperative’s “Energy Express” trailer has become a popular exhibit at home shows, fairs and other community events. It’s an interactive demonstration unit that helps consumers learn how to save energy and money in ways that are practical, affordable and easy to understand.

Getting Comfortable, from page 11

manufactured with this emphasis, such as clothes washers, refrigerators and other aids bearing the Energy Star® logo.

Energy Star is branded by the Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency. This means the appliance is a better value, and was proven in testing to provide significant energy savings over comparable products. Over 75 percent of the public understands the importance of looking for the Energy Star label, Thayer notes, and realizes that just a little more money means long-time savings.

Geothermal Offers More Savings

Perhaps nothing is as valuable, however, as savings realized after installing a geothermal heat pump as an alternative to more traditional heating and cooling units, Thayer advises. Using liquid-filled loops buried about 5 feet underground, this system uses the earth's steady temperature to transfer heat.

Installation costs are high, but geothermal heat pumps deliver a 30 to 70 percent reduction in home heating and cooling costs. Plus, by using a desuperheater, they also deliver about 60 percent of a family's hot water heating needs for free.

Because of their connection to the earth, geothermal heat pumps represent an interesting application of renewable energy, and currently receive a 30 percent tax credit. "That really brings the cost down to a level that's par with high-efficiency systems," he adds. "For new home construction, it's a no-brainer. Why not do it?"

Heat pumps are also hard to beat because they can pay for themselves in just a few years.

The Future is Now

With today's stringent building codes, new homes are much more energy efficient than even just a few years ago, Thayer adds, and co-ops are increasing their educational efforts.

As another example, Midwest Energy is partnering with the Lenawee Intermediate School District's Center for a Sustainable Future and other southeastern Michigan groups to build a state-of-the-art Sustainable Energy Efficient Demonstration House (SEED). The planned SEED house would serve as a unique educational tool for the whole community.

"We're planning to build this house so that any of our co-op members, the community, and students can walk through and realize that energy conservation is practical, affordable and easy to understand in their own

Roger Bowser (L), energy programs/services manager for Midwest Energy Cooperative, uses the "Energy Express" trailer at a county fair to show consumers how to save energy and money. For example, consumers can easily plug certain home air leaks themselves with proper caulking, insulation and sealants.

homes," says Roger Bowser, Midwest's energy programs and services manager.

Plans are for the house to be a "cut-away" design so it can show that if a house is newly-built, remodeled or energy-retrofitted as a "system," it can be air-tight, comfortable and affordable, but still provide fresh, healthy, indoor air quality. "I want our members to understand if they are building, remodeling or energy-retrofitted their home, it should be very attainable and affordable for them," Bowser explains.

Another co-op, Cherryland Electric, is offering its members that are interested in energy efficiency the opportunity to buy solar panels. The plan is to build a community solar panel array near the co-op's office on U.S.-31 in Grawn. Now in the first phase, a total of 80 panels are being offered. Cherryland will retain ownership of the panels, then lease them to members for a one-time fee of \$470 per panel. In return, members will receive an approximate \$2 rebate per bill. Participating members can expect to break even on the investment in about 20 years, and that time frame could be shortened with energy optimization credits. The project's size could eventually offer 360 panels or more over the long-term.



Above: Plugging open spaces around plumbing and other air leaks is an easy fix that saves energy and money.

Right: A blower door test should be a part of any professional energy audit. A temporary door with a pressurizing fan makes it possible to measure and find energy leaks in a home.



Photo - Midwest Energy Cooperative

"It's been very positive," say General Manager Tony Anderson. "I think people want to support our renewable energy, and they are interested in making it work."

Homes will soon be designed with future energy upgrades in mind, such as solar opportunities, Thayer adds. As we move to electric cars, we may begin seeing more solar panels on garages and carports, too.

Homes will also have "smart" appliances, energy efficiency controls, and a monitoring system. "Appliances will have a bigger impact because energy-efficient ones will be prevalent," Thayer says, adding that the move to LED lighting will quicken and TVs and computers will become even more efficient.

"From the outside, you probably won't see a lot of difference in the way homes look," Thayer notes, "but what's on the inside—from construction to appliances—will definitely be different."



Photos - Illinois Country Living

Trenary Wood Products:

White Cedar From the Heart of the U.P.



The incense of cut cedar fills the air; motes of sawdust drift through the sunlight that streams through large windows. The high-pitched whine of the saw makes conversation difficult as the four-man crew cuts, sorts, squares off, and packs.

Trenary Wood Products is in full production, crafting custom shingles and shakes from Upper Peninsula-grown white cedar logs. Their merchandise takes advantage of northern cedar's unique properties: insect and moisture resistance.

Owners Steve and Sharon Boyer have been Alger Delta Electric Co-op members for all 36 years of their marriage. Sharon's mother, Ruth Niemi Kaukola Holmquist, was born on the family farm where the Boyers also live, and remembers when they first got electricity in North Delta back in 1938.

"They were one of the first Alger Delta members around here because their house was so close to the road," Sharon explains.

The Boyers are also proud of the home-grown tradition of their business: they give full-time employment to eight Trenary residents, purchase only local cedar from area loggers, and have perfected a product for their customers that is made to survive harsh, snowy conditions. Their shakes and shingles can be seen on buildings in many U.P. state parks: Fayette State Park in the Garden Peninsula, Fort Wilkins in the Keweenaw, and Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, among others. They were surprised when their cedar shingles found national appeal, too. "I never know who'll be on the other end of the phone when it rings," Sharon says.

"Most of our shingles go to the U.P. or Wisconsin, but we've taken orders from all over the country—New Jersey to California," Steve says. Their biggest job so far was a stave church—a replica of a Norwegian church—built in Moorhead, Minn. "Those were custom cut 6-inch shingles," Steve



Steve Boyer stands next to ready-to-ship bundles of shingles from the Trenary Wood Products business he owns with his wife, Sharon. Visit trenarywoodproducts.com to see more products, or contact them by e-mail at holmquist@tds.net or call 906-446-3326.

Inset photo: This shingled cottage perched on a sand dune overlooking Lake Superior is owned by an Alger Delta Co-op member, Judy Deboer. The cedar shingles, stained a gray tone rather than waiting for them to weather to that shade naturally, are installed with a small space in between each shingle because they absorb water and swell in wet weather. That's the reason cedar offers the best moisture protection and good energy efficiency—it swells and seals tightly.

remembers. The order called for 55 squares (275 bundles of 6-inch shingles), and the customers placed the order a year in advance.

"We can do anything—long as we have enough time to do it," Steve says.

The Boyers' operation is a study in utilizing every scrap of a natural resource. They prefer to buy older cedar logs that have rotted in the center because the outer edges of these trees don't have knots. "That's the stuff they can't get rid of," Steve explains. "And yet, that's the clear [knot-free] wood—we can't get that from the younger cedar because of the branch growth. The old wood is what makes the good shingles."

Trenary Wood Products sells three shingle

grades in custom sizes ranging from 3 inches to 8 inches wide. But that's only the beginning: the trimmed-off scraps are sold in kindling bundles, and also used to heat the family's sawmill and home. The sawdust is baled and sold as animal bedding, spread on muddy farm paths, and used as bow targets. "An arrow won't go through it," Steve says. Any leftover scrap is then trucked downstate to be converted to cedar mulch. "The only thing we don't make is the mulch. We don't throw anything away from this operation—everything gets used," Steve says proudly.

If they could just bottle that woodsy cedar scent and sell it, they might find their biggest market yet.

► **Tell us about your favorite Michigan-Made product!** Please send a few short paragraphs describing the product and why you like it, along with your email and phone number to gknudson@meca.coop or call 517-913-3531.

Use Your Own Money!

How to start your child on an allowance.



Ateen magazine caught my daughter's eye in the store recently. She wanted it, but not enough to spend her allowance. This is exactly the decision-making we were hoping to inspire when we began giving her an allowance.

Many Michigan schools are incorporating financial literacy, and giving children an allowance is one way to extend the learning at home.

There are several ways to go about giving an allowance, some basic factors to consider when determining what is right for your family.

How old is your child and what is their maturity level?

These factors will help steer your decisions in determining the allowance system. You don't want to make it so easy that your child takes an allowance for granted, but you want to set realistic expectations based on their age and maturity.

Visit a local library or bookstore with your child to help explain money management and the concept of receiving an allowance. "Michigan Jump \$tart!" also has a website with activities to teach children of all ages about money management. "Money Smart Kids" offers fun games about financial literacy.

What purpose do you want the allowance to serve?

Is it to teach the value of money, be an incentive for chores, or simply provide some

in-pocket cash? There is no right or wrong reason here, but having a clear concept of why you are giving it will help you plan. You should also explain to your child why they are getting an allowance and what you hope it will help them achieve.

Will the allowance be contingent on anything?

Some children need to complete all of their chores, meet behavior goals, earn certain grades, or meet other criteria in order to receive an allowance. In other families, the child receives it no matter what. Another option is to blend the two methods, so the child receives a small base allowance but has a list of "extra" chores he can choose to do for additional funds.

How will the money be administered?

Options include:

- ▲ Handing out cash every Friday
- ▲ Paying in a lump sum monthly
- ▲ Putting the money directly in your child's savings account
- ▲ Adding the funds to a prepaid debit card
- ▲ Holding onto the money and tracking your child's credits and debits for her

Will there be restrictions on how the money is spent?

If your family has specific rules, such as forbidding toy guns or candy, make sure your child knows the rules still apply even if he has his own money. Some parents require their child to devote certain percentages of

the allowance to charity or savings. Others give their child free reign on how it is spent.

What will they be expected to pay for out of their allowance?

Will your child be expected to use the allowance for lunches, clothing or school supplies? A popular option is to give older children and teens a budget and allow them to keep any excess funds. For example, they may receive \$20 a week, which includes lunch money. However, they can choose to brown bag it to school and use the money in other ways. Or, you may prefer to buy all of your child's necessities and give a small allowance to cover "wants."

How much should you give?

Once you determine if your child will have to pay for certain items out of the allowance or not, you can determine how much to offer. There are many formulas used for this, such as a dollar a week per the child's grade. This is a starting point, but only you can determine the right amount for your child based on all of the above considerations.

It's important to allow some freedom in children's spending, so they learn the value of money firsthand. I don't always agree with how my daughter spends her money, but she's learning to splurge on the items that make her happy and skip the ones she can do without—like teen celebrity magazines.

Rachael Moshman is a mom, freelance writer, educator and family advocate. Find her at rachaelmoshman.com.

The Saskatoons Are Here

There's a new berry in town. It's called the Saskatoon, and it's been growing wild across the prairies of western Canada and the northwestern United States since the buffalo roamed. The Saskatoon "blueberry," as some catalogs call it, has the same look and nutritional value as a regular blueberry, but with a different, sweet-yet-nutty taste.

Saskatoons could become a hit with Michigan gardeners, commercial growers, landscapers and naturalists alike. They can be planted in the garden and trimmed to about 4 feet tall, used as a flowering shrub along a foundation, or allowed to grow wild, free and tall out in the "back 40."

"I think they'll be a lot of fun and easier to grow than blueberries," says Erwin "Duke" Elsner, an MSU fruit and viticulture specialist from Grand Traverse County, and a member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative. "They're also quite adaptable to northern Michigan."

The plants branch off from the trunk like a clump of birch trees and can reach 20 feet tall and about 4 feet wide. However, Elsner says they can be kept trimmed down for garden production or to form an attractive hedge. The pretty spring flowers make Saskatoons a wonderful landscape plant that doubles as a food source. White blooms show in mid-spring, and the deep-purple fruit appears about July.

Saskatoons are used for pies, jam, wine, cider and beer, and are good in cereal or trail and other snack mixes. These berries are healthy little buggers, too, as they're chock-full of protein, vitamin C, calcium, iron and cancer-fighting antioxidants. They're hardy as a polar bear, growing as far north as Alaska, and do well in most soils, except very wet clay. A similar species, known locally as Juneberry, grows wild in our northern lower area and the U.P., mostly in upland, sandy areas.

How to Plant

Plant Saskatoons in full to partial sun and light sandy or sandy-loam soil that drains well. In the garden, space them about 3 to

4 feet apart. They're self-pollinating, but will bear heavier fruit if planted with other Saskatoons. Prepare the soil as for any tree or shrub by digging a hole about twice as wide and deep as the root ball. Back-fill with a mix of compost and good topsoil, water-in the plants well, and then mulch around the trunks. A slow-release or organic fertilizer applied moderately once or twice a year will keep them healthy. Unlike blueberries, Saskatoons don't require acidic soil.

It's a 'Super-fruit'

There is interest in this once-ignored berry out East, and Michigan farmers haven't overlooked them either, Elsner says. In fact, some call it a "super fruit" that is about to take our farm markets and roadside stands by storm. However, the exact amount in production is hard to estimate. Elsner's best guess is that 70 to 100 acres are scattered throughout Michigan, and MSU will conduct surveys to determine how much acreage is under production and what markets are interested in the berries.

"They are fairly simple to grow, they don't require machine harvesting—although they could be harvested with machines—and

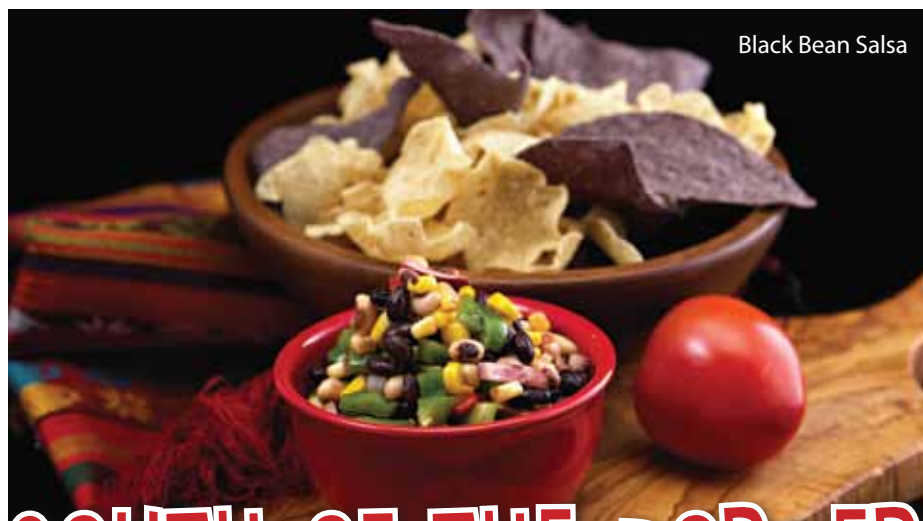
are not a huge up-front investment, Elsner explains. "They also follow a trend toward native plants and are good for you."

Like blueberries and other edibles, Saskatoons are tempting to birds, so using bird netting is worth considering. Rose chafer pests have also found these plants to their liking, adds Elsner, who is also a highly regarded entomologist. He's working with others at MSU to invent an appropriate insecticide to deal with the chafers.

Interest is also picking up on a commercial scale here, and a group has formed to support efforts to grow and market the fruit. "Because of the enthusiasm of local growers, we have started an organization called 'The Saskatoon Berry Institute of North America' to support the development of this new crop, which we all feel has a lot of potential," reports Jim Dixon of Williamsburg, also a Cherryland Electric Co-op member. Dixon has 250 Saskatoon plants in the ground and expects to eventually have berries for the farm markets.

If you're interested in growing Saskatoons, get involved or simply check-in with this enthusiastic group of growers by visiting the Institute on Facebook at facebook.com/SaskatoonBerryInstituteOfNorthAmerica.





Black Bean Salsa

SOUTH OF THE BORDER

These Mexican-style recipes will turn your dinner into a fiesta. Discover enchiladas, tacos and other creative variations of traditional Mexican dishes.

Black Bean Salsa

1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
1 can white and yellow corn, drained
1 can black-eyed peas, drained
1 jar diced pimentos, undrained
1 green pepper, diced
1/4 red onion, chopped
2-3 avocados, diced (add just before serving)
"scoops" tortilla chips

Dressing:

5 T. Tiger sauce (or Red Hot® sauce)
1/2 c. red wine vinegar
1/2 c. canola oil
1 T. sugar, optional
salt and pepper to taste

Mix beans, corn, peas, pimentos, pepper and red onion. Mix dressing ingredients together and pour dressing on bean mixture. Serve with chips. This is also excellent with BBQ or grilled chicken.

Mary Scodeller, Lansing

Enchilada Casserole

2 lbs. ground beef
chopped onion
salt and pepper to taste
1 package taco seasoning
1 can enchilada sauce (mild or spicy)
1 can water
1 can refried beans
1 c. cheddar cheese, shredded
1 c. mozzarella cheese, shredded
1 package flour tortillas

optional: chopped green pepper, green onion, lettuce, tomatoes, sour cream

Brown beef with salt, pepper and onion. Add taco seasoning, water and beans; mix well. Grease a 9 x 13-inch pan. Layer enchilada sauce, tortillas, meat and cheeses. Bake at 350° until heated through. Serve with chopped vegetables and sour cream, as desired.

Sue Kolean, Holland

Upside Down Sombreros

1 lb. lean ground beef
1 small onion, chopped
1 10-oz. can medium-spiced enchilada sauce
1 2.25-oz. can sliced black olives, drained
1 8-oz. can whole kernel corn with red and green peppers, drained
4 8-in. flour tortillas
1 16-oz. can refried beans
4 tomato slices
6 oz. (1 1/2 c.) shredded cheddar cheese or Mexican-blend cheese, divided
1/2-3/4 c. sour cream
1 medium avocado, peeled, pitted, sliced
4 oven-proof, 1 1/2 c. size ramekin dishes (about 5 1/2 in. wide and 2 1/2 in. deep)

In a medium skillet, cook ground beef and onion until meat is no longer pink; drain. Add the enchilada sauce, olives and corn; cook and stir 3 to 4 minutes or until heated through. Place one tortilla in bottom of each ramekin dish, allowing tortilla to overlap sides of dish. Spread refried beans equally among

the four dishes, then spread meat mixture over beans. Place dishes on a baking sheet. Bake, uncovered, at 350° for 25 minutes. Place 1 tomato slice on top of each; sprinkle each with 1/4 cup cheese. Bake until cheese is melted, about 5 minutes; remove from oven. To serve, dollop each dish with sour cream; sprinkle with remaining cheese. Stand two avocado slices, one on each side of each dish, facing toward the center to resemble hat ties.

Marilyn Partington Frame, Traverse City

Slow Cooker Chicken Taco Soup

1 onion, chopped
1 16-oz. can chili beans
1 15-oz. can black beans
1 15-oz. can whole kernel corn, drained
1 15-oz. can tomato sauce
1 12-oz. can or bottle beer
2 10-oz. cans diced tomatoes with green chilies, undrained
1 1.25-oz. package taco seasoning
3 whole skinless, boneless chicken breasts
optional toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, sour cream, crushed tortilla chips

Place the onion, chili beans, black beans, corn, tomato sauce, beer and diced tomatoes in a slow cooker. Add taco seasoning, and stir to blend. Lay chicken breasts on top of the mixture, pressing down slightly until just covered by the other ingredients. Cook on low, covered, for five hours. Remove chicken from soup, and allow to cool long enough to be handled. Shred and stir chicken back into the soup; continue cooking for two hours. Serve topped with shredded cheddar cheese, a dollop of sour cream and crushed tortilla chips, if desired.

Jacquelyn Guisbert, Drummond Island

Peppery Meatloaf

2 lbs. ground beef
1/2 c. V-8® juice
1 t. cumin
1/4 c. onion, diced
1/4 c. jalapenos, chopped
1 c. oatmeal
1 t. salt
2 eggs
1/2 t. pepper
1/2 c. chili sauce
1 t. taco seasoning
1 c. pepper jack cheese, shredded

Mix in order and bake at 350° for 45-55 minutes. Top with cheese and return to oven until cheese melts. Great for next day sandwiches also.

Marie Danis, Pelkie

Photography by: 831 Creative

Crock Pot Picnic Pork Tacos

Combine in a crockpot:

- 1 picnic ham (not smoked)
- 2 T. Chili Ancho Powder (or chili powder)
- 1 white onion, chopped
- 1 t. rosemary
- 1 T. seasoned salt
- 2 whole garlic cloves
- 1 T. black pepper
- 1/4 in. of water in pot

Pico De Gallo:

- 2 fresh tomatoes, chopped
- 1 onion, chopped
- 1 t. minced fresh garlic
- 1/4 c. chopped jalapeno
- 1/4 bunch cilantro, chopped
- 2 avocados, chopped
- juice from 1 lime

flour or corn tortillas
slices of queso fresco cheese
sour cream

Cover and cook on high for eight hours. Remove ham and shred with a fork. Chop all pico de gallo ingredients and mix in a bowl; add lime juice. Add meat to tortillas and top with cheese, pico de gallo and sour cream.

Mary Gorshe, Suttons Bay

Taco Soup

- 1 lb. ground turkey or beef
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 package dry Hidden Valley® dressing mix
- 1 package taco seasoning mix
- 1 15-oz. can pinto beans
- 1 15-oz. can hot chili beans
- 1 15-1-oz. can whole kernel corn
- 1 15-oz. can stewed tomatoes, Mexican flavor
- 1 15-oz. can stewed tomatoes

Brown meat and onions; drain. Mix dressing and taco seasoning mixes into meat and add all other ingredients. Simmer 1 hour. If desired, serve with baked Tostitos® chips.

Thomas Anderson, Cheboygan

Taco Lasagna

- 1 lb. ground beef
- 1 package taco seasoning
- jar of salsa, optional
- 1 can refried beans
- 8 soft flour tortillas
- 3-4 packages shredded taco or Colby Jack cheese

Fry ground beef and add taco seasoning and salsa, to taste. For the first layer, place two tortillas on the bottom of a baking dish, spread with one-half of the meat mixture and top with one package of cheese. For the second layer, place two tortillas on top of the first layer, spread with one-half of the refried

beans and top with a package of cheese. For the third layer, place two tortillas, spread with the remaining meat and a package of cheese. For the final layer, place two tortillas, spread with remaining refried beans and the last package of cheese.

Bake at 350° for about 30 minutes, or until cheese is melted and starts turning a golden brown. Let cool for a few minutes and serve with your favorite toppings (tomatoes, lettuce, sour cream, jalapeno, avocado, etc.) and enjoy.

Tami and John Smith, Boyne City

Enchilada Crepes

Crepes:

- 1 c. baking mix (Bisquick®)
- 3/4 c. milk
- 1/2 t. chili powder
- 2 eggs
- 1/4 c. green onions, finely chopped

Filling:

- 3 c. cooked chicken, finely chopped
- 1 c. shredded Monterey Jack cheese
- 1/2 c. salsa
- 1 avocado, peeled and cut up
- 1/2 c. sour cream
- 1/2 c. water
- 1/4 t. salt
- 1/8 t. pepper
- 1 clove garlic, crushed
- chopped tomato
- shredded cheddar cheese

To make the crepes, beat baking mix, milk, chili powder and eggs with wire whisk until almost smooth; stir in onions. Pour 1/4 cup

batter into hot, lightly greased 10-inch skillet; rotate skillet until batter covers bottom. Cook until golden brown. Gently loosen edge; turn and cook other side until golden brown. Place between sheets of waxed paper.

Mix chicken, cheese and salsa and spoon mixture down center of crepes. Fold ends of crepes over chicken mixture; place folded sides down on greased cookie sheet. Bake at 350° for 15 minutes. Place avocado, sour cream, water, salt, pepper and garlic in blender container; cover and blend on high until smooth, about 1 minute. Pour into saucepan. Cook and stir over low heat until hot. Serve over crepes. Garnish with tomato and cheddar cheese. Serves 6.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

King Ranch Mexican Chicken

- 1 boiled or rotisserie chicken, deboned and cut into small pieces
- 1 can cream of celery soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can Rotel® diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 1 small can diced green chilies
- 1 16-oz. package soft corn tortillas
- 2 c. grated Mexican cheese

Combine chicken, soups, tomatoes and chilies and place in a 9x13-inch baking pan sprayed with nonstick spray. Cut tortillas into bite-size pieces and layer over chicken. Sprinkle cheese over top and bake at 350° for 20 to 30 minutes, or until cheese is bubbly. Let sit for a few minutes and serve.

Nancy Abbott Wilson, Traverse City

Crock Pot Picnic Pork Tacos



Submit your recipe! Contributors whose recipes we print in 2013 will be entered in a drawing to win a prize: Country Lines will pay their January 2014 electric bill (up to \$200)! The 2013 winner will be announced in the Jan. 2014 issue.

Thanks to all who send in recipes! Please send in **"No-Cook Meal"** recipes by **June 10** and **"Diabetic Favorites"** by **July 10**.

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

That Old Fridge or Freezer is Too Costly to Keep!

Recycle now to earn a \$30 rebate.

Do you have an old refrigerator or chest freezer taking up valuable space in your basement or garage? While you may not think much about these secondary appliances that are typically out of sight, refrigerators or freezers that are over 10 years old are most likely costing you hundreds of dollars per year to power.

You can eliminate unnecessary energy use and costs by recycling these old appliances with the help of Midwest Energy and the Energy Optimization (EO) Appliance Recycling program! *Earn a \$30 rebate* by contacting us when you are ready to turn in your old ones (rebate limited to two refrigerators or freezers per home).

What qualifies for a recycling rebate?

The appliance(s) must currently be in your home or garage and in working order. Sorry, but rounding up trashed or curbside refrigerators or freezers won't earn you rebates! A few other things to keep in mind:

erators or freezers won't earn you rebates! A few other things to keep in mind:

- To be eligible for pick-up and a rebate, the refrigerator or freezer must be a secondary unit.
- The refrigerator or freezer must be between 10 and 30 cubic feet.
- Side-by-side refrigerators count as one appliance for recycling.

How does it work?

1. Call **877-296-4319** to schedule your appliance pick-up between 9 a.m. and 6 p.m., Monday through Friday. Or, visit **michigan-energy.org** and click on "Appliance Recycling".
2. The refrigerator or freezer must be clean, empty, and defrosted by pick-up day.
3. Your appliance(s) must be plugged in and running on pick-up day.
4. Disconnect your appliance(s) from water lines prior to the pick-up crew's arrival.

5. Provide clear and safe access to remove your appliance(s).
6. Our service provider, JACO Environmental, will come to your home and haul your old appliance(s) away.
7. An adult must be present to sign off on the appliance(s).
8. Feel good knowing your old appliances are being recycled properly!
9. Best of all: enjoy your energy savings and extra spending cash!

Have any other old appliances lying around?

While we're at your home, we can also pick up outdated (yet functioning) air conditioning units or dehumidifiers for free recycling. Receive a *\$15 bonus rebate* per item!

Use an EO rebate as a valid excuse to finally get rid of these old appliances. And, if you have any questions about appliance recycling or residential, business or farm rebates, don't hesitate to give us a call. Saving energy and claiming rebates is easy with the Energy Optimization Program!

Get \$30 for your old refrigerator or freezer.

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

recycle it

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

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org **PHONE:** 877.296.4319



MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

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

STATE OF MICHIGAN

BEFORE THE MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

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NOTICE OF HEARING FOR THE CUSTOMERS OF MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE CASE NO. U-17309

- Midwest Energy Cooperative plans to file a Renewable Energy Plan in compliance with the “Clean, Renewable, and Energy Efficient Act” (2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001) and Michigan Public Service Commission Orders in Case No. U-15800, dated December 4, 2008 and Case No. U-17309, dated January 31, 2013.
- The information below describes how a person may participate in this case.
- You may call or write Midwest Energy Cooperative’s attorney, Mr. Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933, Phone: 517-374-9159 for a free copy of its application. Any person may review the application at Dykema’s offices or at the office of Midwest Energy Cooperative, 901 E. State Street, Cassopolis, MI 49031.
- The first public hearing in this matter will be held:

DATE: July 30, 2013 – This hearing will be a prehearing conference to set future hearing dates and decide other procedural matters.

TIME: 9:00 a.m.

PRESIDING OFFICER: Administrative Law Judge Mark E. Cummins

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 a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance.

The Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) will hold a public hearing to consider the May 13, 2013, application of Midwest Energy Cooperative (Midwest) to file a Renewable Energy Plan.

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 July 23, 2013. (Residential customers may file petitions to intervene using the traditional paper format.) The proof of service shall indicate service upon Midwest’s attorney, Shaun M. Johnson, at Dykema Gossett PLLC, 201 Townsend Street, Suite 900, Lansing, MI 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/her wish to make a statement of position.

A copy of Midwest’s request may be reviewed on the Commission’s website at <http://efile.mpsc.cis.state.mi.us/efile> and at the office of Dykema Gossett PLLC, or Midwest’s office. For more information on how to participate in a case, you may contact the Commission at the above address or by telephone at 517-241-6170.

Jurisdiction is pursuant to 1909 PA 106, as amended, MCL 460.551 et seq.; 1919 PA 419, as amended, MCL 460.51 et seq.; 1939 PA 3, as amended, MCL 460.1 et seq.; 1982 PA 304, as amended, MCL 460.6h et seq.; 1969 PA 306, as amended, MCL 24.201 et seq.; and the Commission’s Rules of Practice and Procedure, as amended, 1999 AC, R 460.17101 et seq.

Lansing, Michigan

Harvest Wind Farm's Output Down Slightly in 2012

The Harvest Wind Farm completed its fifth year of operation in 2012, generating 136,806 megawatt hours (MWh) of electricity. Total generation in 2012 was slightly lower compared to 2011 output of 142,819 MWh. Wolverine Power Cooperative, of Cadillac, is buying the total output of the wind farm's 32 turbines under a long-term contract and supplying that electricity to its members.

Weather conditions and wind speeds in the state's Thumb area, where the wind farm is located, drive the operation of the turbines. A minimum wind speed of eight miles per hour is needed to generate electricity at Harvest.

"This is the first year since Harvest began generating electricity that we've seen a reduction in annual output," says Tim Martin, manager of energy operations for Wolverine. "It's a direct reflection of weather conditions near Elkton where the turbines are located."

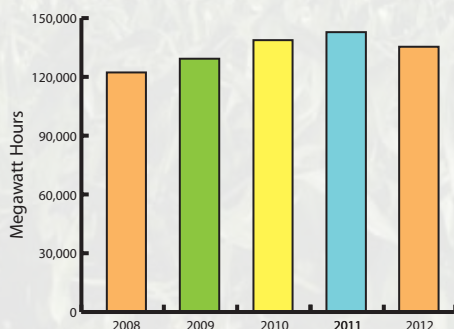
Wolverine and its electric co-op members rely on generation from the Harvest Wind Farm to meet the state's renewable energy requirements. Public Act 295 of 2008 requires Michigan electric providers to have 10 percent of their total power supply come from renewable resources by the end of 2015, and in years thereafter.

Wolverine's long-term commitment to purchase power from the Harvest Wind Farm, in addition to power it buys from a small hydro project, allows the cooperative and its members to meet the current requirements of Public Act 295.

"We committed to Harvest prior to the passing of Public Act 295 because we believed then and continue to believe today that renewable energy has a place in our power supply portfolio," Martin explains.

Harvest, the state's first commercial-scale wind farm, is owned and operated by Exelon Wind. Each turbine stands 393 feet tall—from its base to the tip of one of three blades—and is capable of generating 1.65 megawatts of electricity.

Electricity Generated Annually by the Harvest Wind Farm



Wind Energy Stats for Our State

Under Public Act 295, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) must issue an annual report on implementation of the state's renewable energy requirements. Highlights from the most recent report, completed in February 2013, include:

- Michigan had 978 megawatts (MW) of wind energy from 14 operating wind farms at year-end 2012.
- More than 800 MW of new wind capacity was added in 2012.
- Energy from renewable resources, including wind, is approximately 5 percent of Michigan's total power supply portfolio.
- Nearly \$1.8 billion has been invested in renewable energy in Michigan since the passage of Public Act 295.
- Electric providers in the state are on pace to meet renewable energy targets required by Public Act 295.

Visit michigan.gov/mpsc to view the MPSC report in its entirety.

Cut Through Sales Hype Before Replacing Windows

Q: *We need replacement windows for our home, but every salesman makes his sound like the best and most efficient. How do I choose among the various frame materials, styles and glass types?*

A: It can be extremely difficult to sort through all the sales and marketing hype to make the proper replacement window decision, and there are many absurd claims out there.

First, it's important to note that because windows are expensive, energy efficiency should not be the only reason to buy new ones. Other efforts will save more money, and you can visit EnergySavers.gov to find ways to make your existing windows more energy efficient. But if you truly need new windows, there are some other considerations.

Proper selection depends on the characteristics of the window, the specific house, and your lifestyle. What is best for your next door neighbor may not be best for you. For example, you may want a view of a particular outdoors area or springtime ventilation, whereas your neighbor may keep the blinds closed and use air-conditioning continuously.

The main criteria for selecting replacement windows are frame material, window style, and glass type. From the energy efficiency standpoint, the glass type and window style are more important than the frame material, which has a greater effect on functionality, durability, maintenance and appearance.

FRAME MATERIALS The most common frame materials for residential windows are vinyl, fiberglass, wood, and clad wood.

Vinyl is energy efficient, virtually maintenance free, and made to the precise dimensions of the window opening instead of having to shim out standard sizes.

To attain adequate rigidity, the vinyl frame extrusions have many internal webs and chambers that create natural insulation. Plus, the vinyl material itself is a poor heat conductor. For greater R-value, several vinyl window manufacturers inject expanding foam insulation inside the chambers as the frame is assembled.

Always look for sash frames that have welded corners for strength. Because the

outer window frame is screwed rigidly into the framing for the window opening, welded corners in it are not as important as with sash frames. If you select vinyl frames for large windows, especially in hot climates, they should have internal steel reinforcement. When vinyl gets hot in the sun, it loses strength and rigidity.

Fiberglass frames are extremely strong and can be painted any color to match interior or exterior house colors. Because the primary component is glass, these frames expand and contract with temperature changes at about the same rate as the glass panes to minimize stress. This characteristic is an advantage for dark frame colors exposed to the sun, which can create a substantial temperature range throughout the day and night. The strength of fiberglass frames is also an advantage for smaller windows because narrower frame cross-sections are acceptable. With other frame materials, a thicker frame can reduce the glass area too much.

Wood window frames have been around forever, and when properly maintained, have a very long life. Wood frames are also the most attractive, even if you choose to paint them. It's easier to cut more complex and sharp detail into wood frame surfaces.

The drawback of wood is some regular maintenance is required for appearance and energy efficiency.

Exterior vinyl- or aluminum-clad wood frames greatly reduce the maintenance requirements. The natural wood can still be



Source: WeatherShield

Double-hung windows have hidden latches that allow each sash to be tilted in for easy cleaning.

exposed on the indoor surface so they look like wood windows indoors. Some vinyl and fiberglass frames are also available with natural wood indoor cladding to provide the appearance of real wood frames.

STYLE The proper style of window depends primarily on the appearance and features you desire. For example, people often select double-hung windows because they can be tilted inward for easy cleaning from indoors.

Windows that close on a compression seal, such as casement and awning types, tend to offer the best long-term airtight seal. Casement types can also catch breezes and direct them into the house for natural ventilation.

GLASS Because glass is most of the window, the type you choose is the key to its energy efficiency. Double-pane glass with low-E (low-emissivity) coatings and inert gas in the gap between the panes is adequate for most climates. Triple-pane glass may make sense for severely cold climates.

The location of the low-E coating on the various pane surfaces, often more than one, affects whether the glass is better for winter or summer savings. You may want to select different glass options for different windows in your house.

Further reading on windows:

■ *Tips on style, including energy considerations:* thehousedesigners.com/articles/selecting-the-right-window.asp

■ *Shopping tips:* energy.gov/energysaver/articles/tips-windows

■ *Code requirements for new home construction and details on U-factor and SHGC:* energy.gov/energysaver/articles/energy-efficient-windows

■ *Window ratings from the National Fenestration Rating Council:* nfrc.org/WindowRatings/index.html and ratings label: nfrc.org/WindowRatings/The-NFRC-Label.html

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



Keep Safety in Mind With Do-It-Yourself Projects

If you are a homeowner, you know that there is always a project to complete around the house. Building a new deck, remodeling the basement, fixing the garage door, planting a tree...the list seems endless. But there's one item that needs to be at the top of your list, no matter the project, and that is electrical safety.

Safety tips to keep in mind when tackling DIY projects include:

- ▼ Take a few minutes to prepare. Make sure you have the right tools, and check cords for cracks or frayed insulation and proper connections.
- ▼ Take note of potential hazards in the work area. Be sure to look up and around you. Always be aware of the location of power lines, particularly when using long metal tools like ladders, pool skimmers and pruning poles; when installing rooftop antennas and satellite dishes; or doing roof repair work.
- ▼ Be especially careful when working near power lines attached to your



Photo: iStockphoto.com

Always Contact MISS DIG Before You Dig

MISS DIG System, Inc.

811

811

Know what's below. Call before you dig.

One easy call to MISS DIG at 811 gets your utility lines marked and helps prevent injury and expense.

Safe Digging Is No Accident:
Call (or click) Before You Dig.

Visit www.missdig.org for more information.

house. Keep equipment and yourself at least 10 feet from the lines. Never trim trees near power lines—leave that to the professionals. Never use water or blower extensions to clean gutters near electric lines. Contact a professional maintenance contractor.

▼ Use only extension cords that are rated for outdoor use when working outside. Keep your work area tidy and do not allow power cords to tangle.

▼ Use heavy duty, three-prong extension cords for tools with three-prong plugs. Never remove or bend back the third prong on extension cords. It is a safety feature designed to reduce electrocution or shock risks.

▼ If your projects include digging, like building a deck or planting a tree, call 811 to have utility lines marked before you begin. Never assume the location or depth of underground utility lines. This service is free, prevents the inconvenience of having utilities interrupted, and can help you avoid serious injury.

▼ Electricity + water = danger. If it is raining or the ground is wet, do not use electric power or yard tools. Never use electrical appliances or touch circuit breakers or fuses when you are wet or standing in water. Keep electric equipment at least 10 feet from wet areas.

▼ Make sure outdoor outlets are equipped with ground fault circuit interrupters (GFCIs). If your outdoor outlets do not have them, use a portable GFCI. It is also a good idea to have GFCIs professionally installed in wet areas of the home—such as kitchen, bath and laundry.

For more tips on staying safe around electricity while you finish your projects, visit SafeElectricity.org.



Need a New Water Heater?

Purchasing a new appliance can be an overwhelming proposition. Which brand is best? What features do I need? What will this do to my energy bills?

When it comes to your next water heater purchase, Midwest Energy Cooperative wants to take the confusion out of your hands.

We are pleased to offer a program that will put a 50-gallon, high efficiency water heater in your home with only \$100 out of your pocket. Comparable units are \$400 and above at most hardware stores and retail outlets.

The GE High Efficiency Residential Electric Water Heater offers a .94 efficiency rating. The unit comes with a full one-year in-home warranty through Home Depot, and a six-year limited warranty on tank and functional parts. It features double 4,500-watt heating elements and a factory-installed temperature and pressure relief valve. A special porcelain lining provides tank protection.

If you are a co-op member and homeowner who uses a minimum of 400 kilowatt-hours monthly, you can now purchase this high efficiency water heater for only \$100 out of pocket when you participate in our load management program. Load management allows us to remotely control the electricity

to your water heater. As a utility we have periods of peak usage during which customers are using a lot of power at the same time. Because energy supply charges from our power suppliers are based on monthly peak demand, all co-op members ultimately benefit when we can “reduce peak.” We then pass those savings back to those participating in the load management program in the form

If you participate in our Load Management program, you may purchase a high-efficiency water heater for only \$100 out-of-pocket.

of a credit on their electric bill.

With this program, your \$4 monthly water heater load management credit will be applied to the cost of your water heater for 66 months. After that time, you will receive the full monthly credit under the terms of the load management program. Essentially, you pay only \$100 out-of-pocket for a brand new high-efficiency water heater, and begin pocketing a load management credit after completion of the term.

Water heater control does not exceed five hours a day, and occurs predominately between the hours of 3–9 p.m. when the system is at its peak. The hot water stored within your insulated tank will remain hot for a long time.

Water heaters are available for pick-up from 8 a.m.–5 p.m. in the Cassopolis and Adrian offices, and from 8 a.m.–1 p.m. and 1:30–4 p.m. in Paw Paw. For more information about this program or to see if you qualify, please call the cooperative at 800-492-5989, or visit one of our offices.

Rebates Also Available

The water heater load management offer, combined with the HVAC Program offered through Midwest Energy Cooperative's Energy Optimization Program, could put a new water heater in your home for only \$50!

The HVAC Program is designed to encourage residential members to install energy-efficient heating, cooling and water heating equipment. Co-op members are eligible for a \$50 rebate in the form of a bill credit when they replace an existing electric water heater with a high efficiency (.93 or greater) electric water heater. Members must live in a single family dwelling in Michigan.

Members do not have to participate in the load management program to qualify for the HVAC Program offer.

To claim the rebate, members must complete an incentive claim form and submit it with all required documentation. The claim form submitted must be for equipment purchased on or after Jan. 1, 2013. Claim forms are available at our website at TeamMidwest.com or by calling the office at 800-492-5989. Rebate incentives are subject to change and availability.

For the Love of Wood

We bought a table and two chairs a few months ago. They're counter-height and sit in a bay window where we can catch the southern sun on a bright winter day. The spot is also great for coffee and a book, lunch or an evening beer. The warm wood tones add luster to the room.

It's solid furniture, made from real cherry—not fiber board and veneer. One look and you know it was made by someone who loves wood.

It was made in that old furniture capital of America: Michigan. The pieces are not antiques that were made in long-ago Grand Rapids. They were made a few months ago in the heart of Michigan's Thumb.

The L. J. Gascho Furniture Company has been making furniture since 1986, after a young Lyle Gascho returned to the family farm near Pigeon and remodeled the shed and chicken house into a wood shop. He learned woodworking in a small furniture shop in northern Indiana, where he apprenticed with Amish and Mennonite craftsmen. His company is now made up of 22 small Amish and Mennonite wood shops located in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana and Michigan. All of these pieces are now delivered to the company complex on the Gascho farm for finishing. The furniture is sold in stores in the Midwest and a few Eastern states (ljgaschofurniture.com).

This furniture caught my eye when we were in an Art Van Furniture store. I was captivated by its simplicity, grace and quality. When I found out where it was made, I was sold. We're trying to buy American-made products, and though it seems to be getting a little easier, it still takes effort to find them.

As our state comes back from the economic edge, we seem to be chasing the newest thing to create jobs for the future. Technology is cool, and it's helped our auto industry return to competitiveness

with the rest of world, but it's not a panacea, and not for everyone. Some of the start-up businesses regularly featured in this magazine's "Made in Michigan" series depend on technology, but most still rely on good, old-fashioned creativity and handcrafting. We ought to be fostering that kind of business development, too. Jobs that are attracted by incentives can leave the same way. Growing our own, like Gascho's, sometimes called "economic gardening," makes sense. While we're at it, we should be giving our kids the chance in a school curriculum—to explore manual skills that also lead to meaningful work.

Before Michigan became known for cars, it was the furniture state. Once upon a time, Grand Rapids was the Silicon Valley of the craft era, a "Sawdust Valley" of sorts. After the Civil War, furniture-making became a booming business that continued to be a big part of our economy for the next century. Michigan-made furniture was sold and treasured all over the world. Furniture designers and manufacturers made Grand Rapids their headquarters, with associations of all kinds started to protect and grow the industry. A good bit of it remains, but now it centers on office furniture, since manufacturing in southeastern states, and then foreign imports, have chipped away at the home furnishings business.

Like many retired men, my dad dabbled in wood after he retired. He set up a woodworking shop next to the garage and turned out a series of shelves, quilt racks, picture frames and tables. We're happy to have a few of those pieces scattered around our house.

My own woodworking skills are still undeveloped and likely to remain so.



Fine wood furniture warms our homes and continues to play a role in Michigan's economy.

Maybe that's why I'm drawn to heirloom furniture.

Still, I have one connection to our state's wooden past. For a blessedly brief time in the summer before my junior year of high school, a friend's father hired me and two friends to peel pulp. Eino laughed as we swatted mosquitos and no-see-ums that buzzed us incessantly, drawn by our sweat. Eino, a big, hearty Finn, was immune to the bugs. He dropped the poplar ("popple" in Yooper talk) trees with a chainsaw, cut them into 10-foot lengths, and taught us how to use a bark spud to skin the sinewy bark from the slippery white wood, destined for local paper mills.

It was hot, dirty work. We got so thirsty and hungry that we finished our water and food long before we should have. We were paid 10 cents a length, or "stick." Insect repellents being useless, our bodies were masses of bug bites. We lasted about two weeks, but the memory lasted a lifetime. I still itch and scratch when I see poplar trees, and I hear Eino laughing.

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





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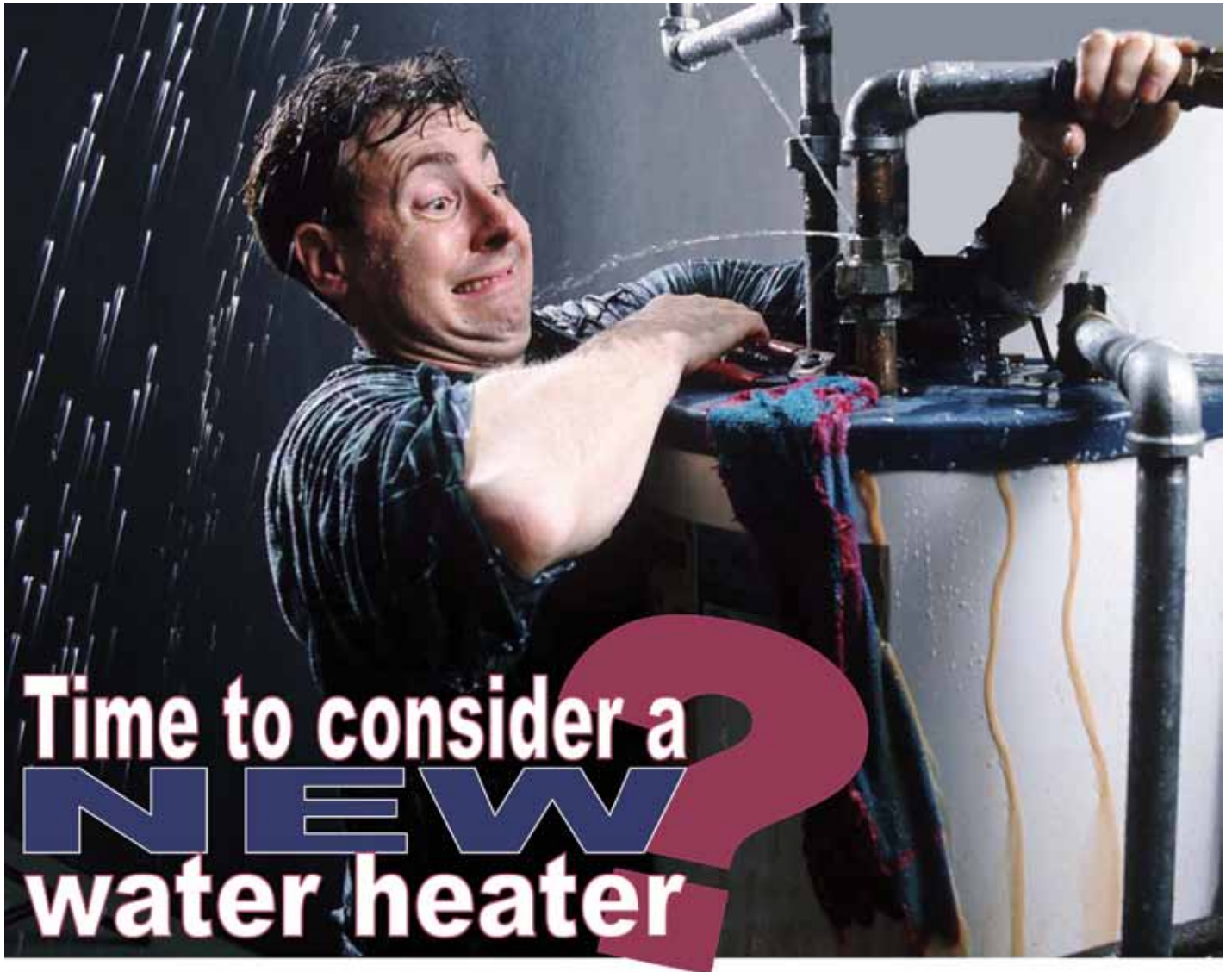


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