

# Michigan COUNTRY LINES

## Ice Storm Blasts Service Area







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# Michigan

## COUNTRY LINES

### IN THIS ISSUE

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Association officers are Ken Swope, Midwest Energy, chairman; Robert Schallip, Cloverland, 1st vice chairman; Jon Zickert, Cherryland, 2nd vice chairman; Eric Baker, Wolverine Power, secretary-treasurer; and Tony Anderson, Cherryland, 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 4 for contact information.



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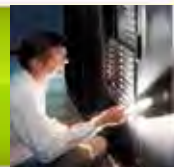
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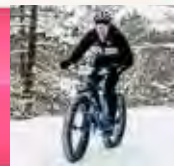
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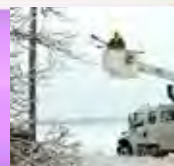
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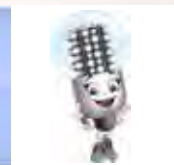
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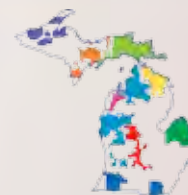
## READERS' PAGE Meet LED Lucy, Low-income Energy Assistance, Help with Affordable Health Care Law



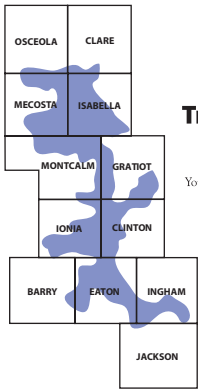
### ON THE COVER

Get used to seeing more people biking through the snow. Snowbiking is gaining popularity in Michigan for commuting, racing and riding, and resorts offering rentals and trails include those served by electric co-ops.

Photo Courtesy - Einstein Cycles, Traverse City, [einsteincycles.com](http://einsteincycles.com)



Michigan's Electric  
Cooperatives  
[countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)



## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

### Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue

Blanchard MI 49310

Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

### Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue

Portland, MI 48875

Open 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Friday

### Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7556 or 1-800-562-8232

### Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

### Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333

(24 hours for emergency calls)

### Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

### High Speed Internet

1-800-668-8413

[homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org)

E-mail: [tricoenergy@homeworks.org](mailto:tricoenergy@homeworks.org)

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## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

### District 1 — Philip Conklin

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1190 E. M-46 Hwy., Edmore, MI 48829

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Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC

## MANAGER'S MESSAGE

# Helping Some Shouldn't Be a Burden to the Rest



Helping the less fortunate among us is our responsibility, and our duty, as human beings.

Sadly, the Michigan Legislature tried to find a way to make it our responsibility as consumers of electricity, and in 2013 their hurried attempt at a law created a bigger mess than they were trying to fix.

After several years of discussion, the Legislature developed a funding plan to be paid by the state's electric consumers rather than from everyone's tax dollars. At the last moment, they added a provision to make it optional for utilities, like HomeWorks, to participate. The bill was signed into law July 1 and handed over to the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) for implementation.

On July 11, we were notified of the MPSC's plan to put a surcharge of about \$1 on the monthly electric bill for each meter. We had until July 24 to decide to opt in or opt out.

Members of our staff were assured, several times by several different people, that our members would still receive low-income energy assistance this winter, whether we opted in or not. However, because we did not opt in, we are not allowed to disconnect any meter for non-payment during the winter months.

Your board of directors, at their July meeting, looked at how much this surcharge would cost our members over a year. Considering the costs and benefits, and the fact that this was done in such a short time that we had no chance to seek member input, the board chose not to participate this year, and to re-evaluate for next year at an open member meeting.

Just before Christmas, the state decided that because we can't remove the meter, our low-income members are not facing an

emergency situation and therefore don't qualify for assistance until after April 15, when funds may or may not still be available. This is a 180-degree change in the policy that we were given in July.

This means two things:

- those members will face months of worry over increasing past-due balances, and the possibility of funds not being available in the spring; and

- all of our other members will be responsible for the cost of bills that go unpaid, in the form of write-offs.

We don't think this is fair, and we're working with our statewide association to get some kind of policy change to make sure our members are not punished for the rushed start to this year's assistance program. Meanwhile, we are working with our low-income members to make the payments they can afford. And the Tri-County Electric People Fund has received a donation they will use this winter to provide assistance with energy bills.

Our customer service representatives will refer eligible members to the People Fund, as well as to the 2-1-1 service's list of other area agencies that may be able to help.

There are no easy answers to helping our low-income neighbors, and we remain disappointed with the state's response, starting with the Legislature's rushed bill. However, we are working on solutions that will be fair to all our members. If you have suggestions, we hope you'll share them with us at or before the open member meeting on April 28.

Mark Kappler  
General Manager



Join the conversation at  
[facebook.com/HomeWorks.org](https://facebook.com/HomeWorks.org)

# Community Solar Leases Now Available

**S**olar panels are available for lease now at the HomeWorks Community Solar Garden, which is under construction at our Portland office on east Grand River Avenue.

Members can sign up for one or more Phase I panels on a 25-year lease, for a net cost of \$500 each after instant rebates from Michigan Energy Optimization and Touchstone Energy.

In exchange for leasing a 270-watt panel, the leasing member will receive a monthly credit on their energy bill for their share of the project's average monthly production, at the co-op's prior-year wholesale rate. Payback is estimated at 18 to 20 years at current electric costs.

HomeWorks Tri-County's Community Solar Garden is engineered and installed by Cascade Renewable Energy of Grand Rapids, which has done a number of similar projects, including the solar array at the State of Michigan Welcome Center near Clare.

One key factor for us in choosing a partner was using American-made products where possible. The panels in our Community Solar Garden are assembled in California, and the racks they're attached to are built in New Mexico.

Members will have access to a website that charts real-time power production from the Solar Garden. To see an example site, in this case the Clare Welcome Center, visit [HomeWorks.org](http://HomeWorks.org) and click on the Energy Optimization tab, then visit our Solar Garden page.



## Information Meetings on Solar Garden Set for March

Want to learn more about your electric co-op's Community Solar Garden? Reserve a space now at one of our two informational meetings: March 18 at Portland, or March 19 at Blanchard.

We'll start with a light supper at 6 p.m., then have presentations and Q&A with staff from HomeWorks and Cascade Renewable Energy. To reserve space, call Nick Rusnell at 517-647-1247; visit [HomeWorks.org](http://HomeWorks.org); or email [Solar@HomeWorks.org](mailto:Solar@HomeWorks.org).

# Swiler Seeks Re-election to Board, District 4 Seat Open

**W**ayne Swiler of Lake Odessa has announced his intention to seek re-election to HomeWorks Tri-County Electric's board of directors this year. Swiler represents District 2, which includes co-op members in Barry and Ionia counties.

Meanwhile, Laverne Hansen of Edmore, who has served District 4 (most of Montcalm County) for over 25 years, says he will not be a candidate in 2014.

The nominating committee in each district consists of the district's officers (listed



Wayne Swiler



Laverne Hansen

on this page), elected by members at the district meeting in May. Each committee is required by the bylaws to nominate at least

one candidate on or before *March 15*.

Candidates may also be nominated with a petition signed by at least 25 members from within the district. Petitions must be turned in by April 5.

Names of nominees will be posted at the Cooperative's offices by *April 10*.

## Interested in Seeking a Board Seat?

If you're interested in running for a HomeWorks board seat yourself, Article VII, Section 2 of the cooperative's bylaws states you must be an individual member of the cooperative in good standing, at least 21 years old, residing in the district which you are to represent, and a U.S. citizen.

To become or remain a director, the bylaws continue, the candidate must "have the capacity to enter into legally binding contracts;" must comply with standards of conduct as laid out in the bylaws; and must meet all reasonable conflict of interest qualifications found in Article VII, Section 3.

Also, within the 10 years immediately prior

to becoming a director, a candidate shall not have been convicted of or pled guilty to a felony, or a misdemeanor crime involving issues of moral character.

For a copy of the bylaws, please visit our website at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org).

If you meet these qualifications and would like to be nominated, contact your district nominating committee, listed on this page, or call HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 517-647-1211 for a nominating petition.

Information about all candidates and district meeting dates, along with an absentee ballot request form, will be published in the May issue of *Country Lines*.

## Who makes up the district nominating committees?

Nominating committees are the district officers, elected by members at the previous year's district meeting.

### District 2: Barry and Ionia counties

Wilma Bailey, *Chair*

12431 Shilton, Lake Odessa, MI 48849, 517-566-8242

Email: [gramskids32003@yahoo.com](mailto:gramskids32003@yahoo.com)  
William Nichols (Portland), *Vice Chair*  
Kristine Ceasar (Portland), *Secretary*

### District 4: Montcalm county, except Bloomer, Crystal, and Evergreen townships

Lisa Johnson, *Chair*

12423 Cutler, Lakeview, MI 48850  
989-352-7593

Email: [lisainamble@gmail.com](mailto:lisainamble@gmail.com)  
Kent Schultz (Mt. Pleasant), *Vice Chair*  
Elaine Rossman (Lakeview), *Secretary*



# Sweet Stuff



Cookies, pies, muffins, cakes, brownies, and more: Try these heart-warming, homemade recipes, and turn your kitchen into a bakery.

## Layered Pumpkin Loaf

1 c. canned pumpkin  
1 c. plus 2 T. granulated sugar, divided  
½ c. packed brown sugar  
4 egg whites, divided  
½ c. low fat buttermilk  
¼ c. canola oil  
2 c. all-purpose flour  
2 ½ t. baking powder  
½ t. baking soda  
2 t. pumpkin pie spice  
1 t. cinnamon  
¼ t. salt (optional)  
1 8-oz. pkg. Neufchatel cream cheese  
(1/3 reduced fat), softened  
¼ c. pepitas, chopped (optional)

In a large bowl, stir pumpkin, 1 c. granulated sugar, brown sugar, 3 egg whites, buttermilk and oil, until combined. In a separate bowl, whisk together flour, baking powder, baking soda, spices and salt.

Add to pumpkin mixture and fold gently just until moistened. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, remaining granulated sugar and remaining egg white until well blended. Spoon half the pumpkin batter into a 9x5-inch loaf pan sprayed with cooking spray. Spread the cream cheese mixture in a layer over that batter. Top cream cheese layer with remaining pumpkin batter. Spread the top pumpkin layer a little bit with a silicone spatula, but it is okay if a little cream cheese is still visible. Sprinkle the top layer with chopped pepitas, if desired. It helps to gently pat the pepitas into the batter. Bake at 350° for 60-65 minutes, or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean. Loosen bread from sides of pan; cool in pan for 10 minutes. Remove from pan to wire rack; cool completely. Yields 1 9x5 loaf (about 16 servings).

*Amy Breimayer, Westphalia*

Photography by: 831 Creative

**Submit your recipe!** Thanks to all who send in recipes! Please send in your favorite "Southern" recipes by **April 10** and "Picnic" recipes by **May 10**.

Mail (handwritten or typed on one side, please) to: Country Lines Recipes, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864; or email [recipes@countrylines.com](mailto:recipes@countrylines.com).

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2014 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2015 electric bill (up to \$200)!

## ◀ Peanut Butter Whirls

1 c. shortening  
1 c. brown sugar  
1 c. white sugar  
1 c. peanut butter  
2 eggs  
2 t. vanilla  
1 t. salt  
1 t. baking soda  
2 ½ c. flour  
4 T. milk  
12 oz. chocolate chips, melted

Cream shortening, sugar, peanut butter, eggs and vanilla. Add sifted dry ingredients alternately with milk. Roll out cookie dough to rectangle 1/4 inch thick. Spread cooled chocolate on dough; roll dough in jelly roll fashion and chill one-half hour. Slice with sharp knife into thick slices – about 1/8 inch thick. Place on ungreased baking sheet. Bake at 350° for 8-10 minutes. Yields 5-6 dozen. This is an oldie but goodie from my mom's cookbook.

*Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake*

## Pumpkin Pie Cake

### Crust:

1 pkg. yellow cake mix, remove 1 c.  
½ c. melted butter  
1 egg

### Filling:

1 lg. can pumpkin  
1/2 t. nutmeg  
1/2 t. ginger  
2 t. cinnamon  
1 c. light brown sugar  
4 eggs  
1 c. whole milk

### Topping:

1 c. cake mix  
1/2 c. softened butter  
1 c. sugar

Combine crust ingredients and pat into bottom of a 13x9 pan. Pour filling over crust. Mix topping ingredients together and sprinkle over filling. Sprinkle with chopped nuts. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

*Virginia Hosmer, Plymouth*



Visit recipe editor Christin McKamey's website, **veggiechick.com**, for healthy, vegetarian recipes and info!

# Tightening the Net

Electric co-ops innovate to secure their members' digital data.

**A**midst continuing cyber threats from crafty computer hackers, electric co-ops are mounting sturdy defenses to safeguard their members' digital data and ensure reliable power delivery.

One way co-ops are bulking up cyber security is with tools from the Cooperative Research Network (CRN), the research arm of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA). CRN's *"Guide to Developing a Risk Mitigation and Cyber Security Plan,"* released in 2011 with funding from the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE), helps utilities of all types develop a process to shore up cyber defenses.

Three innovations promise to these security efforts: pattern recognition software, an update of CRN's revolutionary *Guide*, and securing data.

## Cyber Cooperation

Most home and business computer networks use a firewall—a virtual barrier or hardware—to protect linked computers from hackers, viruses and other virtual invaders. Utilities also use firewalls, but sophisticated cyber threats make firewalls an aging technology.

"Firewalls are less able to provide the level of security we require," shares CRN Program Manager Maurice Martin. "We want to make sure that our co-ops have the tools they need to work securely."

To meet the challenge, CRN is developing a way to replace firewalls with a security tool that monitors computer network traffic by memorizing the normal pattern of operation. When the system detects an abnormal pattern (a possible intrusion), it sounds an alarm.

A DOE grant of \$3.6 million, with an additional \$1.1 million from CRN and partner Honeywell Corp., funds the research. Allies such as Pacific Northwest National Laboratories, Carnegie Mellon University, and Cigital Inc. will work with CRN to develop the cyber security tool.

"We'll combine high-level functionality with an easy-to-use platform," predicts Craig Miller, chief CRN scientist. "The system will simplify cyber security management for small utilities with limited resources." All but one of Michigan's nine electric distribution co-ops

falls into the "small utility" category. The largest has over 101,000 members, and the smallest from about 4,000; the others range from 10,000 to 33,000.

## Evolving Guidance

The CRN *Guide*, and an accompanying template, is being used

by utilities of all sizes—across America and in countries such as India and Italy—to craft cyber-security plans. The cooperatively-developed resources are free to any utility and have been downloaded over 8,000 times.

"The content and ideas were important to share," explains Martin. The *Guide* and tools were developed as part of a \$68 million DOE grant three years ago.

But responding to emerging cyber threats is not a one-time effort. It requires constant education, awareness and vigilance. New resources—products, services and educational tools—are on the way. Expected early this year, an updated *Guide* will work in harmony with new DOE cyber security initiatives. The DOE also has a Computational Sciences Center that performs world-class computational science research—a helpful tool for calculating cyber security risks and creating tools to thwart hackers.

## Securing Data

Threats to security—online and to the power grid—are real. Hackers take pride in undermining computer systems and finding a system's Achilles' heel. But thanks to innovative "cloud" computing, utilities are discovering ways of working together to strengthen co-op security and upgrade IT architecture.



Photo - Pacific Northwest National Laboratory

Electric co-ops have partners and allies in the war on cyber security, including researchers like those at the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory (PNNL). In 2013, these PNNL researchers took part in a national cyber security drill.

"NRECA turned to the Science Applications International Corp. (SAIC) for its solid understanding of the smart grid marketplace and how new technologies can be used to benefit the consumer member at the end of the line," explains Martin.

That project aims to shore up technologies that capture, store and secure information, and will benefit both co-ops and their members. The SAIC is also producing a series of reports to help utilities fully implement smart grid technology and evaluate IT developments (cloud computing, new databases, and more) with an eye toward how such developments can support the co-ops and solve their needs. The goal is for SAIC to map out an "IT architecture" to explain how the tools work to maximize reliability, customer service, and cyber security.

All utilities are vulnerable to digital invasions, but a continually evolving set of cyber security resources and innovations should help keep co-ops and their members a step ahead of the "bad guys."

Forget calculators. The U.S. Department of Energy has a Computational Sciences Center that performs world-class computational science research—a helpful tool when calculating cyber security risks and creating tools to thwart would-be hackers.



# News and Notes from HomeWorks Tri-County Electric

## Your Board in Action

### Meeting at Portland Dec. 16, your board of directors:

- Discussed issues that have arisen regarding the state's low-income energy assistance program and utilities that in July opted out of the 99-cent monthly surcharge.
- Reviewed a long list of positive achievements in 2013.
- Authorized staff to sign a one-year note for up to \$5 million with Wolverine Power Cooperative, at a favorable interest rate and to be repaid by Dec. 31, 2014.
- Heard an update on Michigan Electric Cooperative Association activities from CEO Craig Borr.
- Reviewed the December safety report, listing employee training as well as employee and public incidents.

• Read and approved "Board Policy 112 – Strategic Planning," as read, and "Board Policy 113 – Member Access and Use of Information and Data" with a new section regarding elections.

• Learned there were 108 new members in November.

### Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Board Meetings

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

## Has Your Phone Number Changed? Please Update!

It's a good idea to periodically update your telephone number and other account information with HomeWorks Tri-County.

Accurate account information is important to help you report an outage easily and accurately, or to receive a call-back when power is restored. It also helps us reach you quickly if there is a service or safety issue at your location.

Just call 1-800-562-8232 during regular business hours and review your information with a member service representative.



**YOU ARE A LEADER.** In the classroom, on the team, and in your community, you guide and inspire others to contribute their best efforts. Join other young leaders like you from throughout Michigan at the **YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT (YLS)**, presented by Michigan's electric cooperatives. This **FREE**, high-energy experience will help you develop your leadership habits, explore career opportunities in the electric industry, and learn how to be actively involved in the democratic process. You are a leader. **YOU ARE THE FUTURE.**



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## Christmas Ice Storm Blasts Service Area

**A** late-December ice storm that impacted over 500,000 people across southern Michigan also took its toll on HomeWorks Tri-County Electric's service area. At peak, we estimate that over 12,000 co-op members were out of power.

Line crews from Blanchard and mutual aid crews from Cherryland Electric, Great Lakes Energy, Midwest Energy, and Wolverine Power cooperatives, along with four extra tree crews, were called in to help on Sunday, Dec. 22.

Over the next five days, they worked as "first responders," clear-

ing trees and debris from roads to reach downed lines and broken poles. While we hoped to get all members restored by Wednesday, in time for Christmas, the scope of the damage slowed our progress.

By late Thursday, Dec. 26, we had restored power to all but a few hundred members who needed extensive repairs on one or both sides of their service.

"The safety of our team was kept at the forefront," said General Manager Mark Kappler. "Good communication with so many crews in such a condensed space was critical and well handled by our dispatchers." He added that falling ice was a particular hazard for this storm, and in fact caused the most serious injury during the effort (a tree crew member was hit in the face by a chunk of ice.)

"The support from our community was heartwarming," Kappler said. Office employees and family members brought in food and delivered it to the field crews for early breakfasts, box lunches, and late suppers. Co-op members brought hot coffee and cocoa to crews, and local businesses extended their hours of operation to accommodate the co-op's work force. Hundreds of co-op members also posted words of praise and encouragement on Facebook ([facebook.com/HomeWorks.org](https://www.facebook.com/HomeWorks.org)).



**Photos – Top left:** A crew works in the Eagle area. *Photo provided by member Paula VanderMoere via Facebook.*

**Top right:** The sun going down at Brearley Dairy Farm on Christmas Eve. *Photo – Chris Reed*

**Left:** We quadrupled our Portland work force with mutual aid crews from four other co-ops; here, they gather for breakfast before heading out to another long day in the cold. *Photo – Chris Reed*

**Cover photo:** Lineworkers Ryan Smith and Kyle Balderson work to reconnect a line during the ice storm. *Photo - Jennifer Vallier*



# Fat Tire Biking is a New Winter Ride

**G**et used to seeing more of something unusual this winter – people biking through the snow.

Whether you dub them “fat tire bikes” or “snow bikes,” the popularity of this new winter sport is gaining across Michigan for commuting, racing or just ridin’.

Fat tire bikes first became popular in Alaska for commuting and recreational use on their many trails and ski pathways. They started showing up in the Lower 48 about three years ago, and have blossomed in popularity over the last few winters.



Photo - Einstein Cycles

Navigating the woods on 4-inch fat tires.

These bikes sell new from around \$1,700 to \$3,000 and typically run on fat tires that are 4 inches wide. The tires use about 8 PSI or less of air pressure for on-snow use, leaving little print on a hard, groomed surface.

Crystal Mountain (Thompsonville), Timber Ridge Nordic Center (Traverse City), and Boyne Highlands (Harbor Springs) are all offering rentals and groomed trails this winter.

Crystal has about 10 groomed miles of both cross-country and single-track trails for fat tire bikes. Renting for about \$10 an hour, you can ride them on portions of the cross-country trail until 10 p.m. nightly since it is lit for night skiing.

At Timber Ridge, Einstein Cycles is handling rentals (about \$25, including a trail pass), and there’s about 10 kilometers of groomed trail.

The Highlands offers a five-mile groomed loop. A daily trail pass is \$5, and rentals start at \$30 for two hours.

“We found them to be very popular last year at Crystal Mountain, our first winter,” says Chris Remy, who oversees the resort’s program. “We often had a waiting list and have added more bikes for this winter, and more sizes.”

Trails aren’t the only place you’ll see fat tire bikes, however. Jason Lowetz, owner of Einstein Cycles, sees a market for those dedicated commuters who prefer a bike over a vehicle. “I’m seeing a lot more people using them to commute around town and work during winter,” he explains. “It’s the safest bike you can ride this time of year and allows cyclists to commute year-round. The stability of the bike makes it a good choice.”

Traverse City resident Jason Whittaker agrees.

Photo - Marquette Photo





Photo - Crystal Mountain Resort

## Places To Ride On Fat Tires

### Timber Ridge Campground & Nordic Center

Traverse City • 877-978-3866  
timberridgeresort.net

### Crystal Mountain Resort

Thompsonville • 800-968-4676  
crystalmountain.com

### Noquemanon Trail Network

Marquette • 906-235-6861  
noquetrails.org

### Boyne Highlands

Harbor Springs • 231.526.3000  
boyne.com

Among others, Crystal Mountain (above), Boyne Highlands, and Timber Ridge offer fat tire biking this winter. These resorts also get electric service from member-owned co-ops. Boyne is served by Great Lakes Energy and Crystal and Timber Ridge by Cherryland Electric.

“We’re a one car family with a 20-month-old son. My wife needs the car at home, and the fat-tired bike allows me to safely ride through the snow and slush on the TART (Traverse Area Recreational Trail) to get to work,” he says. “Before they came along I couldn’t ride the trail, which isn’t cleared in the winter. I had to ride my mountain bike on roadways, which weren’t that safe. I also ride on the VASA Pathway on Fridays for fun.”

TART Trails, which spearheads VASA Pathway grooming, is asking riders to buy a \$25 grooming badge. Fridays are set aside as “Fat Tire Friday,” when cyclists and skiers mix on the 25-kilometer trail, and bikes are allowed on TART’s Leelanau Peninsula, from Traverse City up to Suttons Bay, anytime.

There’s a similar trend in the U.P., around Marquette. “We’re seeing more commuter and trail use in our area over the last few years,” notes Nicole Dewald, Noquemanon Trail Network director. “We plan to groom over 20 miles of single track this winter, and ask riders to support the project by purchasing a ‘Support the Groom’ card.”

Other U.P. places to ride include the Keweenaw Peninsula, and Michigan Tech has 15 kilometers of groomed ski

trail and ungroomed single-track where bikes are permitted, and Swedetown Trails permits them after 6 p.m. on Tuesdays. Ishpeming’s Al Qual Recreation Area ski trails also permit them anytime. A day pass is required for all three locations.

For racing, Einstein Cycle has organized a Northern Michigan Fat Bike Series with three races. Fat Chance was at Crystal Mountain in January; King VASA is at Timber Ridge, Feb. 8; and Fat Camp, Timber Ridge, March 1. Fun Promotions

in Grand Rapids has also organized races, with the next at Addison Oaks, Feb. 8; Shore Acres in Saugatuck, Feb. 16; and Pando Winter Sports Park, March 2. Pando also offers Fat Tuesday, a race every Tuesday night through February.

Another Traverse area fat tire rider, Eric Pollard, says, “Riding on snow has been a great alternative to my other winter love, Nordic skiing. Being able to hop on a snow bike is a great way to mix up winter activities and keep it interesting.” Give it a try?



Photo - Marquette Photo

For competition, practical use, or just for fun, fat tire biking can be found around Michigan.

## Pay Your Bill 24/7



### By Internet\*:

- ◆ Go to [homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html](http://homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html)
- ◆ Key in Amount to Pay
- ◆ Select "Pay Now"
- ◆ Select your Payment Option
- ◆ Select "Make Payment"
- ◆ Key in Payment Information
- ◆ Select "Continue"
- ◆ Wait for Payment Confirmation  
(Note your confirmation number)

► Average time: 1 minute, 50 seconds



### By Phone:

- ◆ Dial 1-877-999-3395
- ◆ Select "Make Payment" Option
- ◆ Key in Account Number, followed by #
- ◆ Listen to your Current Balance
- ◆ Key in Amount to Pay
- ◆ Key in Payment Information
- ◆ Wait for Payment Confirmation  
(Note your confirmation number)

► Average time: 2 minutes, 45 seconds



\*Smarthub is your online and mobile gateway to managing your HomeWorks account. The mobile app is available through Google Play or iTunes.

## People Fund Helps Area Families

You helped families with housing needs and medical bills this month through your contributions to Operation Round Up. Your spare change from rounding up your energy bill makes People Fund grants possible.

Meeting Dec. 19, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made six grants totaling \$5,861.21, including:

- \$2,000 to Lakeview Ministerial Association in Lakeview for food pantry items;
- \$1,000 to St. Michael Conference SVDP in Grand Ledge for housing and utility assistance;
- \$500 to a Mecosta County family to help with medical expenses;
- \$1,069 to an Isabella County family to help with medical expenses;
- \$392 to an Isabella County family to help with utility expenses; and
- \$900 to a Montcalm County family for rent assistance.

### How To Apply For a Grant

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

**Note:** Applications must be received by March 3 for the March 12 board meeting; and by April 14 for the April 23 meeting.

### Use these codes for quick access to HomeWorks.org



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# Take the plunge



## Dive in to savings in 2014

Looking for ways to improve your business's bottom line in the New Year? With increased incentives and a number of **new rebates from the Energy Optimization program**, saving energy – and reducing the costs associated with it – is easier than ever. Check out program updates online or contact us today to learn how we can help.

**ENERGY TIP:** Include energy efficiency upgrades in your planning for 2014. This smart investment will provide your business with energy savings throughout 2014 and beyond!

ONLINE: [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) PHONE: 877.296.4319



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





Presque Isle Power Plant

## Wolverine Ends Generation Projects

**W**olverine Power Cooperative recently announced that it is ending the development of two generation projects in northern Michigan.

Construction of a 600-megawatt (MW) power plant and a wind turbine farm near Rogers City was proposed by Wolverine in 2006. An air quality permit was approved in June 2011 for the proposed Wolverine Clean Energy Venture power plant, but the co-op significantly scaled back development of the project in late 2011 with the passing of new emissions rules for new plant construction.

"I am very proud of our efforts on the Wolverine Clean Energy Venture," said Eric Baker, Wolverine's president/CEO. "The project team worked diligently to develop a proposed state-of-the-art power plant to serve co-op members efficiently and cost-effectively."

Wolverine has also brought its joint venture with We Energies (of Milwaukee, WI) at the Presque Isle Power Plant in Marquette to a close. The companies had proposed joint ownership of the plant in January 2012 in exchange for Wolverine's investment in an air quality control system.

"We're disappointed to end the joint venture with We Energies, yet that has become the best option for both parties," Baker explained. "We believe this joint venture would have brought economic and environmental benefits for the region, along with helping to ensure energy reliability."

We Energies plans to evaluate long-term options for the plant and may solicit other potential buyers for some or all of its output.

In keeping with its mission to provide outstanding service to its members, Baker noted that Wolverine will continue to seek reliable, competitively priced power supply that encompasses a mix of fuels and business partners.

Wolverine is the power supplier for Cherryland, Great Lakes Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Presque Isle Electric & Gas and Wolverine Power Marketing co-ops, and Spartan Renewable Energy.

## Powering Up

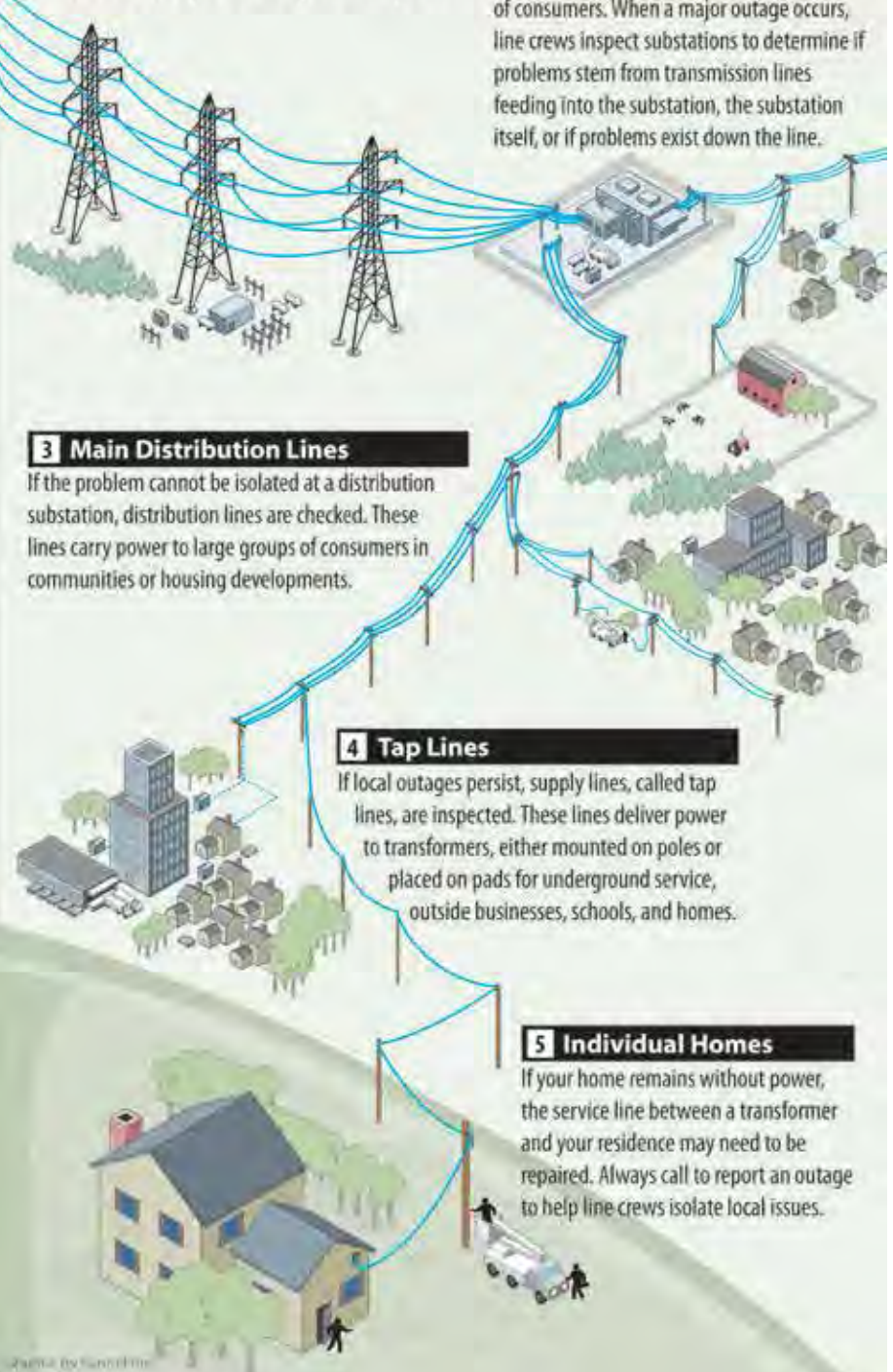
When electricity goes out, most of us expect power will be restored within a few hours. But when a major storm causes widespread damage, longer outages may result. Co-op line crews work long, hard hours to restore service safely to the greatest number of consumers in the shortest time possible. Here's what's going on if you find yourself in the dark.

### 1 High-Voltage Transmission Lines

Transmission towers and cables that supply power to transmission substations (and thousands of members) rarely fail. But when damaged, these facilities must be repaired before other parts of the system can operate.

### 2 Distribution Substation

Each substation serves hundreds or thousands of consumers. When a major outage occurs, line crews inspect substations to determine if problems stem from transmission lines feeding into the substation, the substation itself, or if problems exist down the line.



### 3 Main Distribution Lines

If the problem cannot be isolated at a distribution substation, distribution lines are checked. These lines carry power to large groups of consumers in communities or housing developments.

### 4 Tap Lines

If local outages persist, supply lines, called tap lines, are inspected. These lines deliver power to transformers, either mounted on poles or placed on pads for underground service, outside businesses, schools, and homes.

### 5 Individual Homes

If your home remains without power, the service line between a transformer and your residence may need to be repaired. Always call to report an outage to help line crews isolate local issues.



# New Bulb on the Block: Meet LED Lucy

There's a new mascot in town. It's LED Lucy, and she's a dazzling, spunky mascot who's lighting the way for even brighter lightbulb savings. She joins CFL Charlie, and both are cartoon mascots for Touchstone Energy Cooperatives®, a national brand for the nation's nonprofit, consumer-owned electric co-ops that helps families become "Super Savers" by switching to energy efficient lightbulbs.

Lighting standards moved away from traditional lightbulbs in 2012, and the mascots want to make sure electric co-op members know about all lighting options.

"I'm older than I look," LED Lucy confides. "The first LED was created in 1927. Since then we've added stylish colors, and

costs have dropped. I love bargains, and LED prices get lower every year!"

Following, the mascots share a few pointers on their energy efficiency namesakes.

## Compact Fluorescent Lamps (CFLs)

CFL Charlie—and bulbs like him—are the most common and economical efficient lightbulbs on the market. The swirly style is linked to the concept of efficient lighting, but some consumers haven't warmed to the design.

"Not everyone likes to see my swirls," explains Charlie. "That's fine by me—everyone has a different sense of style, but several of my friends are designed to look just like a traditional lightbulb."

CFLs offer 75 percent energy savings over traditional bulbs and pay for themselves in nine months, notes the U.S. Department of Energy.

## Light Emitting Diodes (LEDs)

Light emitting diodes (LEDs) have been used for years in cell phones and other electronics, and most are small—about half the size of a pencil eraser. By banding several small diodes together, a bright, dependable light emerges. As popularity




CFL Charlie & LED Lucy

grows, some companies are making light with a single, bright LED chip. New ways to build LEDs will help drive costs down.

"It's going to be fun to watch LED Lucy gain fans," laughs Charlie. "She uses a little less energy than me, and lasts 25 times longer than traditional incandescent bulbs." Lighting adds up to 10 percent of a home's electric bill, so every bulb counts.

Visit [kidsenergyzone.com](http://kidsenergyzone.com) for fun ways to help kids learn about lighting and electrical safety, too.



**Energy Efficiency**  
*Tip of the Month*

Fighting winter chills? A crackling fire in the hearth warms the house, but don't let it heat up your electric bill. To cool energy costs, keep the fireplace damper closed when not in use. Caulk around the fireplace hearth. Double up on wood-earned warmth by lowering the thermostat setting to between 50 degrees and 55 degrees Fahrenheit. Learn more at [www.energysaver.gov](http://www.energysaver.gov).

Source: U.S. Department of Energy

## Energy Assistance Available for Low-Income Utility Customers

As extreme weather continues and the promise of more snow puts a strain on utility customers' budgets, the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) is urging low-income customers to inquire about heating assistance. "I encourage customers to call 2-1-1 or their utility to inquire about assistance that may be available to them," says MPSC Chairman John D. Quackenbush.

The MPSC reports that \$89,615,000 in grants have been made available to 14 organizations that are now assisting eligible low-income utility customers, including some electric co-ops. Not all utilities participate in the grant-funded programs, but consumers can call 2-1-1 (see map, right), which is a free community health and human services information and referral service for people in need. Nearly all low-income help is

distributed during the "crisis season" that began Nov. 1, 2013, and ends May 31.

By simply dialing 211, available 24/7, callers are connected with a trained, caring professional who will confidentially assess their situation, identify their needs and refer them to local resources for help. Or, visit [uwmich.org/2-1-1](http://uwmich.org/2-1-1) (nationwide, visit [211us.org](http://211us.org)).

Funding for the grants comes from \$50 million collected through a low-income energy assistance funding factor approved by the MPSC; and \$40 million in Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds provided by the Department of Human Services (DHS). Visit [Michigan.gov/BeWinterWise](http://Michigan.gov/BeWinterWise) for more information, including tips for reducing energy use during the heating months, and how to avoid a service shut-off and receive assistance with bills.

**Michigan 2-1-1 Service Areas**  
**By Regional Call Center**  
(as of March 2013)





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**Tri-County Electric  
Cooperative**

# **Come learn more about our Community Solar Garden!**

## **Phase 1**

**is now being installed  
at Portland**

**We install and maintain  
the panels,  
YOU get the metered  
credit each month**

## **Member Information Meetings**

**with staff from Cascade Renewable Energy, Grand Rapids,  
and HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative**

**Portland .... Tuesday, March 18  
Blanchard .... Tuesday, March 19**

**In the Community Room at each location  
Light supper at 6 p.m.; meetings start at 6:30 p.m.**

To reserve space at one of these meetings, or to learn more about our Community Solar Garden, contact Nick Rusnell at 517-647-1247 or email [solar@homeworks.org](mailto:solar@homeworks.org)