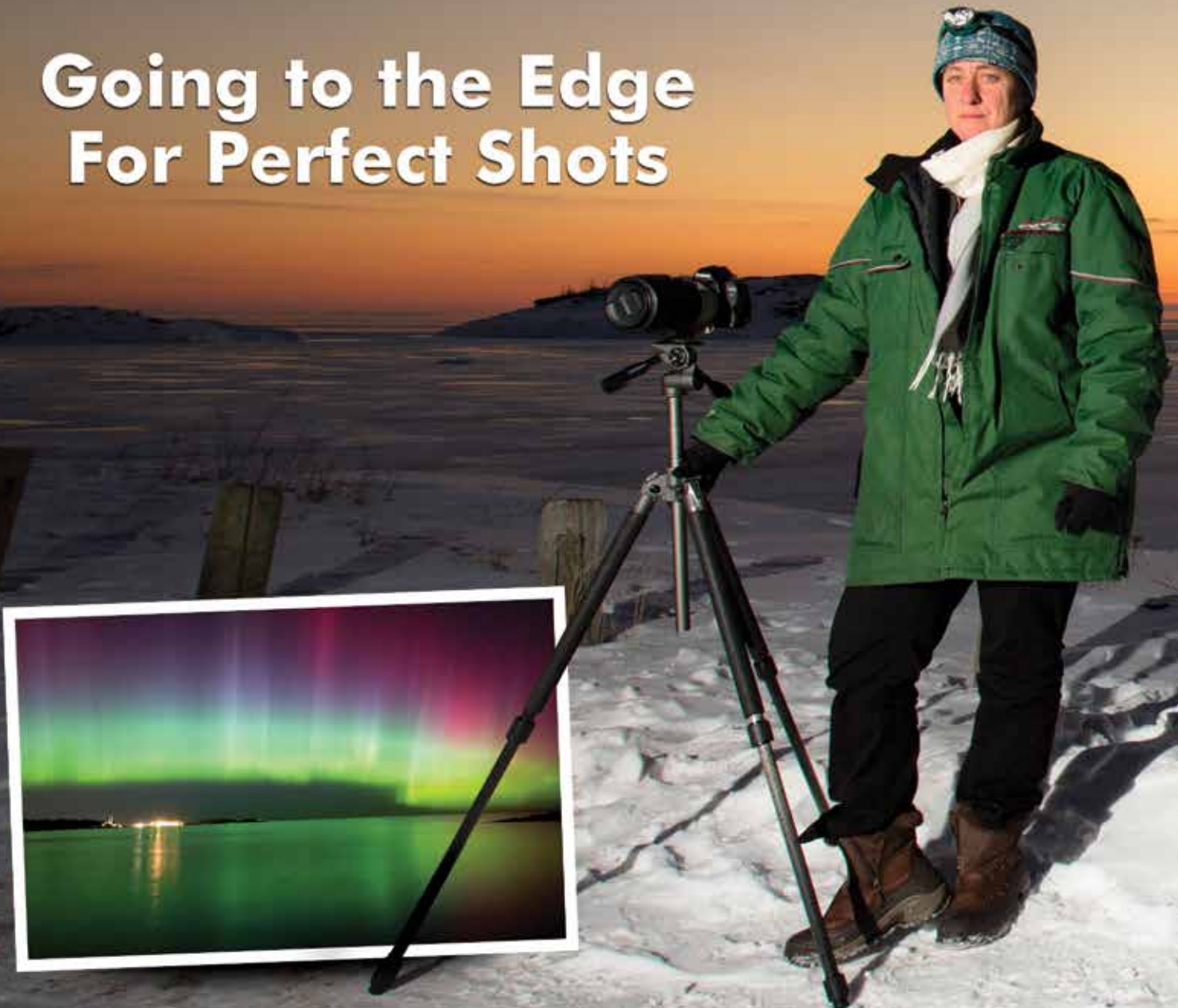


A service of **HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative**

March 2014

Michigan COUNTRY LINES

**Going to the Edge
For Perfect Shots**



4 Demonstrating
Our Commitment

5 Save the Date for
Member Meetings

9 Working on
Reliability

1 YEAR. THOUSANDS of happy geothermal owners. MILLIONS of dollars saved.



Real WaterFurnace
Owners



Over the last year we've saved thousands of happy homeowners millions of dollars on heating, cooling and hot water using the clean, renewable energy in their backyard! During SEVENbration, we're offering instant savings of \$2100 on the most efficient unit on the planet. With the additional 30% federal tax credit, there's never been a better time to upgrade to WaterFurnace. But hurry, this rebate ends April 30th, so contact your local dealer today—and join the SEVENbration!

Your Local WaterFurnace Dealers

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

Berrien Springs
WaterFurnace
Michiana
(269) 473-5667

Big Rapids
Stratz Htg & Clg
(231) 796-3717

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

Carsonville
Certified Temperature
Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Clifford
Orton Refrig & Htg
(989) 761-7691

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

Grand Rapids
Total Comfort
Resource, LLC
(616) 406-3182

Hart/Ludington
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Indian River
M & M Plmb & Htg
(231) 238-7201

Ionia
Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

Jackson
Comfort 1 Htg/
Lenawee Htg
(517) 764-1500

Kalkaska
Kalkaska Plmb & Htg
(231) 258-3588

Lapeer
Porter & Heckman
(800) 445-4328

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

Muskegon
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Muskegon
Kiessel Geothermal
Htg & Clg
(231) 747-7509

Onaway
Standard Htg
(989) 733-8309

Palms
Lakeshore
Improvements
(989) 864-3833

Portland
ESI Htg & Clg
(517) 647-6906

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

Traverse City
D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

UPPER PENINSULA
Manistique
Hoholik Enterprises
(906) 341-5065

Marquette
J Goods Plmb
& Htg
(906) 235-5788

Marquette
Swick Plmb & Htg
(906) 228-3400

**Sault Ste Marie/
Kinross**
Great Lakes
Services Inc.
(906) 632-5543



instant
REBATE

\$2,100

Learn more at waterfurnace.com/SEVENbration

IT'S A
SEVEN
bration

March 2014
Vol. 34, No. 3

Executive Editor
Casey Clark

Editor
Gail Knudtson

Publisher
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

Michigan

COUNTRY LINES

IN THIS ISSUE

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

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

POSTMASTER: SEND 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 **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.

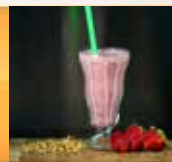
Change of Address: Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.



6

HOME COOKING Shakes & Smoothies

Christin McKamey
& Our Readers



7

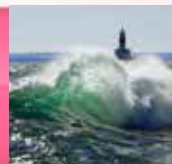
OUR ENERGY Maintaining Affordable, Reliable Electricity—You Can Take Action to Help



10

FEATURE Going to the Edge for Perfect Shots

Kath Usitalo



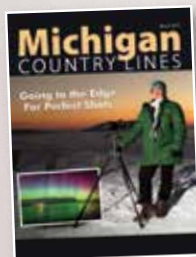
13

SAFETY Stay Clear of Downed Power Lines



14

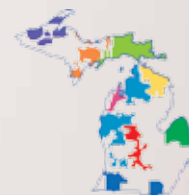
READERS' PAGE Help With Affordable Health Care Law • Mystery Photo • Energy Tip



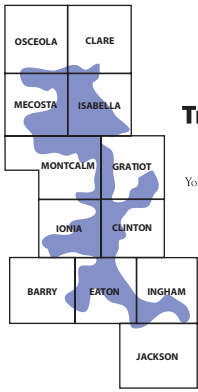
ON THE COVER

Photographer Shawn Malone, who recently opened a studio and gallery in Marquette, literally goes to the edge of cliffs and makes nighttime forays into the wilderness to capture the glory of the Upper Peninsula's land, water and sky.

Photo Courtesy – Shawn Malone/lakesuperiorphoto.com



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
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

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

District 1 — Philip Conklin

5130 W. Gresham Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813

517-726-0127

pconklin@homeworks.org

District 2 — Wayne Swiler

Vice-Chairman

11750 Ainsworth Rd., Lake Odessa, MI 48849

616-374-3141

wswiler@homeworks.org

District 3 — Carl Morton

Chairman

11280 Eden Trail, Eagle, MI 48822

517-626-2258

cmorton@homeworks.org

District 4 — Laverne Hansen

Secretary-Treasurer

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

989-427-5851

lhansen@homeworks.org

District 5 — Cara Evans

10180 Roosevelt Rd., Bannister, MI 48807

989-862-5590

cevens@homeworks.org

District 6 — Ed Oplinger

10890 W. Weidman Road, Weidman, MI 48893

989-644-3079

eoplinger@homeworks.org

District 7 — Dean Floria

1163 Taft Rd., Remus, MI 49340

989-382-5230

dfloria@homeworks.org

Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC

MANAGER'S MESSAGE



Demonstrating Our Commitment

Electric cooperatives were formed by farmers in rural areas unserved by the large utilities. People got together and created a different kind of utility to bring them the services they needed but couldn't provide on an individual basis.

Like co-ops, governments are formed by the people of a region to help provide themselves and their neighbors with centralized services, from roads to schools.

Governments, from your township board to the U.S. Congress, are supposed to improve the quality of our lives by working together to pool resources and provide those needed services. Similarly, HomeWorks Tri-County is your electric utility, not some faceless corporation.

Neither situation is meant to be "Us vs. Them." Your leaders in both cases are elected locally, from local people – not strangers brought in from elsewhere to control your lives without your consent.

That means, as citizens, that our job doesn't end on Election Day. We become public servants ourselves – serving on a township board, coaching a Little League team, being a volunteer firefighter.

And, we take time to let our elected public servants know what we're asking them to do. We share our opinions and show our support, thank them when they get it right, talk to them when the course needs correction.

Through Action.coop, a website created by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, our national organization, you can make sure your opinion is heard. And through the ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action program, you can contribute to candidates that support

electric co-op interests – especially reliable and affordable electric power.

The average ACRE (Action Committee for Rural Electrification) contribution made by over 32,000 members nationwide is about \$41. This isn't corporate lobbyists buying influence. This is grassroots folks like you and me showing our commitment to our cooperative and local community.

We'll be talking more about ACRE at our district meetings, coming up in May. We hope you'll consider joining in to support a great cause that in turn supports your family's need for affordable, reliable electricity.

More Community Action

Speaking of improving the quality of life in our communities, I hope you'll take a few minutes to review the Tri-County Electric People Fund's Annual Report for 2013, which is included as a cover wrap on this issue.

The People Fund is a great example of working together for public service. You give your spare change from your energy bill, and the board members give their time, to help return funds to families and organizations in need around us.

Over \$1.8 million has been granted to fire departments, ambulance services, hospice, libraries, food pantries and youth programs, among others. And, it's all due to you, and your neighbors, who round up their monthly electric bills to the next dollar. Thank you for your continued support of the Tri-County Electric People Fund!

Mark Kappler
General Manager



Join the conversation at
facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

SAVE THE DATE

Geothermal Seminars

April 16 - Portland
April 17 - Blanchard

Learn more about energy-efficient geothermal heating and cooling, and how you can keep your family comfortable while saving money!

Seminars start with a light meal at 6 p.m. followed by a brief presentation at 6:30 and then a Q&A session.

To reserve space, call 1-800-562-8232; email geothermal@homeworks.org; or click on the Quick Link at homeworks.org.

District Membership Meetings:

May 12 - District 5

Fulton Middle School Gym

May 13 - District 3

Eagle Park Hall

May 14 - District 7

St. Michael's School, Remus

May 15 - District 1

St. Mary's Church Hall, Charlotte

May 19 - District 4 (election)

Vestaburg Middle School

May 20 - District 6

Beal City High School

May 21 - District 2 (election)

St. Edward's Church Hall, Lake Odessa

Each meeting starts with a light supper, followed by a business meeting at 6 p.m. Watch your mailbox in late April for information, a map, and your registration card!



to keep up with these events!

Join Us to Learn About Solar

March 18, Portland & March 19, Blanchard



Join the staff of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative and Cascade Renewable Energy from Grand Rapids to learn more about solar power and our new Community Solar Garden at Portland.

Seminars start with a light meal at 6 pm, followed by a brief presentation at 6:30 and then a question and answer session.

To reserve space, call 1-800-562-8232; email solar@homeworks.org; or click on the Quick Link at homeworks.org.

Your Board in Action

Meeting at Blanchard Jan. 20, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the Christmas 2013 ice storm and the co-op's response to it. Adopted a resolution expressing gratitude to everyone who had a part in the restoration efforts.
- Authorized staff to renew memberships in the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) and the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) for 2014.
- Re-elected director Dean Floria to a two-year term representing the co-op on the Wolverine Power Cooperative board.
- Re-elected director Ed Oplinger and general manager Mark Kappler to one-year terms representing the HomeWorks Tri-County on the MECA board.
- Named voting delegates and alternates for the NRECA, MECA and Wolverine annual meetings.

• Reviewed the January safety report, listing employee training as well as employee and public incidents.

• Read and approved "Board Policy 117 – Privacy and Confidentiality," as revised, and "Board Policy 118 – Director Internet Access," as updated.

• Learned there were 98 new co-op members in December.

Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting are available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject. Upcoming board meetings are set for **March 24 at Portland** and **April 28 at Blanchard**. Members who need directions to either office, or who wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

People Fund Assists Area Families With Your Help

Your spare change from rounding up your monthly energy bill makes People Fund grants possible.

Meeting Jan. 29, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made eight grants totaling \$9,201.62, including:

- \$2,225 to Clinton County Council for Prevention of Child Abuse & Neglect for their prevention program;
- \$1,000 to St. Johns Area Community Fund toward the community water spray park;

- \$1,650 to Barryton Area Mobile Food Pantry to purchase food pantry items;
- \$2,500 to a Mecosta County family for a motorized wheelchair;
- \$456.62 to another Mecosta County family for housing expenses;
- \$420 to a Montcalm County family for a year of Lifeline service;
- \$700 to a Clare County family to purchase fuel oil for heating; and
- \$250 to a Clinton County family for well repairs.

Shakes & Smoothies

Shakes and smoothies are a refreshing treat any time of day. With so many different ingredients and combinations, you'll never get bored. They are also unbelievably easy to make. All you need is a blender.

Photography by: 831 Creative

Coconut Granola Berry Smoothie

½ c. granola
6 fresh strawberries
1 T. flax seed oil
¾ c. unsweetened coconut milk
3 T. vanilla yogurt
7-8 ice cubes

Blend until smooth and enjoy. Makes 1-2 servings.

Christin McKamey, Royal Oak

Kate's Green Smoothie

1 c. ice
1 c. apple juice
2 ripe bananas
1 ½ c. kale
¾ c. chopped celery

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. So simple and so good for you. Enjoy! Rinse out your blender and glasses as soon as you can - this mixture sticks to everything.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Peanut Butter Banana Flip Smoothie

1 c. milk of choice
2 T. natural peanut butter, creamy or chunky
1 t. pure vanilla
1 frozen banana, cut into chunks
6 ice cubes

Pour milk into blender and add peanut butter, vanilla, banana and ice. Blend on high speed until smooth and serve.

Lorraine Green, South Boardman

Nutty Monkey Shake

¼ c. milk
1 banana, cut into chunks
¼ c. malted milk powder
2 T. creamy peanut butter
2 c. fat-free frozen yogurt

In a blender, combine milk, banana, malted milk powder and peanut butter. Cover and process for 10-15 seconds or until smooth. Add frozen yogurt, cover and process until blended. 5 servings.

Janice L. Thompson, Martin

Blueberry Cherry Cheesecake Smoothie

2 c. fresh or frozen blueberries
½ c. fresh or frozen cherries
1 ¼ c. milk
¼ c. (2-oz.) cream cheese
1 to 3 ice cubes

Combine blueberries, milk, cherries and cream cheese in blender. Process until mixture is smooth. Add 3 ice cubes if using fresh fruit and 1 to 2 cubes if using frozen fruit. Process until smooth and pour into 2 glasses. Makes 2 (12-oz.) servings.

Tina Bates, East Jordan

Adult Peach Smoothie (Fresh Peach Martini)

2 peaches, peeled, pitted and quartered
4 oz. vodka
1 oz. peach schnapps
1-2 oz. simple syrup
1 ½ c. ice

Place all ingredients in blender and process until smooth. Makes 2 drinks.

Becky Schlatter, Chippewa Lake

Coffee Bananas Foster Smoothie

1 ½ c. strong coffee, chilled
½ t. cinnamon
2 T. brown sugar
2 small ripe bananas
6 oz. vanilla yogurt
½ c. fat-free half & half
1 c. ice cubes

In a blender, combine all ingredients and blend well.

Pat Sullivan, Bozeman

Submit your recipe! Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"All About Snacks"** recipes by **June 10** and **"Best Original Recipes"** by **July 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.

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)!



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

Help Your Electric Co-op Keep Rates Affordable

A message for all Michigan electric co-op member-owners. . .
The fight to maintain affordable, reliable electricity continues—and you can help!

Co-op members are needed to step up and let their voices be heard. Electric co-ops across the country are fighting to maintain a balanced energy policy that protects affordable, reliable and environmentally responsible electricity generation.

Co-op members are being asked to join the fight to instill common sense into the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) rule-making process by commenting online at Action.coop. It only takes a few minutes to complete.

Proposed regulations threaten to end the use of coal at new power plants. This is a concern because the regulations, along with the ones EPA has in store for existing plants, have the potential to drive up everyone's electric bills.

Nationwide, coal is responsible for about 40 percent of all electricity generated.

"As not-for-profit, consumer-owned utilities, electric co-ops rely on a diverse fuel mix to provide affordable, reliable electricity to 42 million Americans," explains Jo Ann Emerson, CEO of the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, the trade

association for America's electric co-ops. "We believe strongly in our responsibility both to our environment and to members, who often serve some of the most economically vulner-

thoughts with the EPA. "This is a start, but we can do better, as it's critically important that the voice of co-op members is heard on this issue," says Craig Borr, president/CEO of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association.

Bringing common sense to the rule-making process is also important as the EPA develops rules for existing plants, which are scheduled for release in June.

In just the last decade, power supply co-ops have invested over \$3.4 billion to reduce emissions and boost efficiency. And, *co-ops are only asking that environmental regulation be balanced with realistic costs and benefits.*

By stepping up to comment, you will be asking the EPA to recognize the unique circumstances of your nonprofit, member-owned electric co-op and to work with co-ops to forge a fair solution that allows them to continue providing you with affordable, reliable power.

Electric co-ops serve over 42 million people nationwide. By joining together, co-op members can make a difference in shaping responsible energy policy.

COOPERATIVE ACTION NETWORK

able populations in this country.

"That's why NRECA continues to urge the administration to reconsider this proposal and the potentially damaging effects it could have on communities and the economy," she adds.

Electric rates are something consumer-owned electric co-ops take personally because they know the tough choices many of us face in trying to live on a budget. That's what sets co-ops apart from other utilities and that's why we must stick together.

Thousands have already answered the call and sent comments through Action.coop, but more are needed. About 609 Michigan co-op members have started sharing their



RENEWABLE ENERGY



NUCLEAR POWER



NATURAL GAS



CLEAN COAL

America needs an
ALL OF THE ABOVE STRATEGY
to keep electric bills affordable

**TELL THE EPA TO RECONSIDER
ITS "ALL-BUT-ONE" APPROACH**

ACTION.COOP

Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/13..

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used

Your co-op's fuel mix

FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	54.1%	59.4%
Oil	2.9%	0.6%
Gas	18.1%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	2.7%	0.6%
Nuclear	17.0%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	5.2%	4.2%
Biofuel	0.4%	0.5%
Biomass	0.1%	0.5%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.0%	0.0%
Wind	4.6%	2.7%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

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

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Avg. Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.1	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,522	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.8	2.0
High-level nuclear waste	0.0056	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/13.

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



Call Before You Dig: It's the Law

Several changes to the 8-1-1 program, also known as Miss Dig, will take effect April 1, 2014, thanks to the passage of Michigan Public Act 174 last fall.

Miss Dig provides a central toll-free number for homeowners and businesses to call at least three business days before digging, to make sure any underground facilities – whether electric, gas, phone, fiber or water and sewer – are safely marked by the utilities involved. Not only does 8-1-1 help assure safe digging, it prevents disruption of services and repair costs being assessed to the excavator.

“One major change is the requirement for a positive response,” says HomeWorks system engineer Chris Jensen, who represents the state’s 10 electric cooperatives on the Michigan Damage Prevention Board.

In the past, utilities received a request and either staked an underground facility or cleared the request, Jensen says. The person calling the request was not always confident whether there were no facilities or if they were just not marked.

With positive response, utilities must now update the request’s status on a central messaging system so it can be tracked. On the other side of the 8-1-1 call, excavators can log-in to see if the property has been staked or cleared before traveling to the site.

Another big change, Jensen notes, is that all non-metallic underground facilities built after the law goes into effect on April 1 must include a tracer wire to enable faster detection.

The new law creates three zones around an underground facility. The “approximate location” is 18 inches either side of the markings, which must be dug by hand to locate the facility before using power equipment in the area. The “caution zone” extends to 48 inches in each direction, and again requires

hand-digging or a form of soft excavation such as a vacuum truck. Beyond 48 inches is the “safe zone” where power equipment may be used.

Also new is an “additional assistance” request, used when facilities are marked but the excavator is not able to locate them by hand-digging. Utilities must respond within three hours to an additional assistance ticket. In addition, if markings are destroyed for whatever reason, utilities must re-stake the facility within 24 hours after being notified.

Finally, the law provides significant penalties for violations, whether it’s a utility that fails to mark facilities upon request or an excavator who damages underground utility equipment and tries to conceal the damage or fails to notify the utility. There are also fines for removing or destroying stakes and markings that a utility uses to mark its underground facilities.

“People need to be careful when they’re mowing around a marked underground utility, and they should keep their children away from the colorful stakes,” Jensen says. “Those markings and stakes are there to save lives and prevent disrupted service.”



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

Right-of-Way Clearing Boosts Reliability, Safety

As your electric co-op, HomeWorks Tri-County is dedicated to providing safe and reliable power to each of its members. A cornerstone of this process is our ongoing effort to keep our rights-of-way clear of trees and vines.

Trees or limbs that contact power lines are a primary cause of power outages. They also cause power quality issues, such as blinking or dimming lights, or those momentary losses of power which make digital clocks blink. “A large portion of our operations budget each year is invested into clearing and maintaining our rights-of-way,” explains Matt Miller, manager of electric operations.

Trees near the power lines can also be a safety issue. Children climbing in these trees might directly contact a power line, or contact a limb that is touching the line, causing, at minimum, burns or serious injury. A live power line pushed to the ground by a falling tree will also energize the ground around it, potentially causing fatal contact for a person or pet that comes near.

HomeWorks Tri-County uses a combination of options to keep our rights-of-way clear, adds Roger Riebow, the co-op’s vegetation management coordinator.

“We have an annual right-of-way plan with yearly goals,” Riebow says. “First, we reclaim a right-of-way with cutting and mowing equipment. Then, in two years, we come back and spot-treat with EPA-approved herbicides, followed by a check-up after another six months of growing season.”

Riebow says this plan allows HomeWorks Tri-County to keep areas clear and safe while maximizing the reliability of its power supply to members. Adding spot-treated herbicide to the plan means that less mechanical intrusion is needed in the rights-of-way.

Over time, these cleared areas will support fewer trees, brush and vines, and more native grasses. Studies show that this is very beneficial to wildlife, Riebow adds.

Plan Where You Plant

“Members can help, too, by planning where they plant. We’ve had to cut beautiful trees and vines from around the power lines, that could have been enjoyed for many more years had they been planted a few feet further away,” he says.

“We really depend on our members being good neighbors and working with us to keep

the rights-of-way clear,” Riebow says.

“Whether it’s planting the right species in the right place, or allowing our crews to clear the trees that are in the wrong place, our reliability depends on everyone working

together and with the cooperative to keep the power lines safe.”

If you would like more information about our vegetation management plan, please contact the cooperative.



Photo – Ryan Smith

Trees and power lines don’t mix – During the Christmas 2013 storm, ice weighed down trees and branches outside the cleared right-of-way and interfered with or damaged our power lines.

Power Line Safety Extends to Farm Equipment

Farm tractors and equipment can easily hit an overhead line or guy wire, creating an electrical danger or causing power outages to neighboring members. Repairs to the power lines are billed to the responsible party, so it’s much less costly to look ahead and avoid problems.

While similar power line safety tips for cars and trucks apply to farm equipment, there are additional tips that farmers need to follow:

- Check equipment for transport height, including antennas, and determine clearance with any power lines under which the equipment must pass.

- Lower portable augers or elevators to their lowest possible level – under 14 feet – before moving or transporting; use care when raising them.

- When moving large equipment or high loads near a power line, use a spotter or someone to help make certain the required 10 foot clearance is maintained. If it’s not possible, stop and call our office for assistance.

- Never attempt to raise or move a power line to clear a path!

- Give all workers, especially those who are new to the farm, special instructions, such as,

“Never transport this cultivator through this gate because of the overhead line.”

- If your tractor comes in contact with overhead power lines, stay on the tractor. Have someone contact the co-op immediately, so professional line crews can remove the danger.

- If you must leave the equipment, jump as far away from it as possible. Do not allow any part of your body to touch the equipment and the ground at the same time.

- Never attempt to get back on or even touch equipment that is in contact with a power line.



Photo – dclw.gov

Even moving equipment from one field to another on a roadway can cause problems, as power lines often cross roads.

GOING TO THE EDGE



She's dangled over an icy wall and rappelled its glassy facade, come dangerously close to the edge of several cliffs, and inched along narrow paths in the pitch-black night of the Upper Peninsula's wilderness to capture stunning images. Photographer Shawn Malone actually studied music in college, but a decade or so after leaving the Chicago skyline behind, she's developed a worldwide following for her impressions of the natural wonders surrounding her adopted hometown of Marquette.

"I was doing a lot of auditions in major cities and grew weary of all the concrete, traffic, and smog. I realized I couldn't possibly be happy in that environment," Malone says of her past life. So, she and husband Brian took a jaunt to the U.P.

and, she recalls, "We fell in love with the area after seeing Lake Superior for the first time in Grand Marais, and were struck by the quality of the water. I always remember that. We just moved up here, with no jobs, for the quality of life."

Looking to earn a living, Malone picked up a camera and began seasonally capturing the woods, waterfalls, Pictured Rocks National Lakeshore, Lake Superior, and the Mackinac Bridge and lighthouses.

With Brian, also a photographer, she then traveled and sold their work on the art fair circuit for many years, including the Ann Arbor show. Burned out by the traveling grind, however, the couple missed the land they loved. "I moved to the U.P. to be in the U.P.," she says. "The next step was to figure out how to stay in the U.P."

One year ago, they cut all but a few art fairs from their schedule and opened Lake Superior Photo, a gallery and studio in Marquette, where they exhibit and sell prints of all sizes.

Besides landscapes, Malone has pointed her lens to the night sky and captured spectacular Northern Lights images, which have catapulted her into the national and international limelight—especially with the release of her time-lapse video, "North Country Dreamland." She edited 10,000 still images taken throughout 2012 into the 7-minute program, which was the "People's Choice" winner in a 2013 Smithsonian online competition (see lakesuperiorphoto.com).

"The Northern Lights have really caught on with the media," Malone says of her extensive portfolio of sky shots. She believes it's because most people will never see the lights in person. While it's possible to catch the colorful, dancing flares most of the year, conditions must be just right. Even in the best viewing spots, including the U.P., there's no guarantee that clouds won't obscure them. "You might go years without seeing a strong display," she says, citing the spans between activity she witnessed in 2004, 2011, and those in her second video, "Radiance" (Oct. 2013). "Those kinds of displays you remember the rest of your life."

Monitoring space weather websites helps her decide whether to venture out and attempt a photo shoot, but she adds, "A lot has yet to be learned on how the aurora works, but you have a good opportunity to see it with a strong solar flare off the sun that is Earthward-directed." Once she sees some activity, her experience helps to



Lake Superior sea caves—This is one of the photographer's favorites because of the arch portals' composition and reflection in the foreground. The sun only sets through the left portal a few days in the year.

FOR PERFECT SHOTS



▲ **Northern Lights, Crisp Point Lighthouse**—One of Malone's most difficult shots, this 10-frame panoramic shows a 180-degree view, and received an Epson International Panorama Competition Silver Award. Lake Superior had to be flat-calm for the composite to mesh, and aurora borealis made an appearance!

▼ **Mackinac Moonrise**—This shot only happens once a year due to where the moon rises, and the weather.



▲ **Milky Way Road**—A unique shot of the Milky Way on a moonless night, creatively lit by the car's headlights.

Photos by Shawn Malone

judge how much time to invest and whether it will pay off.

Patience and luck are given credit for some of her success, too, especially as she ventures into the wilds where there are no danger warning signs. Recalling a trip to Isle Royale after shooting the Northern Lights at Tobin Harbor, she headed back to her lean-to. "I had a two-mile hike at two in the morning along basically a deer path...a cobblestone, trippy kind of thing." It was so dark that she couldn't see what was around her, but could hear moose sparring nearby. "That sound puts the fear of God in you because you could just feel the power of the animals," she says, shuddering while remembering that

too-close call.

"Getting the shot" also involves experimenting with manual settings and using a tripod to keep the camera steady for long exposures, Malone tells shutterbugs in her teaching workshops.

Her imagery also appears in magazines, websites and books, and she freelances as a managing photographer at *Upper Peninsula Second Wave*, an online magazine. Her artwork is also viewable and for purchase at <http://www.lakesuperiorphoto.com>, and this year she'll ponder a book project.

Meanwhile, her camera will be kept ever-ready to record impressions of the land, water and sky she loves.



Photographer Shawn Malone says the difficulty of a shot is related to logistics and understanding what happens at certain times with light and subject matter. Follow her on Facebook at [fb.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto](https://www.facebook.com/LakeSuperiorPhoto)

Get a Handle on Hidden Electric Costs

It's expected that your gas bill will spike in winter due to constant furnace use. But did you know that running the furnace can also cause your electric usage to increase?

Although high electric use is often associated with operating air conditioners, a forced-air furnace uses its fair share of electricity. A furnace typically has two motors: The combustion blower motor, which draws air into the combustion chamber and pushes combustion and exhaust air through the ignition chamber; and the blower motor, or air handler, which blows heated air throughout your home. The blower motor uses about 80 percent of the total electricity consumed by the furnace, costing you anywhere between \$33 and \$65 monthly.

Switch to an ECM Furnace

If your furnace is over 10 years old, a staged

furnace outfitted with an electronically commutated motor (ECM) will help you save energy and money. A staged furnace adjusts the amount of fuel burned (from high to low) in every cycle, and some furnaces modulate their output based on the amount of heat needed. An ECM, also called a "variable speed motor," adjusts its speed as necessary, instead of running at one speed. This type of blower motor conserves energy, ensuring optimal airflow and using less electricity.

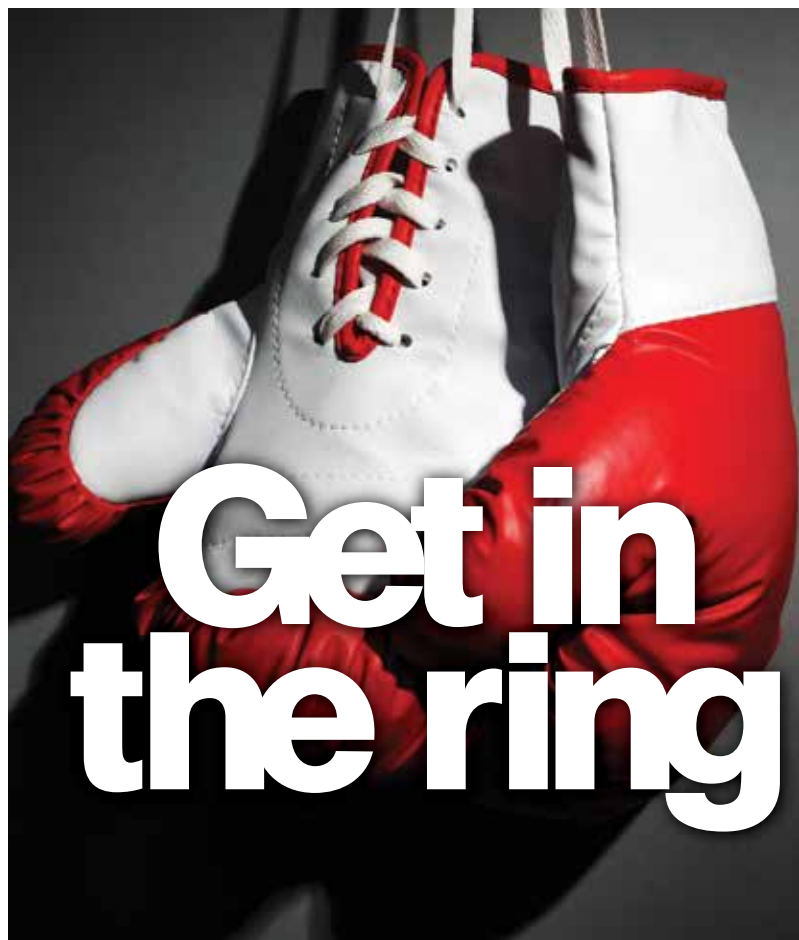
Great Rebates

An ECM furnace can also save you around \$80 per year, costing \$11 to \$32 less per month than running a standard blower motor. You can save even more in gas costs if

the new furnace is a higher-efficiency model. HomeWorks Tri-county Electric Cooperative will help you with the up-front costs of installing an ECM furnace through a \$150 Energy Optimization rebate. For details, visit michigan-energy.org.

Save Even More

Looking for more ways to save? The ENERGY STAR® rule of thumb to achieve optimal savings is to set your thermostat back by at least 8 degrees for 8 hours, twice a day. Also, set the switch for the fan to "auto" instead of "on." The "auto" setting operates the blower motor only when the thermostat turns on the furnace, instead of running the motor constantly.

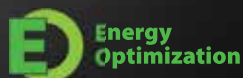


Knock out energy waste

Tired of high energy bills? Fight your frustrations and keep more money in your pocket with the help of your electric co-op's Energy Optimization program. Whether you choose to replace an energy-guzzling furnace or install a high-efficiency CFL or LED bulb, rebates are available to help you complete just about any energy-saving project at home.

ENERGY TIP: Save up to 40 percent in furnace electricity costs by changing the filter regularly.

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319



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

Why We Send You *Country Lines*

As a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, you receive *Michigan Country Lines* magazine in your mailbox 10 times every year. Sure, it's full of great articles, valuable energy-saving tips, and—of course—delicious recipes. But why does your electric co-op send you this magazine?

Country Lines is the most economical and convenient way to share information with our members. It takes the place of many mailings we would otherwise make to give you information about our services, director elections, member meetings, and the staff and management decisions you should know about as a co-op owner. 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 \$4.57 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.

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Case No. U-15815

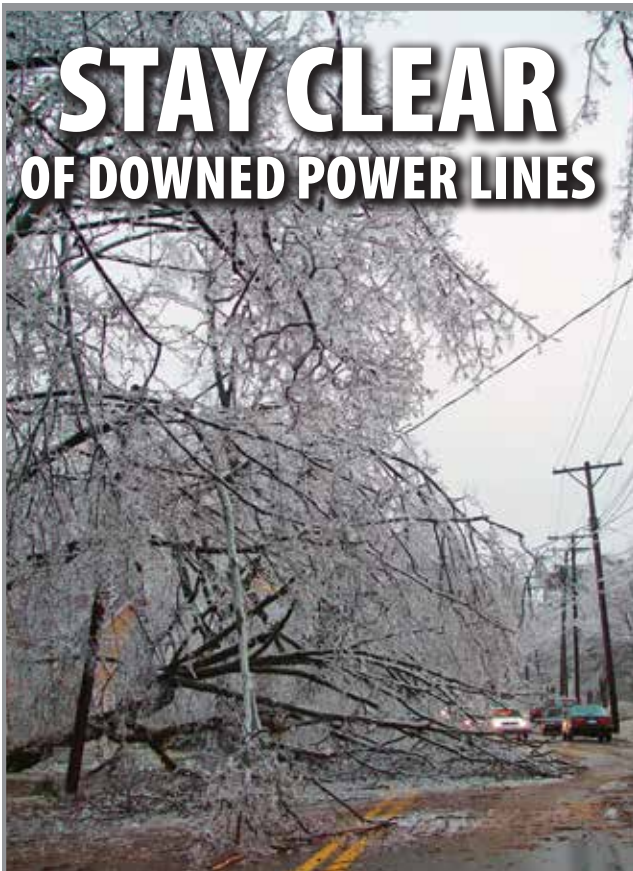
2012 Renewable Energy Plan Annual Report Summary

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately 2 percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012, and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2012, HomeWorks acquired 13,946 renewable energy credits and 285 incentive credits from its wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative, Inc. Wolverine will continue to generate renewable energy and bank unused renewable energy credits for future use and compliance with statutory renewable portfolio standard requirements on behalf of all of its members.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan annual report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the cooperative's website at homeworks.org or by request at any of the co-op's offices.

STAY CLEAR OF DOWNED POWER LINES



- ▼ **Assume all power lines are energized and dangerous.** Even downed lines that seem “dead” can be re-energized at any time during power restoration efforts or improper use of generators. Lines do not have to be sparking to be live!
- ▼ **Any utility wire, including sagging or downed telephone or cable lines could be in contact with an energized power line, making them very dangerous, too.**
- ▼ **Never touch a downed line—or a person or object that is touching it!** A downed line can cause things around it to become energized, traveling through the ground to chain link fences or other objects.
- ▼ **If someone is injured from electrical contact, do not try to assist. You could be injured or killed, too. Call 911.**
- ▼ **If lines fall on your vehicle, do not drive away or get out.** Stay inside until utility workers say it's okay. Warn others to stay away. If you must leave the vehicle—only in the case of fire—jump free without touching the ground and auto at the same time, keeping both feet together, and hop to safety. A live wire touching the ground causes electricity to fan out, and walking or running allows one foot to move from one voltage zone to another. Your body then becomes the electricity's path, and electrocution results.
- ▼ **Never drive over a downed line,** it could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.
- ▼ **Call 911 immediately to report a downed power line.** Then call your electric co-op or the local utility.

Visit **SafeElectricity.org** for other electrical safety tips.



Tri-County Electric
Cooperative

ELEVATE YOUR FUTURE

YOUTH LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

>> PRESENTED BY MICHIGAN'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES

April 23-25, 2014 | SpringHill Camps | Ewart, MI



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.



>> PARTICIPANTS WILL BE CONSIDERED FOR AN ALL-EXPENSES-PAID WASHINGTON, D.C. YOUTH TOUR. VISIT miYLS.com TO LEARN MORE.

miYLS.com



>> SCAN THE QR CODE WITH YOUR SMARTPHONE TO LEARN MORE, OR TO APPLY ONLINE

YOU ARE THE FUTURE.

Touchstone Energy
Scholarship
Applications due
March 15
Visit homeworks.org
or call 1-800-562-8232
to apply

MSU Extension Offers Help for Understanding Affordable Care Act



Michigan State University Extension wants to help individuals, families and businesses make the right health insurance decision.

Extension has a team of educators that can help residents understand the new rules and requirements, navigate the federal Health Insurance Marketplace, and make a decision that fits both health needs and financial realities.

"People need to be extremely careful when signing up for insurance," explains Brenda Long, who spearheads MSU Extension's education efforts. "This is one of the most important decisions a person can make, and they will be dealing with concepts they are often unfamiliar with."

"We hope to give people the knowledge they need so they can meet with a local certified application counselor, or go to the federal health care site and make the appropriate decisions for themselves and their families."

Part of the service offered is a series of free, weekly, unbiased educational webinars and a new website that explains changes in the insurance landscape. A list of the webinars, as well as details about the Affordable Care Act, Health Insurance Marketplace, and how both affect Michiganders can be found at Extension's Affordable Care Act Roadmap (aca.msue.msu.edu).

Organizations that provide health or

community assistance, or employers looking to provide education for their employees can also contact MSU Extension directly at healthinsurance@anr.msu.edu and request information about setting up an in-person training session.

"We aren't trying to push consumers to select any one specific plan," Long adds. "We hope to teach people skills they can use so they can decide on the plan that best fits the needs for themselves, their families or their employees."

The online educational webinars for individuals are held every Monday from 9-11 a.m., 3-5 p.m., and 6-8 p.m.; and for farmers and small-business owners every Monday from Noon-2 p.m.



◀ DO YOU KNOW WHERE THIS IS?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **April 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; enter your guess at 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 May 2014 issue.

The January contest winners are Gary and Elaine Pohl of Westphalia, who are members of both Home Works Tri-County Electric Cooperative and Cloverland Electric Cooperative. The Pohls correctly identified the photo as a mural at the R. E. Olds Transportation Museum near the riverwalk in downtown Lansing.



January photo



Energy Efficiency

Tip of the Month

Programmable thermostats can save up to \$160 a year in energy costs. Match thermostat settings to your schedule: cold when you're away and warm when you're at home. In winter, set the thermostat to 68 degrees during the day (lower at night when you're snug in bed). By turning your thermostat down 10 to 15 degrees for at least eight hours, you can shave 5 to 15 percent from your heating costs.

Source: TogetherWeSave.com, U.S. Department of Energy

Did snow bury your roof this winter?

Watch
snow slide
off a
metal roof*

[YouTube.com/AmericanMetalRoofs](https://www.youtube.com/AmericanMetalRoofs)


Showcase Homes WANTED! Earn Big Discounts

We would like to use your home to showcase a beautiful American Metal Roof. Qualified homes can earn big discounts. Call today to see if your home qualifies. 844.638.2576 (Note: Not all homes will qualify. Not a free roof.)

*Frank Farmer, President,
American Metal Roofs*

Why choose metal?

- Permanent/Lifetime Guarantee
- Add beauty & value to your home
- Many colors/styles to choose from
- Year round statewide installation
- Senior/Veteran discounts
- Ask about our Do-It-Yourself seminars
- Visit our showrooms:
FLINT • 6140 Taylor Dr.
LANSING • 1875 Lansing Rd.

 facebook.com
/AMRmichigan

Call today! 844.638.2576
844.METAL.ROOFS



NEW! Pocket Rib Panel for Rural Buildings

Toughness and low maintenance requirements make metal roofing perfect for the demanding needs of agricultural applications. Each roof is handcrafted and finished with custom trim and accessories by installers with a minimum of 300 hours of training. Available in a variety of colors.

Financing Available
www.AmericanMetalRoofs.com

*When the temperature reaches 40°F outside, snow will slide off the roof.