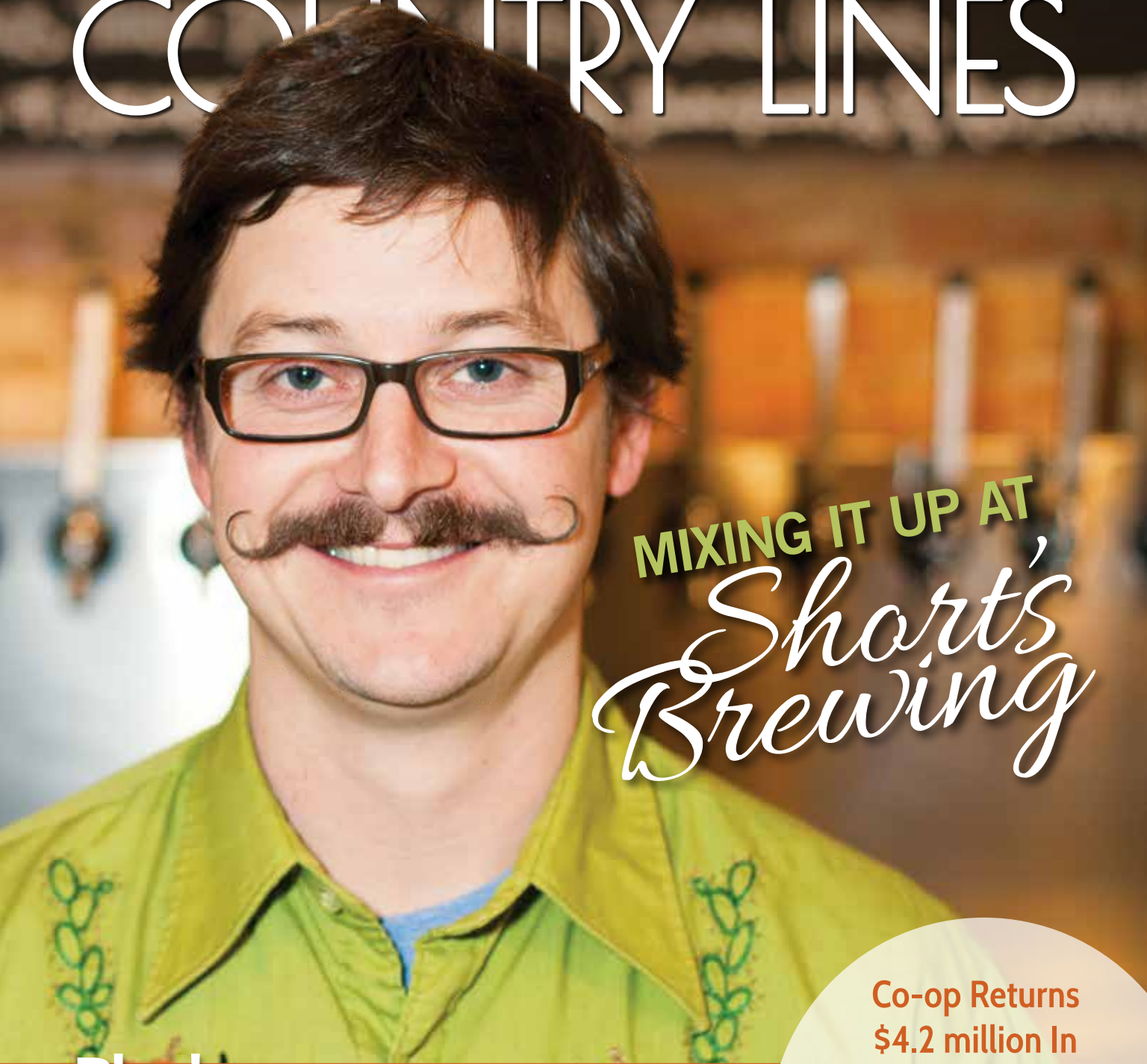


# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



MIXING IT UP AT  
*Shart's  
Brewing*

**Plus!**

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Turns 64

Co-op Returns  
\$4.2 million In  
Capital Credits!

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



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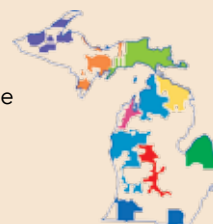
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## ON THE COVER\*

Joe Short is the founder of Short's Brewing Company, in Bellaire, MI, and likens brewing to being a chef. The beers he mixes up are creative in both their ingredients—from spruce tips to marshmallows—and names, like "Dr. Zeus" and "Stache Bender," whose artsy label depicts his mustachio.

Photo Courtesy—Michael Murphy IV Photography

\*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



Michigan's Electric  
Cooperatives  
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# Greetings

from Cherryland Electric

## The Three-Legged Stool

**O**nce again, it's October and National Cooperative Month.

That gets us thinking about our roots and the beginning of the cooperative program over 76 years ago.

Before there was electricity, cows were milked by hand. I can remember a three-legged stool my grandfather had in his milk barn for the times when he had no electricity due to outages that were more common in the early years of our program.

As your cooperative begins to hand out about \$4.2 million in a record-setting capital credit retirement, I sit at my desk extremely proud of this accomplishment and fully aware that it takes a strong three-legged cooperative structure to get to this point.

The three legs on our successful stool are the members, the board of directors, and the employees.

Obviously, there is no cooperative without the members. Cherryland exists only because farmers and rural residents wanted and needed electricity over three quarters of a century ago. Through the years, the members have shouldered all the rate increases necessary to build a cooperative that is now 3,000 miles of line in size and 35,000 members strong.

Members have been patient in times of severe storms, and yet demanding in their desire that outages be fewer and farther between. They have been paid back with reliability numbers that are among the best in the business.

The second leg is the loyal, dedicated board members who were elected by their peers to guide the cooperative through lean times of the past and today's best of times. These board members make the hard policy choices, difficult budget decisions, and challenging rate approvals.

Why do board members serve? They serve because they truly "get" what a cooperative is about. They "get" the fact that it is owned by them and their fellow members. They "get" that there is no better form of governance for any type of utility than a not-for-profit cooperative. Your directors "get" that they are responsible to each member, no matter how big or how small.

The third leg of this sturdy cooperative stool is the employee group. Every hour of every day, dedicated employees live by this mission statement: *Member focused. Safe. Reliable. Affordable.* What we must do every day is really this simple.

Our employees believe in and back our members. They perform many hours of volunteer service after hours in an effort to give back to their community. When storms arrive,



**Tony Anderson**  
General Manager

*(Continued on page 8)*

# Your Co-op To Return \$4.2 million in Capital Credits



**Mark Wilson**  
Chief Financial Officer

Cherryland has proudly served as your local co-op for the last 76 years.

Like all businesses, we need capital to operate. This is usually supplied by a combination of equity and debt, but the most significant source of equity for most co-ops is the retention of margins from the sale of products and services. In Cherryland's case, that's electricity.

We allocate margins to our members as capital credits based on their kilowatt hour (kWh) purchases from the co-op, or patronage. These credits reflect each member's ownership in the cooperative. When our financial status permits it, we retire, or pay back, capital credits.

It is your board of directors' responsibility to determine whether the co-op is in a strong enough financial position to return capital credits, and the dollar amount to retire in a given year.

That decision is influenced by many factors, including the co-op's financial performance and equity management plan.

**For 2014, your board has authorized a record general capital credit retirement of \$4.2 million!!**

You will receive your retirement this month on your October bill. It's a perfect way to celebrate National Cooperative Month!

Since 2009, Cherryland has issued over \$13 million in capital credit retirements back to our members. In doing so, the financial strength and stability of your co-op has remained strong, with continued healthy margins and equity as a percent of total assets averaging over 44 percent during this same period.

The following graph helps illustrate this same statistic. Since 2009, the cumulative patronage capital retired as a percent of total patronage capital has grown from slightly over 25 percent to almost 33 percent.

Other Michigan co-ops average closer to 20 percent, and co-ops of our same size (our peer group) across the country average closer to 25 percent. Cherryland ranks 13th out of 57 co-ops within our peer group.

Not only are we returning money to you, but we are protecting the finances and future of the co-op that you own.

Now *that's* something to celebrate! ■



## GENERAL MANAGER

Tony Anderson

## CO-OP EDITOR

Nick Edson

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## Capital Credit Retirements

	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
CEC—32.76	26.07	28.46	28.63	30.09	32.76
State—19.93	19.7	23.07	19.34	19.65	19.93
Cons Size—24.84	23.03	22.9	23.55	23.35	24.84



# KITCHEN CREATIVITY

Looking to try something new? Co-op cooks share their custom creations.

## Artichoke & Spinach Dip



2 8-oz. pkgs. light cream cheese  
8 oz. pkg. light sour cream  
1 c. parmesan cheese  
2 small cans artichokes, diced  
10 oz. pkg. frozen spinach  
2 T. olive oil  
1 T. marjoram flakes  
½ T. red pepper flakes (dry)

Mix all ingredients and put into a 2 qt. crock pot on low. Stir often as it heats. Serve with tortilla chips.

Paula Miles, Lawton

## Fiesta Lasagna (pictured)

1 lb. burger, browned  
1 can corn  
1 can black beans  
1 16-oz. can tomato sauce  
1 can diced tomatoes  
1 16-oz. can salsa  
1 small can sliced black olives  
1 envelope taco seasoning  
3 T. fresh cilantro  
8 oz. sour cream  
8 oz. cream cheese, softened  
1 pkg. lasagna noodles,  
tortillas or zucchini  
1 egg, lightly beaten  
8 oz. shredded  
mozzarella cheese  
16 oz. shredded cheddar cheese  
Shredded lettuce

Brown burger. Add corn, black beans, tomatoes and tomato sauce, salsa, olives, taco seasoning and cilantro. Stir. In another bowl, mix together sour cream, egg, mozzarella, and cream cheese. Layer like lasagna in a 9"x13" pan, ending with cheddar cheese on top. Bake 30 minutes at 375°. Take out of oven, and add lettuce. Set for 10 minutes. Serve with sour cream.

Patsy Miller, Pickford

## Golden Honey Glazed Chicken

3 ½ to 4 lbs. chicken, cut up  
½ c. Worcestershire®  
3 T. honey

Rinse chicken and pat dry. Place in a shallow pan, lined with foil. Mix Worcestershire® with honey. Baste chicken. Bake at 350° for 40 minutes, basting often.

Peggy Krentz, Alpena

## Chocolate Mousse Cheesecake



1½ c. chocolate wafer  
crumbs, crushed  
⅓ c. melted butter  
¾ c. sugar, divided  
16 oz. cream cheese  
1 t. vanilla  
3 eggs, unbeaten  
2 squares dark baking chocolate, melted

### Chocolate Mousse Topping:

½ c. butter  
8 oz. cream cheese, softened  
¾ c. sugar  
1 t. vanilla  
1 square dark baking  
chocolate, melted  
1 c. heavy cream, whipped

Grease a 9" cheesecake pan. Mix crumbs with butter and ¼ c. sugar until crumbly; pack firmly onto bottom and up sides of pan. On low speed of mixer, beat cheese until smooth and fluffy. Gradually add vanilla, ½ c. sugar, eggs and melted chocolate, continuing to beat until creamy. Pour over crumb crust in pan. Bake at 325° for 45 minutes. Cool to room temperature. For mousse topping, cream butter and cheese together until fluffy; add sugar gradually, mixing well. Add melted chocolate and vanilla, and beat at high speed until fluffy. Fold in whipped cream; spread over chocolate cheesecake and chill at least 2 hours. Serves 10–12.

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

## SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Ethnic" recipes by **Oct. 10** and your favorite "Sandwiches" recipes by **Nov. 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)!

Find more of our readers' recipes at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)



# When Do Appliance Upgrades Make Sense?

**F**or major appliances, comparing the EnergyGuide label is the best way to find the cost of using them. Based on the purchase price, you can calculate which one provides the best return.

The most efficient one is not always the best buy from a payback standpoint, but there are other factors to consider. Some people are concerned about the environmental impact of appliances, so they are willing to spend extra for the most efficient models. Choosing an Energy Star® model is a good choice.

To do a proper payback analysis, you must determine the annual operating cost of using an appliance. You may have the old EnergyGuide label, or you may find it on the internet. But remember, these are only averages. If you are already energy conscious, your operating costs are likely on the low side, so savings from installing a new appliance will be lower than Guide figures.

The easiest way to calculate this cost is to download the “Save Energy, Save Money” app from TogetherWeSave.com, which offers several home appliance calculators to help compare the cost of different appliances sizes, styles and ages, and a “Home Tour” to learn about saving energy.

Another way is to find the wattage rating on the nameplate. Divide it by 1,000 and multiply the result by your \$/kwh electric rate to get the operating cost-per-hour. If the nameplate lists amperage, multiply it by 120 to figure the watts. For appliances with a thermostat, reduce the operating cost by about 50 percent.

The rate of efficiency improvements and meaningful new features in major appliances is slowing, so don't wait if you really need a new one. An exception is TVs, as their prices are constantly dropping, and features and quality improving.

In general though, keep older appliances about 10 years, or until they need expensive repairs. If you use them as seldom and as efficiently as possible, they will not cost a lot more to use than a newer one. Even for a refrigerator, which runs constantly, your usage habits can really influence electricity consumption.

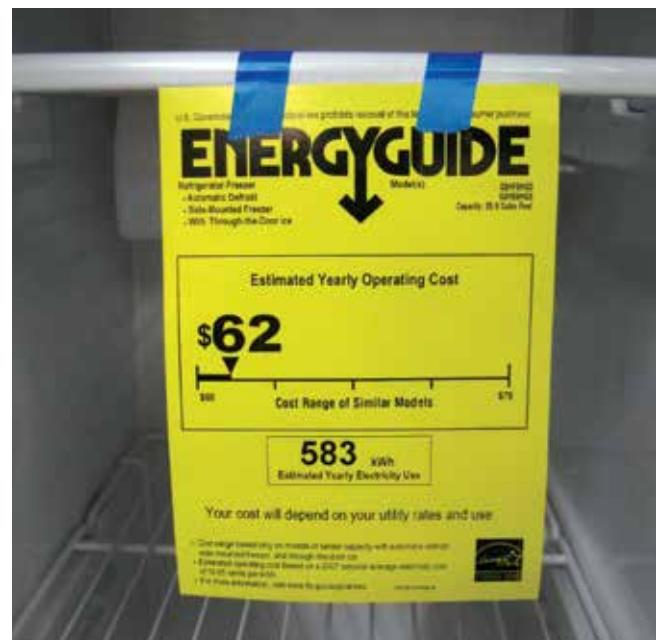
If you have a large family and do much laundry, that cost includes the water cost, and heating it. Upgrading your water heater, to perhaps a heat pump model, will reduce your dishwashing, bathing *and* laundry costs.

New front-loading washers are more energy efficient than top-loaders since they require less heated water (and less detergent). They also have a faster spin cycle, which extracts more water, so the dryer runs less.

For a new dishwasher, make sure it has a built-in water “pre-heater.” This allows you to set your water heater temperature lower without sacrificing the cleaning power of hotter water. Select a model with many cycles, so you can target the cycle length to each load's requirements.

Just like a house, a smaller refrigerator has less interior space to cool, so uses less electricity. Don't go to extremes on the small size, though. If you have to keep the door open to hunt for what you want, more energy is wasted than saved. Energy Star refrigerators use about one-half the energy of 10-year old models.

In new ranges, the energy efficiency of various models doesn't vary much. Convection ovens bake faster, so they use less electricity for some foods. Induction units lose less heat to the room air, so electricity use is somewhat less. The best way to save is to use the microwave or other small countertop appliances whenever possible. ■



Photos—James Dulley

## Are Renewables the Best Way to Meet Clean Energy Goals?

**W**hen people hear I work for an electric utility, they sometimes assume I hate the environment and that I kiss my pet “coal” every night before bed. Let me set the record straight. I want a clean energy future, too. We should be seeking new innovations that will help us keep the lights on in safe, affordable and sustainable ways.

Back in 2000, Germany embarked on an “Energy Transformation” journey. Their goal was to create a “nuclear free, carbon-reduced economy through the deployment of renewable technologies.”

Let’s unpack that. Nuclear is a *carbon free* electric generation technology. Germany’s goal wasn’t just reducing carbon emissions—it was transitioning to an energy portfolio consisting primarily of renewables. In fact, they hoped to provide 80 percent of their electricity from renewables by 2050.

They are doing well. They have brought a lot of renewables online. But, this came at a cost. Household electricity prices in Germany have more than doubled from about 18 cents/kilowatt hour (kWh) in 2000 to over 38 cents in 2013. Comparatively, U.S. electricity prices have remained relatively stable, averaging 13 cents/kWh over the last decade.

The case could be made that the environmental benefit justifies the costs. While it’s undeniable that Germany is now producing more solar energy than any other country, the U.S. has achieved far greater emissions reductions.



**Rachel Johnson**  
Member Services  
Manager

Since 2003, the U.S. has reduced emissions by six times what Germany has achieved.

As Germany gets rid of nuclear plants, they are building coal plants to replace them. The U.S., on the other hand, is increasingly diversifying its portfolio to include more natural gas while maintaining our existing nuclear fleet. We are incorporating a lot of renewables, too.



There is no perfect technology for generating electricity. They all have advantages and disadvantages. Our job as an electric provider is to balance our generation portfolio in a way that minimizes the disadvantages and maximizes the benefits.

That has to start with a fair and honest discussion about our goals. I think our goal should be to provide the cleanest, most affordable and reliable electricity we can. Which is why I am so excited about Cherryland’s energy portfolio in the coming years.

By 2016, almost 36 percent of our energy will be *carbon free*. That mix includes both renewables and nuclear, and an increase in our use of natural gas. We are predicting that by 2019 almost 25 percent of our members’ energy will come from natural gas. During that same time, we predict a continuing period of rate stability.

With new EPA regulations and the upcoming renewal of Michigan’s energy policy, we are likely to hear a lot about energy in the coming months. During those debates, I encourage all of you to be wary of those whose sole purpose is promoting renewables. We have the benefit of learning from Germany’s experience. They have more renewables, rising emissions, and skyrocketing prices.

As we continue our “energy transformation,” let’s focus on continuing to decrease emissions while keeping electricity affordable and reliable.

Continue the conversation on twitter @RachelOnEnergy. ■

## The Three-Legged Stool *(Continued from page 4)*

families and personal lives are set aside in order to get power restored to the members they know are counting on them.

When these people step in the office door or roll out in a truck, the goal is to serve. Our safety record is solid. The reliability numbers are near the top. Our rates have never been as competitive in our history as they are today.

The cream in the can next to our three-legged stool is the \$4.2 million in capital credits that is going out to our members during this National Cooperative Month. Your cooperative is standing strong on all three legs and all members are benefiting.

This is how it should be. Since the first farmer set aside his wooden stool and flipped the lights on in the barn, this is how it was meant to be. ■



# Willie Wiredhand Turns 64

**O**n Oct. 30, **Willie Wiredhand** can officially start singing The Beatles' classic song, "When I'm 64."

Willie, the mascot of the electric co-op industry, was "born" on Oct. 30, 1950, after his creator Andrew McLay had downed "a few beers."

McLay was a freelance artist who worked for the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association in Washington, D.C. He was asked to come up with a symbol that the co-ops could use to portray rural electric service as the farmer's hired hand.

So, one evening McLay got together with co-op magazine editor Bill Roberts and after a few beers they started throwing out ideas. When the idea of Willie was hatched, McLay picked up his sketch pad. Willie was born on that fall night in 1950.

The national membership selected Willie as its animated ambassador in February, 1951.

As luck would have it, the heyday of animated advertising characters was booming because of a new medium—television.

Companies were looking for spokesmen and animated characters were just starting to become the "in" creation at advertising agencies.

So, characters like Speedy Alka-Seltzer and the Jolly Green Giant were born.

Willie Wiredhand was on his way to stardom, it seemed. But there was a problem. A BIG problem.

His name was Reddy Kilowatt. He had been around since 1926, and was the symbol of investor-owned electric utilities.

The creator of Reddy—a guy named Ashton Collins—refused to let Willie stand on his own without a fight. He thought Willie was the creation of the "socialist co-ops" who relied on federal loans to get their start.

So on July 14, 1953 a lawsuit was filed saying that Willie's creation infringed on Reddy's registered trademarks. In essence, Reddy and his legal henchmen were trying to pull the plug on Willie. Rumors, however, were that Reddy and Willie became fast friends years later.

It took three years, but finally in 1956 a federal judge sided with Willie and said he could stand on his own two plugs.

It was a landmark victory for the co-ops, who wanted Willie to represent co-op friendliness and spunk.

He's been going strong ever since. In fact, at age 64 he's more popular than ever because Baby Boomers



©NRECA



**Nick Edson**

remember those loveable advertising characters they grew up with. And, younger members like the way Willie's versatility is displayed as he uses social media and changes with the times.

Willie Wiredhand is, quite literally, a connection between our co-op past, present and future.

He's still plugging along, helping us spread the word about the cooperative difference. ■



# SHORT'S BREWING COMPANY

MIXING IT UP AT

# Short's Brewing





Joe Short thinks of beer brewing as a “noble profession”—one rooted in ancient history. The drink of royalty and the common man, beer and pubs have long brought people together.

“Beer has a fantastic history,” exclaims Short, the 35-year-old, mustachioed CEO and founder of Short’s Brewing Company, one of Michigan’s leading craft beer companies. “It’s a story that has been left out of most history books. Pubs have been meeting houses and where court has been held; their role has shaped our culture.”

Short’s Brewing now shapes the culture of Bellaire, a scenic northern village near Torch Lake. Its story begins with a 22-year-old Joe Short, a young man with a passion for brewing inventive beers and the courage to convert a 120-year-old hardware store into a brewhouse and restaurant, later building a production facility in Elk Rapids, all of which has made Bellaire a destination for craft beer lovers.

The company celebrated its 10th anniversary in April, and is the third largest craft beer producer in the state. Michigan’s beer sector generates over 64,000 jobs, ranking the state 10th nationally in related jobs, notes the National Beer Wholesalers Association and the Beer Institute. Beer distribution alone generates 5,000 jobs and \$1.9 billion in economic activity.

“Bells and Founders are number one and two in Michigan for beer sales, but they distribute to other states,” notes Short, who lives in Elk Rapids with his wife, Leah, and their two young sons. “We produced 193 barrels our first year, 23,000 barrels in 2013, and we will do 34,000 to 38,000 barrels this year.”

Short’s beers are known for unusual ingredients, from spruce tips to marshmallows, coffee and chocolate, or fruits and spices. It is distributed only in Michigan, an approach that allows Short and his staff to be creative and develop 30 to 40 different beers each year. National distribution, he says, would require narrowing the selection, a distasteful option for the Kalkaska County native who likens brewing to being a chef.

“It’s a form of cooking with limitless creative potential,” offers Short, who brewed his first batch at 19 years old



while living at his mother’s rural Rapid City home, where he grew up. It was an unsuccessful experiment, but it would lead him to learn more.

“That first batch was really bad,” Short says. “It was brown ale. But, I became a proficient home brewer and brewed a lot of beer while in college.”

Short got his first professional job brewing beer at age 21, while working at the former Traverse Brewing Company in Elk Rapids. That led to brewing for other Michigan companies and eventually back to the region where he grew up and longed to settle.

“I realized once I went to school (at Western Michigan University) that I wasn’t a city type. I need the woods and water, and Torch Lake is one of the most beautiful places you can live [near],” Short says.

His company makes over 200 beers (visit [shortsbrewing.com](http://shortsbrewing.com)). Most have wacky, clever names like Dirty Sturks, a double imperial stout, and Dr. Zeus, an India pale ale. Bellaire Brown is named for its home town. The brewery offers two “stache” beers as well, Hopstache and Stache Bender—a double-strength recipe. Both have bold citrus flavors and artsy labels depicting Short’s trademark mustache.

“The names for our beers come from all the people in the company,” Short explains. “Some refer to music or food or are experience-related. ‘Night Wheeler’ (a dark black lager) comes from when we go wakeboarding at midnight when the moon is out.

“We’re the Willy Wonka of the beer world. If you can dream it, there is a good chance we can make it.” ■



# Co-op News

## Energy Smart Seminar

**Date:**

Wednesday, Oct. 15

**Time:**

6 p.m.

**Location:**

Cherryland Electric Cooperative

## Interested in Reducing Your Heating Bill?

Join us at our Cherryland Electric Cooperative office, in Grawn, on Wednesday, Oct. 15, and learn to be Energy Smart with Ric Evans of Paradigm Energy Services.

We'll cover the most efficient ways to heat and cool your home, and the most effective ways to insulate and weatherize. Ric, an instructor at NMC, will discuss what you can do yourself and what you should leave to the pros.

Several attendees will win LED gift baskets and one lucky member will win a *free* home energy audit with Ric.

This seminar is free to Cherryland members, but space is limited. Please RSVP to Tammy Squires at (231) 486-9261 or by email at [tsquires@cherrylandelectric.com](mailto:tsquires@cherrylandelectric.com).

## Cherryland Buys Two Pigs at Fair

Cherryland purchased two pigs from co-op members at the Northwestern Michigan Fair and donated them to Goodwill and Father Fred.

Board president Terry Lautner purchased pigs from Grace Kolbusz and Morgan Burch. Grace lives on David Rd., attends Kingsley schools, and is the daughter of Charles and Lori Kolbusz. Morgan lives near Interlochen, attends Benzie Central schools, and is the daughter of Tyson and Melissa Burch.

## Cherryland Cares Seeks Grant Applications

Area nonprofit agencies who are seeking financial help can apply for a grant through Cherryland Cares.

Cherryland Cares is a five-member board, made up of Cherryland Electric Cooperative members, who distribute money from Operation Roundup to area nonprofits. The next quarterly meeting of Cherryland Cares is Monday, Dec. 15, and grant applications are due by Friday, Dec. 5.

Funding for this program comes from Operation Round Up, which is money donated from Cherryland members who elect to round up their bills to the nearest dollar every month. This amount averages \$6 per year.

To receive a Cherryland Cares grant application or join Operation Round Up, contact Nick Edson at 486-9222 or e-mail [nicke@cecelec.com](mailto:nicke@cecelec.com).



Cherryland CEO Tony Anderson (L-R) and board president Terry Lautner are pictured with Grace Kolbusz, who sold her 4-H pig to the co-op.



Morgan Burch (L), shown with Cherryland CEO Tony Anderson (center) and board president Terry Lautner, also sold her 4-H pig to Cherryland Electric Cooperative.

## Pay Your Cherryland Electric Bill Online

Want to save money and pay your Cherryland Electric Cooperative bill online?

It's easy to do. You can set up your accounts to get only an e-mail bill—no more paper bills.

To sign up, access your account on [CherrylandElectric.coop](http://CherrylandElectric.coop). It will prompt you immediately after you sign in to make a decision on whether or not you want the paper bill to continue; if you do, check the box. If not, simply press "update."

Questions about online payment can be answered by Cherryland's Member Service Department at 486-9200.

## Check Out Our New Website!

For the latest energy efficiency rebates, online account management, scholarships, board meeting minutes, and co-op news and events, check out our new website ([CherrylandElectric.coop](http://CherrylandElectric.coop)).

If you haven't already set up a log-in to manage your account online, you will be prompted to do so the first time you try to access it via our SmartHub® account management system. You can access your account anytime and anywhere from a smartphone, tablet, or PC. ■

# Teach Kids Well About Electrical Safety

**E**lectricity is a dynamic power source. We live surrounded by it, but sometimes forget how dangerous it can be. Many electrical fires, injuries and electrocutions can be prevented when we understand and practice electrical safety. This is especially true for our youngest electric co-op members.

Throughout the year, Cherryland Electric Cooperative offers safety demonstrations at local schools to help teach kids about electricity. But, as your child's first and most important teacher, you can help reinforce those lessons.

Start at an early age, teaching them about the physical dangers associated with electrical components and how to handle electrical plugs, outlets, switches and other devices. Keep in mind, talking to your children about electrical safety should also include fun activities and facts about the basics—what is electricity, the need to respect its power and how to use it efficiently as they study, work and play.

Getting kids to show interest in these lessons isn't easy. Just remember that what your kids learn from you today can be a lifesaver later when they encounter potential hazards, like downed power lines, in their path, play hide-and-seek behind the big metal electrical boxes in the neighborhood, or are tempted to clamber up a utility pole.

Gather your kids around the kitchen table—some of the best teachable moments about electrical safety can

occur in and around your home. Look around. There are plenty of opportunities to demonstrate safety that are as close as the electrical outlet on your living room wall. For example, show kids how plugs work, and let them know that even if they are curious about the slits of an electrical outlet, *nothing* else should be placed inside. Each year about 2,400 children end up in the emergency room after suffering injuries caused by inserting objects—paper clips, pens, screws, nails, forks, hair pins, coins and more—into electrical outlets. That's about seven kids per day who sustain injuries ranging from electric shock to burns.

But this isn't the only electrical mishap that impacts kids. Our reliance on electronics and gadgets has left families at risk when they overcrowd electrical outlets, continue using frayed wires, place devices near liquids, or leave electronics on for long periods of time. Some of the same guidelines offer to help protect both kids and adults. We should all set good examples for our youngsters.

Supplement your lessons at home with resources. The Electrical Safety Foundational International ([esfi.org](http://esfi.org)) is also among the many national organizations offering free kits, videos and interactive online tools that make learning and practicing electrical safety fun for you and your children. And as they grow older, remember to keep teaching them about the power of electricity and how to use it safely. ■





# Jobs Are Opening in the ELECTRIC CO-OP NETWORK

**O**ctober is National Cooperative Month, and this year, Michigan Country Lines is showcasing careers at electric co-ops. Read on to learn how these jobs vary and touch every aspect of business—and how you can find yourself in one of them.

The men and women who climb poles to work on power lines are the most visible electric utility employees, but it takes many others to keep the power flowing. From accounting to communications, engineering, human resources, and customer/member service, job opportunities are numerous and will increase as Baby Boomers retire in waves.

By 2017, 55 percent of electric co-op CEOs will be eligible for retirement, and that jumps to 75 percent in 10 years. Workers in other categories are also leaving in the next five years: 37 percent—senior managers, 31 percent—supervisors, 26 percent—system operations staff, 24 percent—engineers, 16 percent—skilled trades (lineworkers, equipment operators), 14 percent—information technology (IT).

This means new positions may be opening at a co-op near you. Co-ops are generally considered great places to work because people are valued over profits. Electric co-ops, specifically, are nonprofit businesses, which means they have to generate money in order to operate and meet financial lending requirements, but any extra revenue above expenses is returned to their member-owners as patronage “capital credits.”

It's common for employees to stay with a co-op (and in this industry) for 30 or 40 years because of its stability and good benefit offerings. Co-op employees often wear many hats within a single job description, and this gives them a real opportunity to build long-lasting relationships within the co-op and its network.

## Preparing for the Tide to Turn

Retirements have already begun in earnest, and electric co-ops are planning to ensure that new employees are equipped to offer top-notch service. Decades of knowledge can't be replaced, but training provides a solid foundation.

To that end, training programs for lineworkers and other employees sponsored by or partnered with electric co-ops have popped up nationwide. In Michigan, there are at least six line technician programs. This means workers get proper training and start their new careers on solid footing, and co-ops get employees with a head start. And, it's one more venue for technical job training. The Michigan Electric Cooperative Association also offers in-state training for electric co-op employees.



Electric Cooperative Careers  
There's a place for you in the co-op network.

It's also common to see new employees who spent time interning at their local electric co-op.

## Electric Co-ops By the Numbers

The unique aspect about U.S. electric co-ops is that each one is an independent business, but they're all connected to a vast network serving 42 million people in 47 states. They serve 19 million businesses, homes, schools, churches, farms and other establishments in 2,500 of America's 3,141 counties. This means 900 electric co-ops nationwide employ 70,000 workers.

Much more goes on at these co-ops than just keeping the system running. Member services employees take phone calls and bill payments, and offer programs and services, such as home energy audits and scholarships for high school grads. Staking technicians and engineers plot where new power lines will be built, while purchasing employees keep equipment inventory and negotiate contracts. And, IT professionals are increasingly part of the landscape, as more digital technologies are integrated.

## How to Find Co-op Jobs

Interested in joining the co-op family? National electric co-op career opportunities are available at [TouchstoneEnergy.jobs](http://TouchstoneEnergy.jobs), at [cooperative.com](http://cooperative.com), or by visiting Michigan co-op websites at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com) and clicking on “Your Co-op” and choosing a co-op's name. ■



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As a member-owner of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, you have the privilege of participating in the political affairs of our cooperative. That includes your unique right to make financial contributions to the campaigns of candidates for political office who support our electric cooperative.

The Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) is the political action committee of the nation's electric cooperatives. ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action gives you, the member-owner, the opportunity to raise your voice on behalf of the cooperative.



For more information on ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action, contact Rachel Johnson at [rjohnson@cecelec.com](mailto:rjohnson@cecelec.com) • 231-486-9275