

MICHIGAN COUNTY LINES



BASKETBALL MADNESS

'Floored' By Michigan Companies

Plus!

4 Electrical Safety Shows For Kids

5 Enter Pay My Bill Photo Contest

8 Heat Pump Discounts

9 New Bill Pay Option

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



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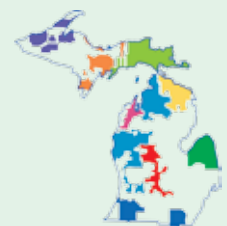
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ON THE COVER*

Upper Peninsula native Tom Izzo coaches the MSU Spartans basketball team. The flooring they—and most teams nationwide—play on is made in the U.P.

Photo—Matthew Mitchell

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
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For more information on our free electrical safety demonstrations, visit gtlakes.com, click on "Your Community" and again on "Electrical Safety Demonstrations." School presentations are for fourth to seventh grades and begin in April.

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Attend A GLE Safety Show

Our electrical safety demonstrations were presented to 38 groups in 2014 reaching approximately 3,000 people, mainly students, in our service area.

Each spring, our safety demonstration team takes to the road with their electrical display trailer. They visit many schools, along with road commissions and fire departments.

Mounted to the trailer is a portable power line energized at 7,200 volts that lets children clearly see the danger when tree branches, antennas and other objects touch the line.

Whether working atop a utility pole or behind a desk, we all participate in a comprehensive safety program at Great Lakes Energy. Safety is everyone's job here.

Electric service is more than just keeping your lights on. It includes providing extra value to the members of Great Lakes Energy. Part of that value is bringing our safety message to area schools and groups. Each year, we reach more youngsters, and adults, with information that could save their lives. There's nothing more important than that.

If you are a school teacher or administrator within our service area, feel free to contact us to find out more about this entertaining and critically important service that we can bring to your school. At Great Lakes Energy we are always looking out for you. ■



Steve Boeckman
Great Lakes Energy
President/CEO



GLE's Reliability Goal for 2015

SAIDI (pronounced SAY-DEE) says Great Lakes Energy's reliability goal this year is to not exceed 182.1 average outage minutes.

If successful in 2015, the cooperative will have met its annual reliability goal for eight of the last 10 years. We met our goal in 2014.

The goal is based on average outage minutes recorded during normal conditions. Typically, outages are due to weather, animals, equipment failures, vehicle accidents, and other causes.

SAIDI is an industry standard index used by GLE to determine the average amount of time a GLE member could be without power in a given year. Since it represents an average, some members actually experience no outage times while others experience more than the SAIDI number.

Weather-related outage events are factored into the SAIDI calculations, with the exception of major event days (MEDs). Storms that create MEDs occur infrequently and are the most damaging.

Great Lakes Energy will continue working to limit the weather's damaging impact on its distribution system. The addition of more line protection devices, use of new technologies, improvements to major power line circuits, and ongoing vegetation management to limit tree damage to power lines are all helping to get the lights back on safely and more quickly for members during storms.

Watch for SAIDI goal updates in future issues of *Michigan Country Lines*. ■

Take Your BEST SHOT!



Announcing the New Photo Contest for Members

Great Lakes Energy is pleased to announce our new Pay My Bill Photo Contest. One lucky GLE member will win a credit to their energy bill in 2015.

The contest launched Feb. 10 on the GLE website. Members are invited to submit photos now through Sept. 21. Photos published in *Michigan Country Lines* during 2015 will be entered into a random drawing to win a gift of energy up to \$200 toward a member's December 2015 electric bill.

Details and instructions for photo submission—including contest rules, topic list, publication date, and submission deadlines—can be found online at gtlakes.com/photocontest. Photos can also be mailed to our Boyne City office.



Photos will not be returned, and contest is only open to co-op members.

We look forward to seeing your best shot! Your photo could be a winner!

Who Are Your Directors?



Paul Schemanski

The directors of your electric cooperative are Great Lakes Energy members, just like you.

In this issue, we continue featuring GLE directors so you can get to know them better. Paul Schemanski, senior data management—team lead, helps manage the electronic medical records systems at McLaren Northern Michigan Hospital in Petoskey.

Working with other departments, his efforts in gathering data electronically for the Antimicrobial

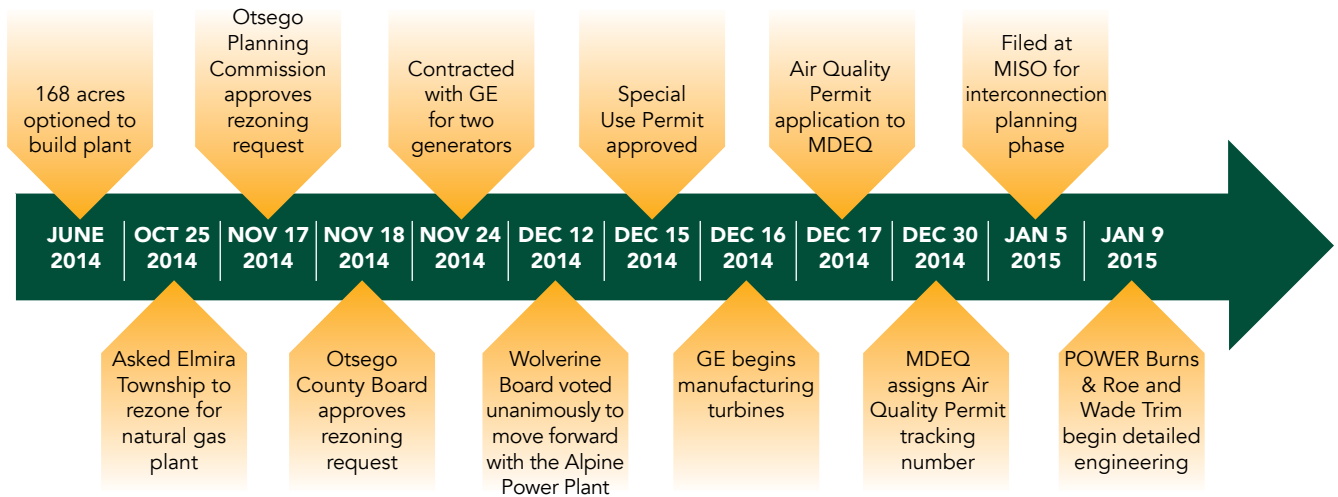
Stewardship Program helped the hospital earn a Governor's Award for improving patient care through automated data analysis. He also was recognized as a Patient Safety Hero by the hospital for automating the gathering of infectious disease data which enhanced patient care.

"It is extremely rewarding to know that the work I do has a direct impact on the care of patients," said Schemanski.

In addition to his responsibilities as a GLE board member, he volunteers his time with Northern Community Mediation, Petoskey Rotary, Petoskey High School and the Petoskey Community Garden.

Working together for the benefit of all is part of the cooperative difference. ■

Wolverine Power Moves Forward With Natural Gas Plant



Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative Inc., of Cadillac, is moving forward with a new 432 megawatt natural gas-fueled electric power plant, located in Elmira Township, near Gaylord. The Alpine Power Plant will use natural gas to generate electricity during times of peak demand and to compliment the ever-increasing amount of intermittent renewable energy in our state, like wind and solar. The Alpine Power Plant is scheduled to be completed by Spring 2016.

“The members of the planning commissions and boards of Elmira Township and Otsego County have voted unanimously to approve our applications, sending the message that this project is widely supported,” said Ken Bradstreet, project spokesman. Visit alpinecleanenergy.com to learn more and keep updated on this project. ■

New Touch-Control Faucets Save Water, Energy

The right kitchen faucet can have a strong impact on your water and energy savings.

Today, one-handle faucets are common, as their size and shape impact water use, but the newest, most efficient models can be controlled by the wave or touch of a hand. By not adjusting a handle, water is not wasted by readjusting the temperature. This provides a lot of savings—especially when washing dishes by hand.

A standard faucet uses more water and energy when washing dishes by hand than running a properly-loaded, efficient dishwasher. With a touch-control faucet, hand-washing dishes can be more efficient than a dishwasher. Also, fewer germs are spread because the faucet is touched less often with dirty hands, and the attractive finish lasts longer.

There are two “no-hands” models. One senses touch from your body (hand, forearm, elbow). For example, when rinsing dishes, you can hold several plates in each hand and tap anywhere on the faucet with your arm to control the water flow.

The other model has a sensor on top (a hand-wave controls it), and another on the faucet neck that triggers when your hands are in hand-washing position.

Tall faucet spouts with a pull-down sprayer are also efficient. Depending on under-cabinet clearance, pick the

tallest that fits, as the height is handy when rinsing a large pot. Choosing one with a pause button also lets you temporarily stop the flow without waving or touching the fixture.

Whichever faucet you have, never ignore a dripping one, since even a slow leak increases energy costs. After heating and cooling, heating water is the greatest energy user, but cold water also uses a lot of energy to purify, pump and treat.

Companies offering touch-control faucets include: American Standard, 800-442-1902, americanstandard-us.com; Delta Faucet, 800-345-3358, deltafaucet.com; Kohler, 800-456-4537, kohler.com; Moen, 800-289-6636, moen.com; and Pfister, 800-732-8238, pfisterfaucets.com. ■



Photo—Moen

—James Dullely



SOUP FOR THE SOUL

In a slow cooker or on the stove, these soups are the ultimate in comfort food.

Easy Taco Soup (pictured)

1½-2 lbs. ground beef
1 large onion, diced
2 15.5-oz. cans pink or red kidney beans
15.5-oz. can pinto or chili beans
15.5-oz. can shoe peg corn (or whole kernel corn)
14.5-oz. can diced tomatoes and green chilies

2 14.5-oz. cans, any brand, Mexican-style tomatoes
4.5-oz. can diced green chilies
4.6-oz. can black olives, drained and sliced
1¼-oz. pkg. taco seasoning mix
1-oz. pkg. ranch salad dressing mix

For Garnish:

tortilla chips
sour cream
grated cheese

chopped green onions
sliced black olives

Brown the ground beef with onions. Drain excess fat, then transfer to large crock pot or large pot on stove. Add beans, corn, tomatoes, olives, chilies, taco seasoning and ranch dressing mix. You may need to add ½ c. of water for desired consistency. In the crockpot, cook on low for 6 hours. On the stovetop, simmer on low about 1 hour. Break the tortilla chips and put in bottom of bowls and cover with soup. Top with your choice of garnishes.

Melody Brown, Big Bay

Butternut Cheesy Bacon Chowder—Gluten Free

4 c. chicken broth
1 butternut squash, roughly 3–4 c.
1 c. diced onion
1 c. diced celery
1 ½ t. salt

¼ t. black pepper
2 c. bacon or diced ham, cooked
2 c. shredded sharp cheddar
1 ½ c. heavy whipping cream
fresh chives, optional

Combine first six ingredients and cook until vegetables are tender. While vegetables are cooking, fry your meat of choice and drain. Using a blender, purée the vegetables and return them to the pot (an immersion blender works best). Add meat, cheese and heavy cream to the cooked vegetables. Heat through for about 5 minutes, but do not boil. Garnish with fresh chives, if desired.

Anna Kinsey, LeRoy

Mushroom Barley Soup

1½ lbs. cubed beef
1 T. vegetable oil
2 c. finely chopped onion
1 c. diced carrots
½ c. diced celery
4-oz. can mushrooms, undrained
1 garlic clove, minced

14.5-oz. can beef broth
14.5-oz. can chicken broth
2 c. water
½ c. pearl barley
1 t. salt
½ t. pepper
3 T. chopped parsley, for garnish



In a soup pot, brown meat in oil. Remove meat with a slotted spoon and set aside. Sauté onion, carrot and celery in drippings until tender, about 5 minutes. Add meat back into pan along with all other ingredients; bring to a boil. Reduce heat, cover and simmer 1½ to 2 hours or until barley and meat are tender. Stir in parsley.

Geraldine Rutkowski, Ubly

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite **"Camping"** recipes by **April 1** and your favorite **"Burgers/All American"** by **May 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprinted or typed on one side, please): *Country Lines Recipes*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Please note the co-op from which you receive your electric service.

Contributors whose recipes we print in 2015 will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's January 2016 electric bill (up to \$200)!

Visit countrylines.com for more reader recipes!

Photos—831 Creative

Fuel Mix Report

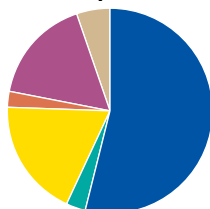
The fuel mix characteristics of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/14.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

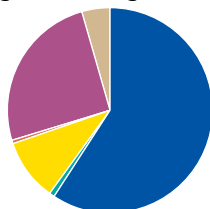
Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	53.6%	60.4%
Oil	3.5%	0.7%
Gas	18.4%	8.9%
Hydroelectric	3.2%	0.5%
Nuclear	16.0%	24.6%
Renewable Fuels	5.3%	4.9%
Biofuel	0.5%	0.7%
Biomass	0.1%	0.4%
Solar	0.0%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.0%	0.0%
Wind	4.6%	3.2%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

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 Average Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	4.2	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,470	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.5	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0054	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/14.

Great Lakes Energy purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Cooperative, which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Heat Pump Discounts

Qualifying Great Lakes Energy members whose primary heating system is a heat pump (ground-source or air-source) can have it separately metered at a lower kilowatt-hour (kWh) rate.

The rate rewards members who have an efficient electric heating system with a 3 cents per kWh credit for energy used by their heat pump. Credit is available year-round for qualifying ground-source heat pumps. Qualifying air-source heat pumps will receive the credit only during the heating season; bills rendered November through May.

Electric heat pump must meet or exceed the energy efficiency standards below to qualify for the lower rate:

Geothermal System – minimum requirements of EER 17.1 COP 3.6 for closed loop water-to-air; EER 21.1 COP 4.1 for open loop water-to-air; EER 16.1 COP 3.1 for closed loop water-to-water; EER 20.1 COP 3.5 for open loop water-to-water; EER 16 COP 3.6 for direct geoexchange.

Air-Source Heat Pump – minimum requirements of HSPF 8.5, EER 12.5, & SEER 15 for split systems and HSPF 8, EER 12 & SEER 14 for package systems.

Heat pump must also be wired to a second meter so recorded kilowatt-hours can receive the discount. Energy used by other electric appliances, devices and equipment will continue to be recorded by the main meter at the standard residential rate.

Once enrolled in the rate, you will receive one bill for energy used by both meters.

Rebates Available, Too

- Rebates for qualifying ground-source (\$500) or air-source (\$250) heat pumps will continue, but with higher efficiency standards that correspond with new electric heat rate standards.
- Additional rebates up to \$450 for qualifying heat pumps are available through our Energy Optimization (EO) program: michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319.

For more information, call us at 1-888-485-2537, ext. 8957, or e-mail us at glenergy@glenergy.com. ■

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Great Lakes Energy is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

If you wish to file a Civil Rights program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html, or at any USDA office, or call (866) 632-9992 to request the form. You may also write a letter containing all of the information requested in the form. Send your completed complaint form or letter to us by mail at U.S. Department of Agriculture, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W. Washington, D.C. 20250-9410, by fax, (202) 690-7442 or e-mail at program.intake@usda.gov.

Another Pay By Phone Option

The use of e-checks to pay your Great Lakes Energy bills has been expanded to include our automated phone system.

Pay by phone at any time with our automated phone service. Call 888-485-2537, use the options menu, and follow the payment prompts. Have your electric bill handy, as you will need to enter your account number before completing the process. You will receive a confirmation number to verify your payment was received and applied to your account.

With electronic checking or e-checks, you simply enter your banking account information to have the payment electronically drawn from your checking account.

You can also pay by credit or debit card using our automated phone system.

Other convenient payment methods also include:

Pay online at gtlakes.com. Visit my.gtlakes.com and follow the instructions. Enroll in e-billing while you're there.

Automatic payments ensure your bills are always paid on time. Payments are automatically deducted each month from a checking or savings account, or charged to your credit or debit card.

Contact our reps by phone to pay. Call 888-485-2537. Member service representatives are available 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday through Friday, to take your payment



over the phone. They can use your bank account information to debit your checking account or will accept a credit or debit card payment.

Pay in person. Bring your payment to any of our GLE locations in Boyne City, Waters, Kalkaska, Reed City, Newaygo, Scottville, Hart, or Wayland, with convenient drive-through windows in Hart, Newaygo and Scottville. We accept cash, check, money order, credit or debit card payments.

Several local businesses also accept payments for GLE bills that are not delinquent. Visit gtlakes.com or contact us for the location of the pay station nearest you.

Call 888-485-2537 or visit gtlakes.com for additional information on ways to pay your GLE bill. ■

YOUR SMALL CHANGE MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE



Bellaire Public Library
Children's Literacy Station Computer

Can you give a few cents a month to help your community? The People Fund program works because there is power in numbers. A contribution of less than \$1 each month adds up fast when thousands of Great Lakes Energy members get involved.

The needs of our local communities continue to grow, and you have the power to give the People Fund a bigger role in meeting those needs. We round up your electric bill to the next dollar and the amount, which averaged just 49 cents a month in 2014, goes into the People Fund. There are no administrative costs. All donations are returned to our local communities.

We Need Your Help!

Enroll in the People Fund today: 1-888-485-2537 • gtlakes.com





BASKETBALL MADNESS

'Floored' By Michigan Companies

Tom Izzo surveys the basketball court in Michigan State University's Breslin Center and still relishes what that court represents. Fifteen years earlier, Izzo led the Spartans to the NCAA championship on that very floor in Indianapolis.

After beating Florida, MSU purchased the portable court for its own use from Horner Flooring Co. Inc., which has manufactured sports flooring in Dollar Bay, MI, since 1891, the year Dr. James Naismith invented basketball.

"You wouldn't put the U.P. and basketball together for being famous," Izzo says. "But when you think about it, it makes some sense."

The Upper Peninsula has been the center of the athletic flooring universe for over 100 years. And, Izzo's one NCAA title, six Final Four appearances, 11 Big Ten regular season and tournament crowns, 17 consecutive NCAA Tournament bids and eight National Coach of the Year awards make the Iron Mountain native one of Michigan's most prominent sports figures. So, it all makes perfect sense.

Michigan State's journey to the 2009 Final Four at Ford Field in Detroit and most recent national semifinal appearance the following year back in Indianapolis, ended on courts made by Connor Sport Court International Inc., located in the heart of Iron County. Connor Sport has been in business since 1872 and in 2005 was named the official supplier of courts for the men's and women's Final Fours.

Both U.P. companies have amassed an astounding list of venues they have equipped—from high schools and colleges and professional facilities to the Olympics.

During the Spartans' last practice before defeating the Gators on the Horner floor that momentous

Monday night in April 2000, Izzo commiserated with his equally renowned boyhood rival, former Iron Mountain High School and Northern Michigan University teammate and best friend, Steve Mariucci, who at the time was the head coach of the San Francisco 49ers.

"We were laughing about it, saying me, you and this floor were made up in the U.P.," Izzo says. "I always knew about the floor companies up there and there's no question that when I'm watching a Final Four or an NBA event, I take a lot of pride in it, being a Hooper."

Proximity to a select variety of hard maple trees, which thrive in the U.P. climate, is the reason Michigan has become the world leader in athletic flooring.

The U.P. companies have
amassed an astounding list
of venues they have
equipped—from high schools
to colleges to professional
facilities to the Olympics.

"Hard maple trees obviously grow south of there, as well, but when you go that far north the growing season is real short," says Jason Gasperich, Connor Sports' sustainability director. "So, what happens is you end up with a very tight-grained, dense hardwood."

The old-growth forests have been replanted numerous times by an industry that has been at the forefront of renewable resource development. Some 40 different sawmills supply the lumber and a minimum of 30 trees—roughly



Photos—Matthew Mitchell

25 years old and up—will be used to make the court on which the Final Four will be played at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis, April 4–6.

Michigan State's court has been taken apart and put back together countless times between non-sporting events, such as commencement exercises and concerts.

According to MSU Deputy Athletics Director Greg Ianni, who oversees the Spartans' athletic facilities, Horner has taken the floor back to the U.P. to be refurbished on numerous occasions, though it is nearing the end of its life expectancy.

After the surface is replaced in the next year or so, parts of it will be put on permanent display, others stored in the school's archives, and "pieces will be made available to our fan base," Ianni says. "The quality of the court has been terrific, and the irony of the fact that this floor was built in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan where our head basketball coach came from, is quite unique." ■



Steve Grinczel is the online columnist for MSU's athletics website, *MSUSpartans.com*, and the co-host of the "Griff & Grinz" sports radio talk show on WQTX-FM (92.1).

He covered the Spartans for 24 years for Booth Newspapers of Michigan and lives in Haslett, MI.

Coulter Farms' Efficiency Upgrades Good for Business

GLE Member Spotlight

Coulter Farms

Energy Saving Actions:

Built a state-of-the-art controlled-atmosphere fruit and vegetable storage facility:

- Super-insulated cooler envelope
- High performance four-stage water chiller
- Centralized cooler evaporator fan controls
- On-demand evaporator coil defrost controls
- Energy efficient carbon dioxide scrubber to downsize nitrogen generator
- Variable frequency drives on all process pumps and fans
- Centrally controlled lighting and individual occupancy sensors
- High performance T8 fluorescent high bay lights
- High frequency forklift battery chargers

Results:

- Lowered electricity use by over 200,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year
- Received \$12,900 in EO Program rebates

Great Lakes Energy helped Coulter Farms of New Era save over 200,000 kilowatt-hours (kWh) per year, enough energy to light over 250 average-sized homes for a month.

Owner Caleb Coulter needed to build a new processing and storage facility. He decided to design the facility for maximum efficiency by participating in the cooperative's Energy Optimization (EO) program.

"I enrolled because I was positive that many of the applications in my facility would meet or exceed the program requirements," Coulter explains.

In a refrigerated storage facility like the one at Coulter Farms, all components work together to maintain the freshness of food products processed and stored inside. Upgrades included variable frequency drives to improve the efficiency of pumps and fans, centrally controlled refrigeration and lighting, occupancy sensors, and a custom designed controlled-atmosphere system for fruit storage.

Coulter feels he's been sufficiently rewarded for being environmentally responsible and saving energy, and also appreciates that the process was so easy. "It's been great service from start to finish with Great Lakes Energy and the EO staff. They were punctual at showing up when they said they'd be there and kept my project moving without delays".

Find out how saving energy can benefit your business. Call 877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org to learn about the options available from Great Lakes Energy for your business, farm or home. ■

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Make this the year you say **YES** to energy savings. If your business is ready to improve its bottom line and implement energy-saving strategies, we have a **solution** for you. With a number of Energy Optimization rebates available, the time to act is **NOW**.

ENERGY TIP: Commercial and industrial buildings use roughly 50% of the energy in the U.S. economy at a cost of over \$400 billion. That leaves a lot of opportunity for improvement!



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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.

POP QUIZ:

Do you know what to do if a power line falls 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 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. This makes your body the electricity's path, and electrocution results.

Other safety tips:

Never drive over a downed line. It could cause poles or other equipment to come crashing down.

Never touch a downed line or a person or object that is touching it! You could be injured or killed, too.

Call 911 immediately to report a downed line, then call your electric co-op or the local utility.

Wolverine Signs 20-Year Purchase Power Agreement for 114 Megawatts of Wind Energy

Harnessing energy from the wind is one clean and efficient way to generate power. Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc. (Wolverine), a generation and transmission electric cooperative in Cadillac, MI, recently increased its renewable energy portfolio by signing a 20-year Purchase Power Agreement (PPA) with Renewable Energy Systems Americas Inc. (RES Americas) for 114 megawatts of wind energy.

Known as the Deerfield Wind Energy Project, this development will be located on 20,000 acres in Huron County, in the Thumb of the Lower Peninsula. Wolverine will receive the entire output of the 114-megawatt project, expected to be approximately 400,000 megawatt hours annually.

“Wolverine is very pleased to be adding competitively priced wind energy to its power supply portfolio for its members,” said Eric Baker, president and CEO of Wolverine. “This PPA not only further diversifies

Wolverine’s overall energy portfolio, it also positions Wolverine and its members to meet Michigan’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requirement of 10 percent renewable power supply by 2015.”

In 2008, Michigan passed a law establishing the RPS, requiring Michigan electric providers to attain a retail supply portfolio that includes at least 10 percent renewable energy by 2015. With the addition of wind energy from the Deerfield Wind Energy Project, Wolverine more than meets this requirement.

RES Americas is a leader in the development, engineering, and construction of wind, solar, transmission, and energy storage projects in North America. They will be constructing and operating the project, which will provide up to 200 jobs during peak construction and up to six permanent jobs at the completion of the project. ■

Calling All ArtPrize Artists in Michigan!

We would like to spotlight Michigan artists who participated in 2014, or are entering the 2015 ArtPrize® competition, in the July/August issue of *Country Lines*.

For 19 days, 3 square miles of downtown Grand Rapids becomes an open canvas of art. Artists from around the world enter the contest, and viewing their work is free and open to the public.

If you are an electric co-op member who participated in the 2014 ArtPrize event, or you are entering in 2015, please send your contact information by e-mail to Christine Dorr at cdorr@meca.coop or by mail to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. The deadline is April 20.

ArtPrize 2015 will take place Sept. 23–Oct. 11

For more information about the event, please visit Artprize.org ■



Thumbs Up For The Thumb!

Quick! Name your favorite part of our state. Many will say the U.P., Leelanau County, or Grand Traverse Bay. My hunch is some will say, “the Thumb.” We wouldn’t be the Mitten State without a thumb, so let’s pay it some homage...

Phil Parrot, a Thumb native and owner of Parrot’s Tours (parrottstours.com or 810-376-9245), in Deckerville, sends vacationers to destinations worldwide, but he’s often asked about the Thumb area by other travel professionals. Parrot’s ready response is, “There’s the Upper Peninsula, Leelanau Peninsula, and Old Mission Peninsula, but the Thumb is Michigan’s undiscovered peninsula.”

Comprised of Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac, Lapeer and St. Clair counties, it boasts 150 miles of shoreline, 2,100 miles of rivers and streams, 51,000 acres of public recreation land, 49,000 acres of state game/wildlife areas, and many annual festivals and events.

Tour the Lake Huron and Saginaw Bay shoreline along M-25 with 160 miles of quaint towns and four lighthouses. The village of Sebewaing claims bragging rights as the “Sugar Beet Capital of the World” by hosting an annual Sugar Festival with a parade, carnival and entertainment tent. Caseville, near the Thumb’s tip on sandy Saginaw Bay, hosts the well-known Cheeseburger Festival every August. Algonac sits on the largest fresh-water delta in the world, with canals and an impressive 1,800 feet of boardwalk that credit its nickname as “The Venice of Michigan.”

And, visitors will want to explore the Sanilac Petroglyphs Historic State Park. The great Thumb fire of 1881, Parrot says, burned over 1 million acres and revealed prehistoric rock carvings made 300 to 1,000 years ago.

Seek a pleasant place by visiting it and giving a thumbs up for “the Thumb”! ■



Jack O'Malley



Photo courtesy of ArtPrize 2015. Photo credit: Brian Kelly.



Jan Photo

The January Mystery Photo Contest winner is Laura Neuman, of Mackinaw City, a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op member who correctly identified the “snow people” figures in front of the tourist information building in Paradise, MI.

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