

MICHIGAN COUNTY LINES



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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Letters to the editor should be sent to *Country Lines*, 2859 W. Jolly Rd., Okemos, MI 48864. Phone 517-913-3531. **E-mail:** cdorr@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.



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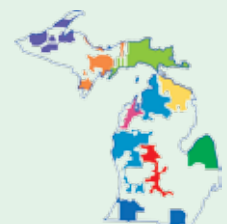
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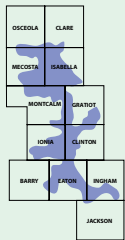
Upper Peninsula native Tom Izzo coaches the MSU Spartans basketball team. The flooring they—and most teams nationwide—play on is made in the U.P.

Photo—Matthew Mitchell

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



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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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:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232

Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

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(24 hours for emergency calls)

Tri-County Propane:

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homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

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Join the conversation at
facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Survey Tells Us How We Measure Up



Mark Kappler

General Manager

Last fall, an independent company surveyed 300 HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members to help us learn more about your expectations, and how we're doing at meeting them.

Our first report, in last month's issue of *Country Lines*, covered the top "satisfaction drivers," such as courteous and knowledgeable employees, quality customer service, and reliable electric service, all of which scored 90 percent or higher.

In fact, we scored an outstanding 86 on the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The ACSI is based on four questions asked of customers in similar surveys across the U.S. every year. With an 86, we rank higher than most other electric co-ops nationwide (81), as well as Apple (84), Cadillac (80), and Southwest Airlines (78), among others – check out the chart on page 5.

There are two areas that we're taking a closer look at: ownership and renewable energy.

As a cooperative, we are owned by the people we serve. That's everyone who buys electricity from us. However, 51 percent of those surveyed said they feel they are customers, not co-op members; and a significant number say it's not important to attend an annual meeting (36 percent) or vote to elect the board of directors (29 percent).

These results tell us we need to do a better job of educating all members about their role in a democratic organization, especially since we are member-regulated.

HomeWorks has been providing renewable energy for several years, through our generation partner Wolverine Power Cooperative. Wolverine is a leader in Michigan, involved in the state's first commercial wind farm since 2009. We also launched our Community Solar Garden last spring, making solar power easily affordable to any interested HomeWorks member. We've used *Country Lines* to report regularly on each of these projects.

Yet, 62 percent of those surveyed didn't know what kind of renewable energy HomeWorks offers, and 2 percent said we don't offer any.

For the record, the state of Michigan requires us to get at least 10 percent of our energy from renewable sources as of the end of 2015. With Wolverine's help, we've met and passed that goal. On page 13, you can also read more about the renewable projects Wolverine is working on.

We're very pleased that the survey tells us so many members rate HomeWorks highly on their satisfaction scale, and we learned that we have a lot more education and communication to do on a few subjects.

Thank you for taking time to share your opinions with us, and thanks most of all for the great responses. We'll keep working hard to earn your trust and satisfaction. ■

Measuring Customer Satisfaction

We regularly survey our member-owners to make sure we're doing the right things on your behalf.

One series of four questions stays the same, to allow us to benchmark ourselves with the American Customer Satisfaction Index (ACSI). The ACSI is the only national cross-industry measure of customer satisfaction that represents the U.S. economy. It was developed by University of Michigan researchers (based on a Swedish model), and is now published quarterly with data from 10 economic sectors and 43 industries.

To get our ACSI score, we ask members:

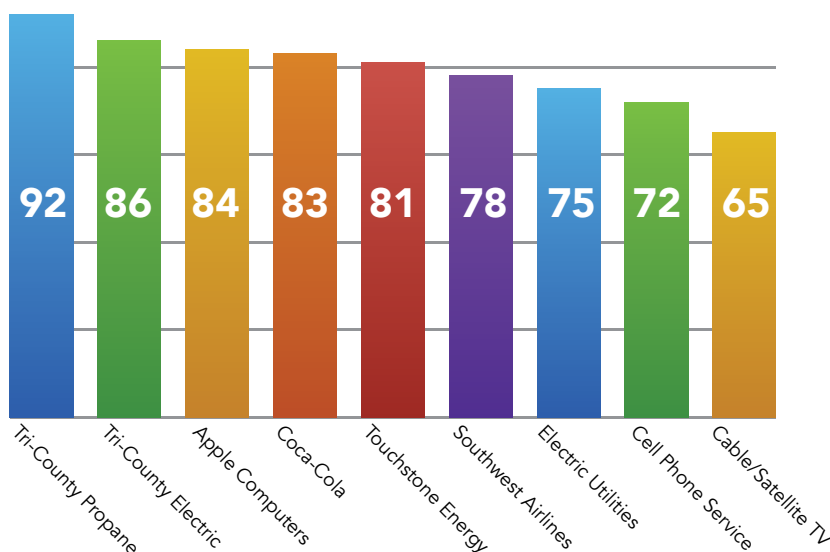
- How satisfied overall are you with the co-op?
- To what extent has the co-op fallen short of or exceeded your expectations?
- How well does the co-op compare to your ideal utility company?
- If you could choose your electric company right now, how likely is it you would choose HomeWorks again?

Based on your answers to these questions on the last survey, in late 2014, our ACSI score is 86. That's down a little from the 88 score on our last survey, but still ranks highly

when compared to other utilities, and even to other well-known companies such as Apple or Coca-Cola.

Tri-County Propane, our subsidiary, also did well, receiving a high score of 92 from this year's survey.

Electric utilities in general rated a 75, while Touchstone Energy® cooperatives like HomeWorks averaged an 81 score from their members. Cell phone and TV services were ranked much lower nationwide.



Save the Date For District Membership Meetings:



Members have the chance to win prizes, like this iPad Mini, at their district membership meeting.

- May 11 – District 5** Fulton Middle School Gym
- May 12 – District 1** St. Mary's Church Hall, Charlotte
- May 13 – District 7** St. Michael's School, Remus
- May 14 – District 3 (Election)** . . . Eagle Park Hall
- May 18 – District 4** Vestaburg Middle School
- May 19 – District 6 (Election)** . . . Beal City High School
- May 20 – District 2** St. Edward's Church Hall, Lake Odessa

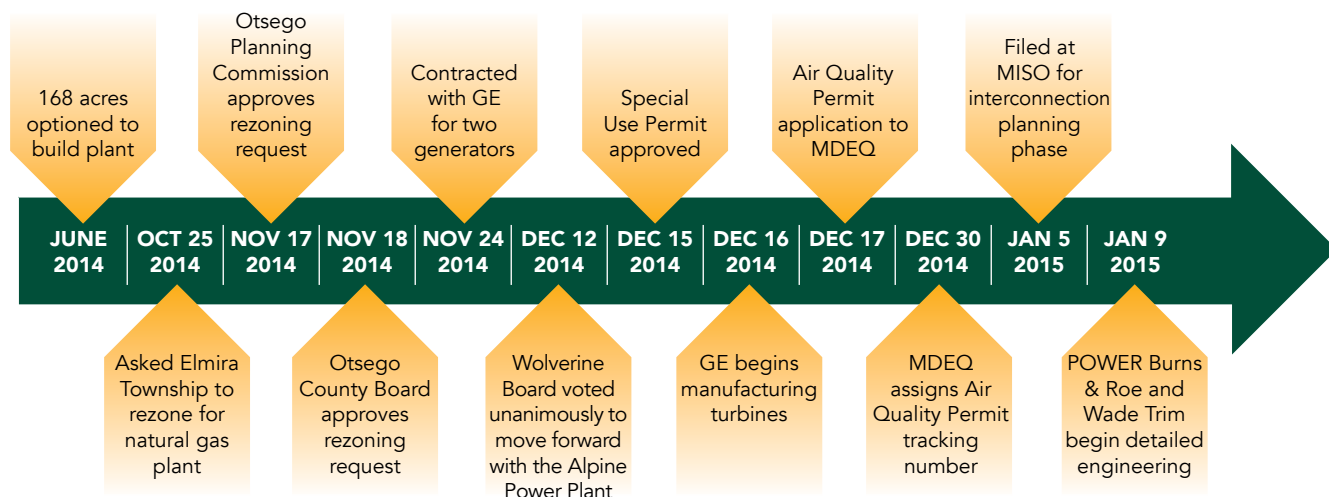
Each meeting starts with a light supper, followed by a business meeting at 6 p.m.

Watch your mailbox in late April for information, a map, and your registration card.



Like us on Facebook to keep up with these events!

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. ■



—James Dulley



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



MORE SOUP FOR THE SOUL

Tortellini Soup

½ lb. Italian turkey sausage (mild)	½ t. oregano, crushed
2 c. sliced zucchini	4 cans chicken broth
1 c. green pepper, squared	3 cans water (soup cans)
1 c. diced onion	2 8-oz. cans whole tomatoes, diced
2 cloves (medium) minced garlic	2 T. fresh parsley, chopped
	2 12-oz. pkg. frozen tortellini

Squeeze out sausage filling into large pot and simmer. Break up sausage filling into small pieces, cooking until partly done. Add zucchini, green pepper, onion, garlic, and oregano. Continue to simmer until sausage is thoroughly cooked. Add chicken broth, water, tomatoes, and parsley. Bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer for 30 minutes. Add tortellini; bring to a boil again. Reduce heat and simmer for an additional 25 minutes. Serves 6.

Jo Jones, Charlotte

Arizona Mountain Soup

1 ¼ c. dry pinto beans	16 oz. can tomatoes
3 slices bacon	2 c. water
chopped onions	salt and pepper, to taste
garlic	paprika, to taste
½ c. brown rice	

Soak dry pinto beans overnight (or boil 2 minutes and soak 1 hour). Simmer beans in water to cover for 2 hours. Reserve 2 cups of the bean liquid. Meantime, sauté 3 slices of bacon with chopped onions and garlic and cook brown rice. Stir together beans, reserved liquid, bacon, onions, rice, canned tomatoes, 2 cups water, salt, pepper and paprika and simmer 1 hour. Serves 8.

Mary Ellen Wynes, Mt. Pleasant

Soothing Cream of Chicken Soup (pictured)

2 qt. water	3 c. chopped or diced chicken
5-6 chicken bouillon cubes	1 c. sour cream
6 ½ c. noodles	minced dried parsley, optional
2 cans cream of chicken soup	

Bring water and chicken bouillon cubes to a boil. Add noodles and cook until tender. DO NOT DRAIN. Stir together cream of chicken soup, chicken and noodles and het. Remove from heat and add sour cream and parsley. Serve warm. Serves 6-8.

Judy Black, Hastings

COOKING FROM THE HEART

A cookbook produced by HomeWorks Tri-County member-consumers for the benefit of mid-Michigan families and organizations in need.



ON SALE IN AUGUST 2015

Submit your recipe to

HomeWorks by May 31 in any of several ways:

- At our annual district meetings in May
- At the Blanchard or Portland office
- Mail to: People Fund Cookbook, 7973 E. Grand River Ave., Portland, MI 48875
- Email to: tschneider@homeworks.org

Make sure the recipe is legible and complete, with full instructions. Include your name, town, and a daytime phone number where we can reach you if we have questions.

Categories include Appetizers; Soups, Salads, and Sauces; Casseroles; Meats and Main Dishes; Cakes, Cookies, and Desserts; Breads, Rolls, and Pastries; and Miscellaneous.

Visit countrylines.com for more reader recipes!



HomeWorks customer service representative Luanne Goodman, left, delivered a \$1,207.98 grant check to Connie Teachworth, Jane Rudisill, and Meg Wheeler from the Lake Odessa Community Library. The grant will be used to purchase a projector and document camera for the library's media room.

People Fund Update

Meeting Jan. 21, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board of directors approved five grants, totaling \$3,914.50, including:

- \$500 to the YES Center, Inc., Grand Ledge, for their After School Program;
- \$949.93 to a Clare County family for housing expenses;
- \$420 to a Montcalm County family for medical expenses;
- \$1,386.49 to a Mecosta County family for housing expenses, and
- \$658.08 to a Montcalm County family to help with housing expenses.

Grants are funded by donations made by members who voluntarily round up their energy bill to the next dollar. Rounding up averages \$6 a year; since 1993, this spare change has returned over \$1.9 million to mid-Michigan communities.

How to Apply for a Grant

The Tri-County Electric People Fund provides grants to individuals and organizations in the co-op's service area for food, shelter, clothing, health, and other humane needs, or for programs or services that benefit a significant segment of a community.

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, Mich. 48875, for an application form and grant guidelines, or visit homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by April 13 for the April meeting. ■



We're Growing a Brighter Future... Together!

Solar panels are still available. Call HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op today (517-647-7554 or 800-562-8232) to learn how you can get solar power credits on your monthly energy bill.

Fuel Mix Report

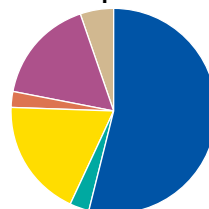
The fuel mix characteristics of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Co-op as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/14.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

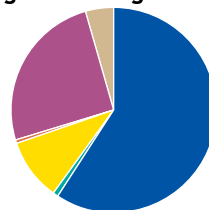
Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	53.6%	60.4%
Oil	3.5%	0.7%
Gas	18.4%	8.9%
Hydroelectric	3.2%	0.5%
Nuclear	16.0%	24.6%
Renewable Fuels	5.3%	4.9%
Biofuel	0.5%	0.7%
Biomass	0.1%	0.4%
Solar	0.0%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.0%	0.0%
Wind	4.6%	3.2%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

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.

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



Youth Programs Build Tomorrow's Leaders

Youth Leadership Summit Applications Due March 20

Visit miyls.com to learn more & apply!

Each year, Michigan electric co-ops sponsor high school students for a Youth Leadership Summit, where they learn about safety, energy and co-op careers. Some of these students go on to attend the National Rural Electric Youth Tour in Washington, D.C.

If you are a high school sophomore or junior interested in applying for one of these free trips, please see the application information at left.

HomeWorks recently caught up with some of our alumni to mark the Youth Tour's 50th anniversary. Here are just a few "where are they now" stories:



Jarot Karcher, Blanchard – 1986

Jarot works in fleet management for the Mears Group, Rosebush, serving the pipeline construction and maintenance industry. His grandfather, Willard Haenke, was an early co-op member and served on the HomeWorks board for almost 50 years; Jarot's brother, Jon, has been a HomeWorks lineman for over 20 years. Jarot says his most important hobby is raising two daughters, with his wife, Laura (pictured, L-R: Laura, Madelyn, Alyvia). He also enjoys tinkering with antique farm tractors.

"My experience with Youth Tour, and generally growing up learning about the co-op and REA from my grandfather, taught me that things are different in the country, but if we work hard, we can still have the conveniences enjoyed in the city...I learned that great things can happen in small towns when people organize, cooperate and pitch in. The lessons I learned about the co-op have led me, along with much of my family, to continue the tradition of volunteering time to make things happen in our small town."



Jacob Dugopolski, Eagle – 2000

Jacob studied architecture at the University of Michigan, and now lives and works in New York City. He is a senior architect and urban designer, working on civic and non-profit projects in and around the city.

"The Youth Tour was a fantastic opportunity to meet a range of talented people and explore Washington, D.C. I have continued this interest in design, planning and infrastructure, specializing in cultivating strong community-led processes."



Lisa (Pohl) Guerrini, Portland – 2002

Lisa (far left in photo) graduated from Grand Valley State University, then earned a master's degree in human resources and labor relations at Michigan State University. After a summer internship with Shell Oil in Houston, TX, she took a full-time job with Shell, where she met her husband, also a Michigan native. She now stays at home with their infant daughter, Evelyn.

"Even though it has been 10+ years since I participated, I have many great memories. It was so important to have an opportunity as a young adult to meet new people and be given new challenges to solve together. My time with the Youth Tour also gave me experience in stepping out of my comfort zone and challenging myself as an individual.

"But just like the real world, it's all about teamwork; taking a leadership role but also understanding that as a leader, you need other voices in the room. It's about respecting each other, challenging each other, and building one another up to get to the best result. It's important to give young adults a safe place to build these skills and give them confidence to try something new, meet new people and learn about their community."



Brandt Ayoub, St. Johns – 2005

Brandt teaches 9th grade English in a small Indiana town, after graduating from Alma College with a degree in English and Spanish secondary education. He was a frequent volunteer while at Alma, working for Big Brothers, Big Sisters; Habitat for Humanity; and his local church.

"The trip to Washington, D.C., with HomeWorks did two things for me. First, it gave me the gift of seeing the world outside of a small town Michigan. I have since traveled the entire country, most excitingly via a cross-country bicycle trip to raise money for affordable housing with an organization called Bike & Build. And secondly, it allowed me to realize that I can get involved and make a difference in my community.

"I believe a foundation for change is education, thus, I go to work every day and work towards educating my students and broadening their world view. This year will be my first group of students I've worked with for all four years of high school, and I'm really anxious to see where their paths lead them."



Andy Scollon, Pewamo – 2006

In 2014, Andy finished his master's degree in food science at Michigan State University, and accepted a scientist position with Land O'Lakes Inc., in Minneapolis, MN.

"My Youth Tour experience was a great opportunity to build skills in team work and networking. These skills have greatly enhanced my collegiate and professional experiences. I strongly recommend young adults take the time to apply to the program as it is a truly enjoyable time and will undoubtedly benefit you in many ways, both immediately and in the future."



Capture your favorite moments and share!

1. Quincy, a Shar Pei, passed away Jan. 8 at 11 years old. Sent in by Brian Stanley, Eagle.
2. It's hard to tell if Sadie belongs to Caleb Schneider, or if Caleb belongs to Sadie! Sent in by Caleb's mom, Tanya Schneider of Portland.
3. "I know I can get that mouse!" Vivienne's owner, James Dean of Eagle, won the gun at a raffle and had just put a scope on it and set it on the floor to take a picture of it. Vivienne went up to the gun to check it out just as he was snapping the picture.
4. Montague helps Larissa Dougherty with some homework. Submitted by Susan Drapek, Eaton Rapids.

See more SnapShots at: facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Submit Your Photo!

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

Upcoming SnapShot contests

- "Cars", Deadline: Mar. 16 (May Issue)
- "Sunrises & Sunsets", Deadline: Apr. 15 (June issue)

Go to homeworks.org/content/snapshots to submit your high resolution digital photos and see additional themes. It's fast and easy. To send by mail: Include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, and details about your photo. Mail to Attn: *Country Lines SnapShots*, 7973 E. Grand River, Portland, MI 48875. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos.



Teens Can Learn More About Renewable Energy

Explore how Michigan's abundant natural resources, growing agriculture industry and emerging technologies are changing the face of energy and what it means to your family, Michigan and the world.

4-H Renewable Energy Camp (July 6–10) is a five day camp held on the Michigan State University campus. It is open for all youth, age 13 to 19, who have an interest in science, renewable energy and natural resources.

Campers will:

- experience campus life
- create their own biofuel
- interact with the MSU Solar Car Racing Team, and with leading scientists and engineers
- tour a wind farm and a commercial ethanol plant
- compete in an engineering design challenge
- and much, much more.

To apply or get more information, visit:

http://4h.msue.msu.edu/events/4_h_renewable_energy_camp



by May 1, or call Insa Raymond, extension educator and camp coordinator, Hillsdale County MSU Extension, at 517-439-9301. Cost to attend the five-day camp is \$190 for 4-H members, and \$200 for others. ■

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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.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland Jan. 19, your board of directors:

- Re-elected Wayne Swiler to the Wolverine Power Cooperative Board of Directors, and elected Kimber Hansen to the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association board.
- Reviewed the annual MPSC distribution standards report, and how HomeWorks performed in the eight categories measured.
- Authorized payment of 2015 dues to the state and national cooperative organizations.
- Received copies of the Emergency Response Plan developed by staff to make sure the co-op is prepared for a large ice or wind storm, such as those that hit different ends of the system in December 2013 and April 2014.
- Discussed the December-January safety report, listing employee training and several public and employee incidents.
- Reviewed and approved, with minor updates, board policies “211 – Whistleblower” and “301 – Equal Employment Opportunities”.
- Learned there were 108 new member applications 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. The next meetings are set for March 23 at Blanchard, and April 27 at Portland. Members who need directions to either office or wish to have items considered on the board agenda should call 517-647-7554.



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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** ■



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



Photo—Kathryne Winkler

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



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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