

MICHIGAN COUNTY LINES



BASKETBALL MADNESS

'Floored' By Michigan Companies

Plus!

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13 Tree Trimming Means
Reliable Electric Service

16 Free Travel & Programs
for Local Teens

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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

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



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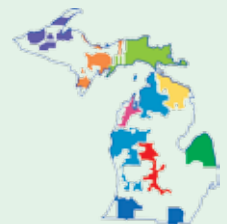
Jack's Journal: Thumbs Up Call For ArtPrize® Entrants

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
countrylines.com



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Co-op Owners for Political Action™

Join ACRE to Help Support Co-op Issues



Dallas Braun
General Manager

A **Political Action Committee** or “PAC” is defined as a group formed to raise and contribute money to the campaigns of candidates likely to advance the group’s interest. A “Lobby” is defined as an organized group of people who work together to influence government decisions that relate to a particular industry, issue, etc. You could argue that a “PAC” and a “Lobby” are the same.

Whether we like it or not, politics, directly or indirectly, impacts all of us. Politics touches every business, including your electric cooperative.

Every day, the cooperative’s interests are being represented at the state and national level. Here are just a few of the front burner issues facing the electric industry today: carbon regulation by the EPA, mandates on renewables and energy efficiency standards, and possible elimination of large storage capacity electric water heaters that are currently being used by over 50 percent of TEC members.

In 1966, the Action Committee for Rural Electrification (ACRE) was formed for almost 900 rural electric cooperatives throughout 47 states. Today, this PAC has over 30,000 members comprised of co-op employees, directors, and co-op member-owners. Most co-op employees and directors have supported ACRE since its inception. And, there is now a renewed effort by our national organization, the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association, to engage the 42 million people served by electric cooperatives. Currently, only about 8,000 out of the eligible 42 million co-op members participate!

At Thumb Electric’s June 2014 annual meeting, the “ACRE Co-op Owners for Political Action” program was introduced for TEC members to join. Thank you to those members that have joined! For those who have not joined, please consider it, as there are important political issues that need to be heard, and in today’s world monetary contributions can have an effect on how well one is heard. Understandably, you may not agree with PACs or Lobbys but that is the political arena we currently have. One of our members recently summed it up by stating, “It is better to be at the dinner table as opposed to being the dinner on the table.”

Where does the money go? Every contribution dollar is split between state (49 cents), federal (50 cents), and a 1 cent federal tax. The dollars then go to the candidates that support the electric co-op position on issues. ACRE does not care about party affiliations, but rather looks at legislators’ voting records on issues important to cooperatives all across the country.

How can you, as co-op members, contribute? Thumb Electric has made it easy by allowing your contribution to be added to your monthly electric bill. The minimum monthly amount is \$2.08. If interested, please call the Thumb Electric office to sign up or visit our website at tecmi.coop. All contributions are voluntary and the general public cannot be solicited, only co-op members.

I believe that giving Thumb Electric members an opportunity to be ACRE members is very important. I appreciate the support of those politically active members as we strive for a louder voice that will benefit this cooperative. ■

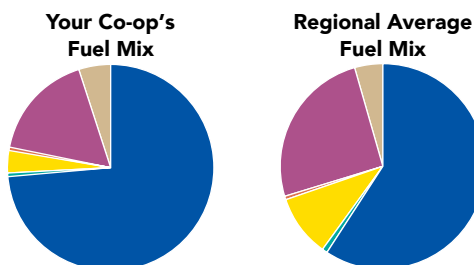
Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Thumb Electric 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	74.1%	59.4%
Oil	0.2%	0.6%
Gas	3.6%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	0.2%	0.6%
Nuclear	17.2%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	4.8%	4.2%
Biofuel	0.1%	0.5%
Biomass	1.1%	0.5%
Solar	0.0%	0.0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.3%	0.0%
Wind	3.2%	2.7%
Wood	0.1%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas.

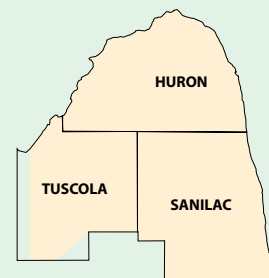


EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	6.9	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	2,105	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	2.2	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0056	0.0083

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

Purchased electricity accounted for virtually 100% of the electricity sold by Thumb Electric during the period. TEC also complies with the state RPS law by purchasing renewable energy credits (RECs).



Thumb Electric Cooperative

2231 Main Street
Udly, MI 48475-0157
1-800-327-0166 or
989-658-8571
E-mail: tec@tecmi.coop
www.tecmi.coop

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Statement of Non-Discrimination

Thumb Electric Cooperative 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 email at program.intake@usda.gov.



Energy Efficiency Tip of the Month

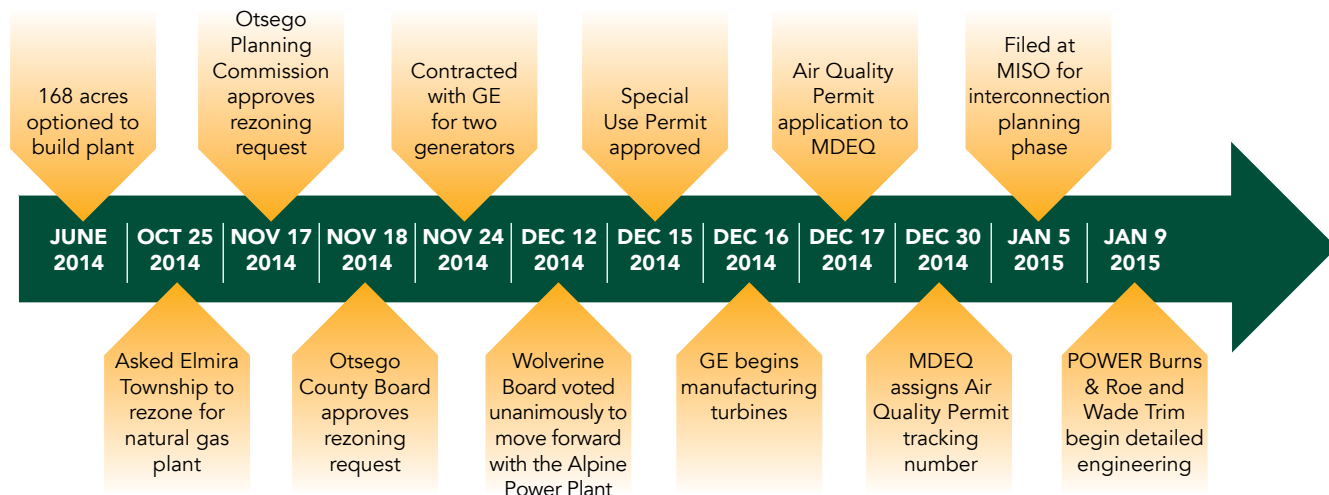
Your home works hard for you. Consider giving it an energy checkup. Hire a professional energy auditor to diagnose where your house could be losing energy and where you can start saving money. Auditors check for air leaks, inspect insulation, survey heating and cooling equipment and more. After making efficiency upgrades, you could save 5–30 percent on your energy bills!

Source: EnergySavers.gov

Visit Thumb Electric's website
www.tecmi.coop

Thumb Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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

Metering and Service Equipment

Thumb Electric Cooperative is responsible for repairs to the meter itself. We are also responsible for the service drop, which is the line either above ground or underground running from the utility pole to your home or commercial facility. You are responsible for all other equipment at the meter location, including the service entrance cable. Contact a licensed electrician to complete any repairs that are your responsibility.

METER EQUIPMENT

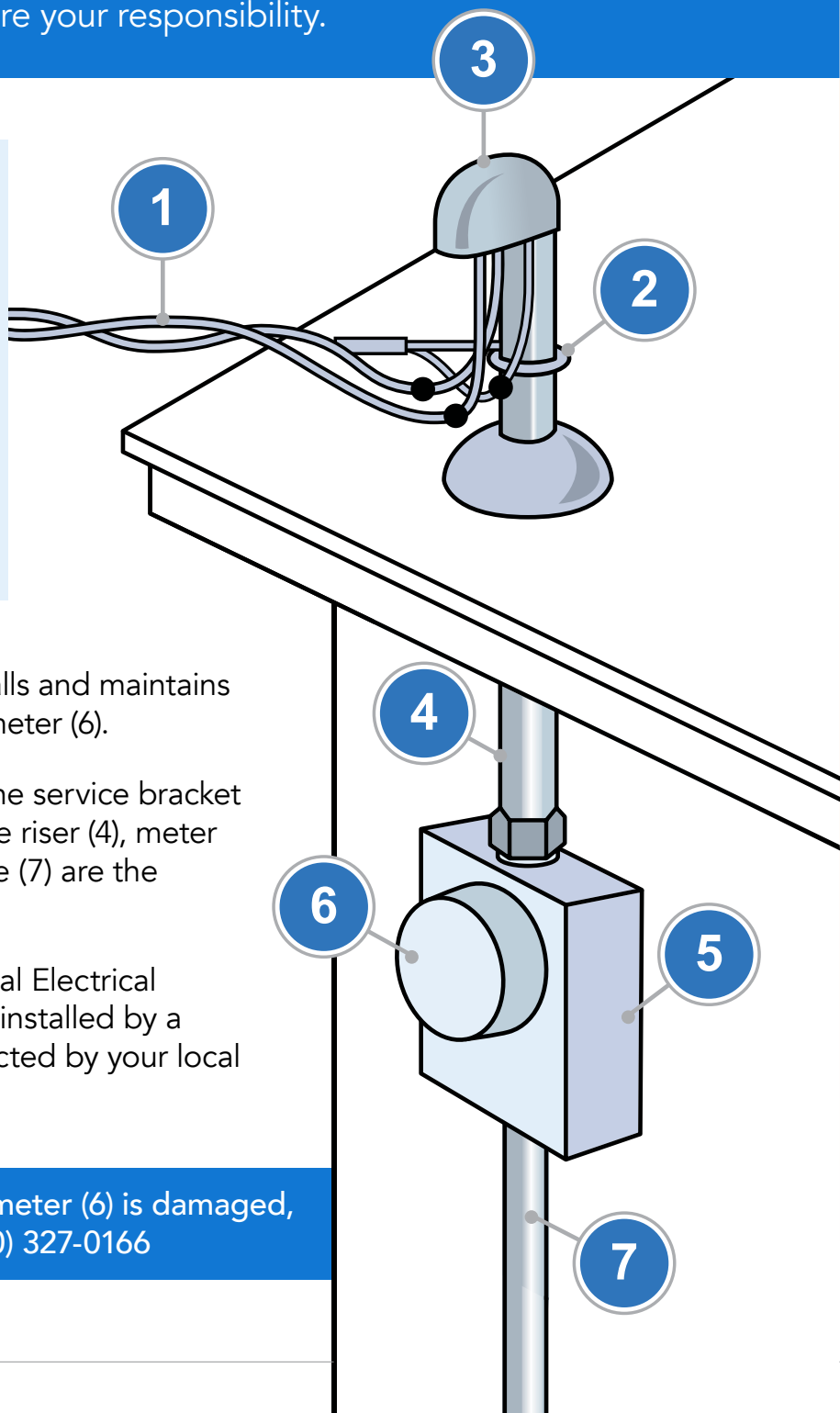
- 1 Service Line
- 2 Service Bracket or Hook
- 3 Weather Head
- 4 Pipe Riser
- 5 Meter Can
- 6 Electric Meter
- 7 Service Entrance Cable

Thumb Electric Cooperative installs and maintains your service line (1) and electric meter (6).

Installation and maintenance of the service bracket or hook (2), weather head (3), pipe riser (4), meter can (5) and service entrance cable (7) are the customer's responsibility.

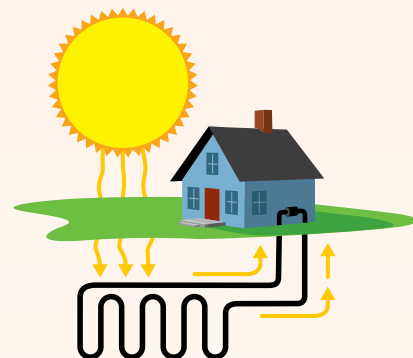
These items fall under the National Electrical Code and by regulation must be installed by a licensed contractor and be inspected by your local inspection authority.

If your service line (1) or electric meter (6) is damaged, please call (989) 658-8571 or (800) 327-0166



Renewable Geothermal Heat

Geothermal is a simple technology that uses the earth's renewable energy to provide high-efficiency heating and cooling. In winter, the system draws heat from the ground and transfers it to your home. In summer, it extracts heat from your home and transfers it to the ground. **Contact the energy experts at Thumb Electric Cooperative at 800-327-0166** for honest answers on your energy choices, or call any of the trained and certified installers listed here.



All-Temperature Geothermal Systems

1103 E. Caro Rd., Caro, MI 48723
989-673-5557

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2891 E. Forester Rd., Deckerville, MI 48427
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B & D Heating, Cooling & Plumbing

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800-515-1117

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989-269-7532

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248-531-0325

Geomasters, Inc., Plumbing & Heating

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810-679-2251

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West Bloomfield, MI 48322
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Superior, Inc.

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Thumb Cooling & Heating

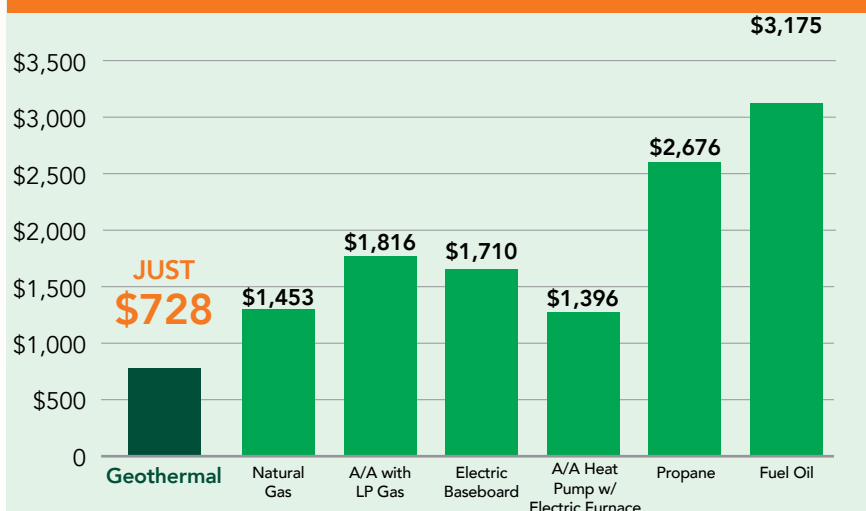
5599 Pochert Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468
989-428-4948

And: 837 South State, Caro, MI 48723
989-672-4948



Annual Operating Costs

For an Average 1,800 Sq. Ft. Home
(45,000 BTU heating load, 20,000 BTU cooling load)



Factors Used: Electric Baseboard, Air-Source Heat Pump and Geothermal—based on TEC's 6.863¢/kWh dual-fuel rate. LP gas—based on \$2/gal. and 90% efficient furnace. Fuel Oil—based on \$3.00/gal. and 80% efficient furnace. Natural Gas—based on \$1.08/therm., 90% efficient furnace including \$9/mo. service charge. (Electric baseboard costs do not include air conditioning.)



BASKETBALL MADNESS

'Floored' By Michigan Companies

O'Reilly

O'Reilly

AUTO PARTS

O'Reilly

AUTO PARTS

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.

Help Us Celebrate National Lineman Day

Powering your life through rain, sleet and snow over 2.5 million miles of line.

As the “first responders” of the electric co-op family, lineworkers perform around-the-clock in dangerous conditions and challenging situations to keep power flowing and protect the public’s safety. That’s why electric co-ops have designated a National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year, April 13 is the day we honor the hard-working men and women who keep the lights on.

Resolutions adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) explain it best:

“Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas there would be no electric co-ops without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of lineworkers.”

“Electric lineworkers do not often receive the recognition they deserve,” says Thumb Electric general manager, Dallas Braun. “They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to their communities. Our lineworkers, and those across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition.”

Thumb Electric invites you, as a co-op member, to take a moment to “thank a lineworker” for the job they do and show support for those who help light our lives. ■

April 13, 2015, is National
Lineman Appreciation Day.
#ThankALineman

Photo courtesy—Midwest Energy Cooperative

RIGHT HERE. RIGHT NOW.

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!



ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319

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

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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.

Tree Trimming Means Fewer Outages

Tree trimming will take place in the following areas by Kappen Tree Service and Proline Clearance.

Tuscola County

Juniata Township: Sheridan Road, Vickory Road, Densmore Road, and Ball Road

Koyalton Township: English Road and Livermore Road

Millington, Arbela, and Vassar townships: All single-phase lines.

Sanilac County

Upper Sanilac and Bridgehampton townships

Huron County

Various maintenance trimming

**Note: Other areas could see trimming, as time allows.*



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

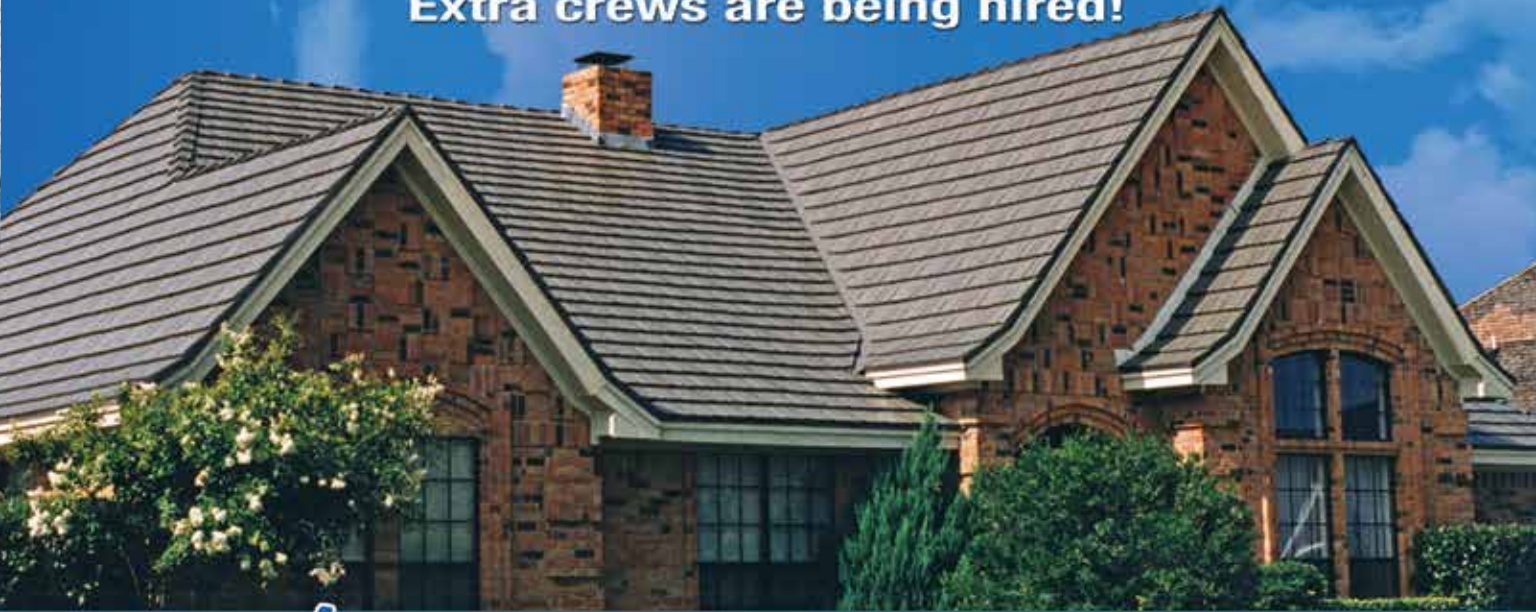


The January Mystery Photo Contest winner is Laura Neuman, of Mackinaw City, a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op member who correctly identified the “snow people” figures in front of the tourist information building in Paradise, MI.

March Installation Explosion!

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