

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

July/August 2015

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

A photograph of an art installation. In the foreground, there are several large, colorful, diamond-shaped structures made of translucent material, arranged in a row. The structures are illuminated from within, creating a vibrant glow. In the background, a group of people are walking through the installation, their silhouettes visible against the bright light. The floor is dark and reflective, showing the colors of the structures. The overall atmosphere is artistic and modern.

Plus!

8a America The Beautiful

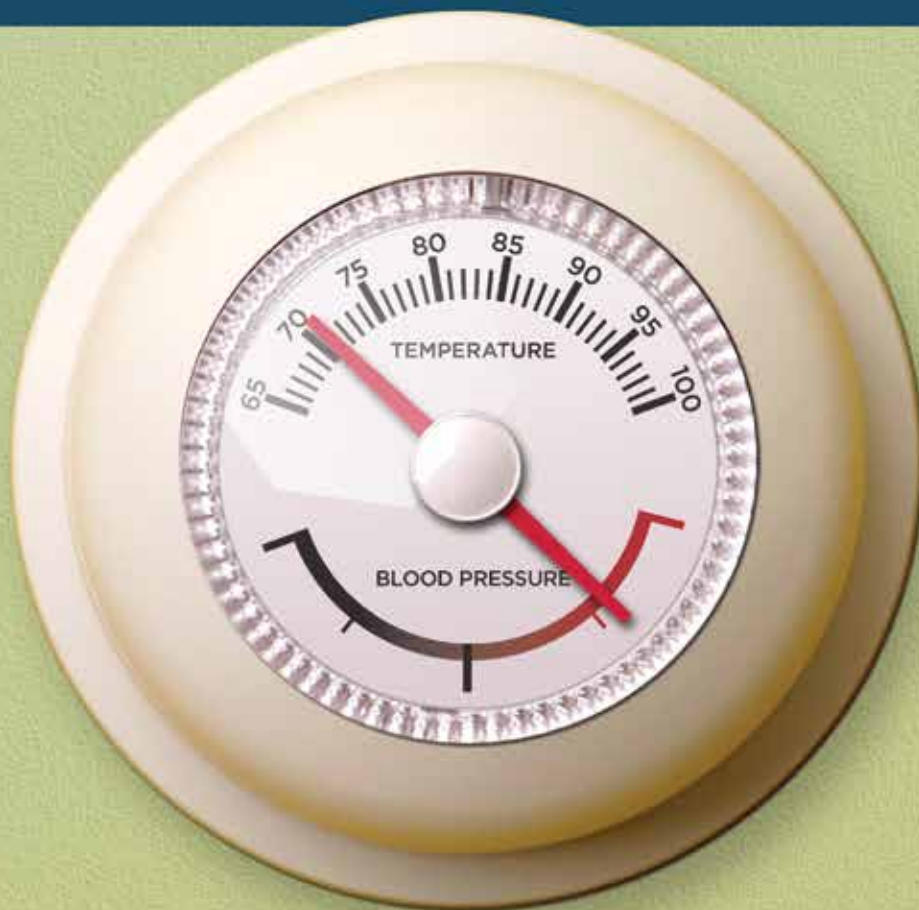
8d Matt Miller Retires

12 Power & Hope
Award Honoree

Home Is Where The

Art Is

Local Co-op Artists On ArtPrize



WATERFURNACE HAS A SMARTER WAY TO COOL YOUR HOME

Wouldn't it be nice to set the temperature of your house based more on comfort and less on your bank account? As the temperatures rise, homeowners around the world are finding that a WaterFurnace geothermal system is a smart way to **reduce your carbon footprint and utility bills** at the same time. WaterFurnace units use the **clean, renewable energy found in your own backyard to provide savings up to 70% on heating, cooling and hot water**. It's good for the environment, great for your budget and **thanks to a 30% federal tax credit**, now's the best time to act. Call your local WaterFurnace dealer today to learn more.

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

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

Berrien Springs
WaterFurnace
Michiana
(269) 473-5667

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

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

Carsonville
Certified Temperature
Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Clifford
Orton Refrig & Htg
(989) 761-7691

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

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

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

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

Ionia
Home Experts
(800) 457-4554

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

Kalkaska
Kalkaska Plmb & Htg
(231) 258-3588

Lapeer
Porter & Heckman
(800) 445-4328

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

Muskegon
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665

Kiessel Geothermal
Htg & Clg
(231) 747-7509

Palms
Lakeshore
Improvements
(989) 864-3833

Portland
ESI Htg & Clg
(517) 647-6906

Sunfield
Mark Woodman
Plmb & Htg
(517) 886-1138

Traverse City
Geofurnace Htg
& Clg
(231) 943-1000
D&W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215

UPPER PENINSULA

Kinross
Great Lakes
Services Inc.
(906) 632-5543

Manistique
Hoholik Enterprises
(906) 341-5065



July/August 2015
Vol. 35, No. 7

Executive Editor
Casey Clark

Editors
Christine Dorr
Gail Knudtson

Publisher
Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association

Design and Layout
Ciesa Design

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

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

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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

Association officers are **Robert Schallip**, Cloverland Electric Cooperative, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **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.



IN THIS ISSUE



6 OUR ENERGY
Legislation Would Strengthen Tie Between Michigan's Peninsulas
Craig Borr



7 HOME COOKING
A New Twist On The All-American Burger
Christin McKamey & Our Readers



10 FEATURE
Home Is Where the Art Is: Local Co-op Artists On ArtPrize
Emily Haines



13 SAFETY
Water and Electricity: Stay Safe Near Boats, Docks



14 READERS' PAGE
"Tour of Honor" Recognizes Heroic Men And Valiant Women Of Our Country
Jack O'Malley
Mystery Photo Winner!

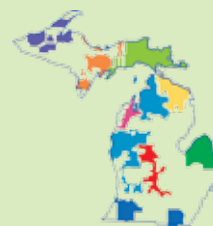
ON THE COVER*

"Trichromatic Spectra," created by Thomas Linder, was a past entry in the ArtPrize competition held annually in Grand Rapids, MI.

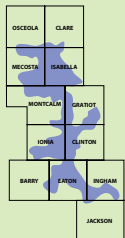
Linder's artwork is a kinetic inflatable installation involving thousands of LEDs that are controlled by computer animation.

Photo courtesy of Artprize.

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



Michigan's Electric
Cooperatives
countrylines.com



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue
Blanchard MI 49310
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue
Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday-Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

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

Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333
(24 hours for emergency calls)

Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

High Speed Internet

1-800-668-8413

homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

Board of Directors

District 1 — Philip Conklin

5130 W. Gresham Hwy., Charlotte, MI 48813
517-726-0127
pconklin@homeworks.org

District 2 — Wayne Swiler

Vice-Chairman
11750 Ainsworth Rd., Lake Odessa, MI 48849
616-374-3141
wswiler@homeworks.org

District 3 — Luke Pohl

15560 W. Hanses Rd., Westphalia, MI 48894
989-292-0427
lpohl@homeworks.org

District 4 — Kimber Hansen

6535 N. Wyman Rd., Edmore, MI 48829
989-506-5849
khansen@homeworks.org

District 5 — Cara Evans

Secretary-Treasurer
10180 Roosevelt Rd., Bannister, MI 48807
989-862-5590
cevens@homeworks.org

District 6 — Ed Oplinger

Chairman
10890 W. Weidman Road, Weidman, MI 48893
989-644-3079
eoplinger@homeworks.org

District 7 — Dean Floria

1163 Taft Rd., Remus, MI 49340
989-382-5230
dfloria@homeworks.org

Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC



Join the conversation at
facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

It's Time To Get To Work



Mark Kappler
General Manager

In recent weeks, you may have seen a television advertisement that indicates Michigan is in a very precarious position in the area of future power supply. For some utilities in our state, that may be true; those ads cast a very ominous cloud over Michigan and what could happen.

However, I want to share with you how HomeWorks, and our power supplier, Wolverine Power Cooperative, ARE investing for the future power supply needs of our member-consumers. Furthermore,

I want to provide some details on who is behind those rather gloomy television advertisements and what they hope to achieve.

First, HomeWorks and Wolverine are currently investing approximately \$175 million in the development and construction of the Alpine Power Plant near Gaylord. This 430-megawatt natural gas-fired power plant, which will become operational next year, will meet the future electric capacity needs of HomeWorks and four of our fellow electric cooperatives well into the future. We are working hard to meet your future electric needs.

Now, let's talk about those ads that you frequently see during the 6 p.m. news on your local stations. Those ads are the work of one of our state's largest public relations firms in conjunction with Detroit Edison and Consumers Energy—Michigan's two largest electric utilities. Their multi-million dollar advertising campaign has one very simple goal—to eliminate electric competition in Michigan. It is our understanding that they are spending \$2–3 million on those



ads, in an effort to enact changes in state law by scaring electric consumers and our elected officials in Lansing.

Michigan law, enacted in 2008, allows 10 percent of an electric utility's commercial customers to choose another supplier. Michigan's electric cooperatives believe the threat of 10% of our sales base leaving us for another supplier has made us more attentive to customer needs and competitive pressures. In fact, I am proud to point out that HomeWorks has NEVER lost a member-customer to another supplier—even though our large customers have had that option since 2000. We believe competitive rates and high quality service are the reason our large customers have chosen to stay with HomeWorks.

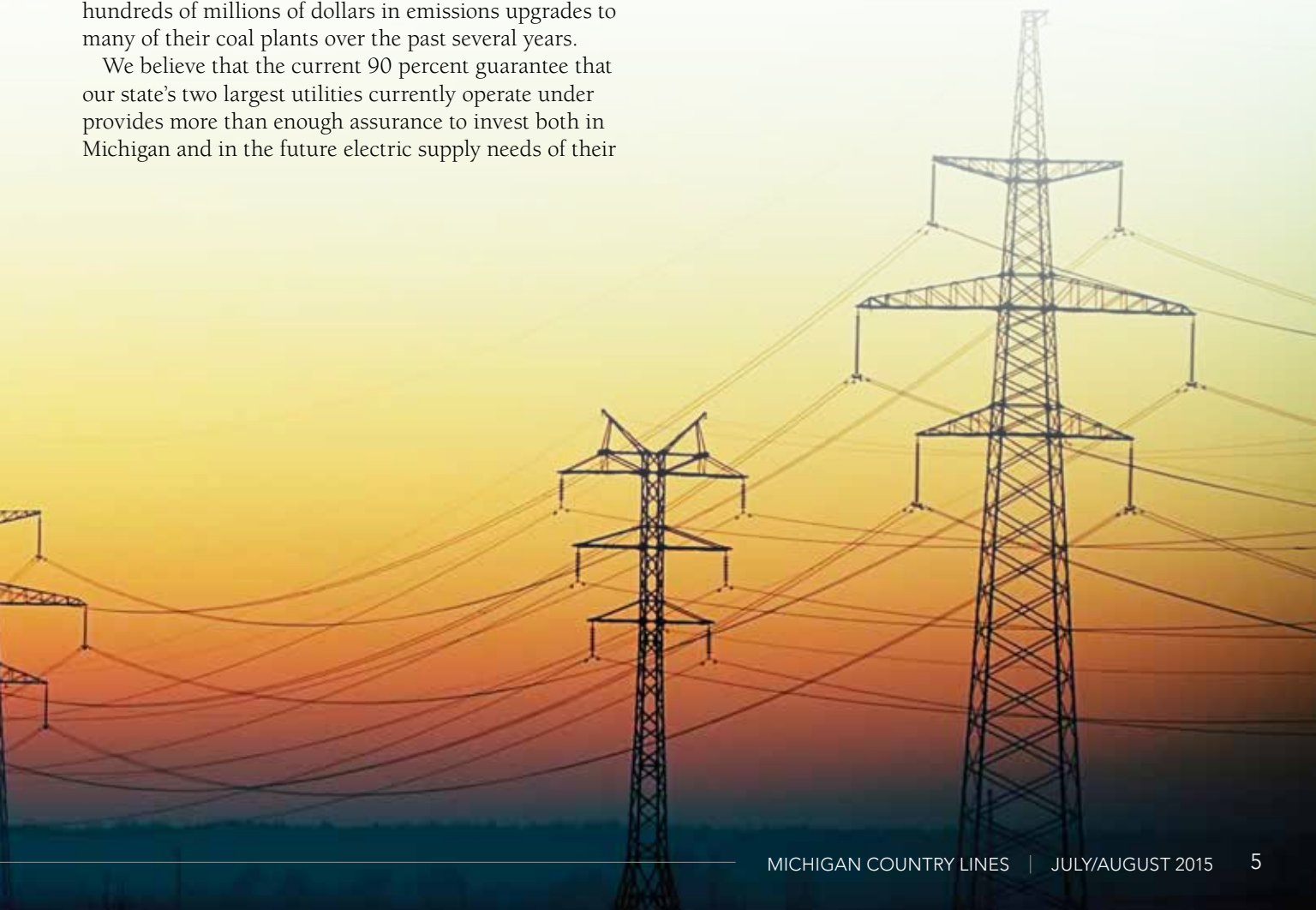
The big utilities in our state, in conjunction with their Lansing public relations firm, are attempting to use scare tactics to change state law and eliminate competitive options for their large customers. They say they need greater assurance that their customers won't leave for other suppliers before they can build additional generating plants. They said the same thing in 2008 when state legislators reduced their risk by capping the market at 10 percent. Ironically, they have both invested hundreds of millions of dollars in emissions upgrades to many of their coal plants over the past several years.

We believe that the current 90 percent guarantee that our state's two largest utilities currently operate under provides more than enough assurance to invest both in Michigan and in the future electric supply needs of their

"We believe competitive rates and high quality service are the reason our large customers have chosen to stay with HomeWorks."

customers. There are many small businesses HomeWorks serves throughout mid-Michigan that would be very happy with a 90 percent guarantee of their sales base!

A good portion of the generation fleet of the state's two largest utilities is old, dirty and needs to be either upgraded or totally replaced due to new federal environmental standards. This isn't new news. I am proud to say that Michigan's electric cooperatives aren't investing your dollars in ominous television ads but rather in your future, with new renewable energy projects and a new, \$175 million natural gas generating facility near Gaylord. In the end, we have an obligation to serve your needs and we take that obligation seriously. ■



Legislation Would Strengthen Tie Between Our Peninsulas



Craig Borr
Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association
President and CEO

The Mackinac Bridge opened to vehicle traffic between the upper and lower peninsulas nearly 60 years ago. To this day, it continues to be a vital commercial link, as well as a symbol of what Michiganders can do when we work together for our state's benefit.

Legislators in Lansing may soon have an opportunity to debate legislation that could be a similar “bridge” for enhanced

flows of electricity between our two peninsulas. But it will take a great deal of determination and willpower to move this legislation forward. There are likely to be many detractors—as there were when we built the “Mighty Mac”.

Legislation was recently introduced in the Michigan Legislature that could result in the development of an additional high-voltage transmission link between the peninsulas. The Senate version of SB 282 was introduced by Sen. Tom Casperson, while the House version, HB 4575, was introduced by Rep. Triston Cole.

Currently, our two peninsulas do not operate as one when it comes to electricity. Michigan policy, utilities and regulators control the Lower Peninsula, while Wisconsin interests and utilities dominate the Upper Peninsula. All too often these competing interests and policies do not align—and customers are caught in the middle.

In addition to creating a more robust electrical tie, the legislation would form one “resource adequacy zone” to include both peninsulas, as well as increase reliability by reducing electrical “congestion” costs involved in the flow of energy between the peninsulas.

These congestion costs are a hidden tax in the cost of electricity. Portions of the northern Lower Peninsula as well as the Upper Peninsula have some of the highest

congestion costs. Residents who live in these congested areas have higher electric costs because of this “hidden tax”. These costs could be dramatically reduced, and in some cases eliminated, if we as a state have the will to invest in a more robust transmission link between the peninsulas.

Since most of Michigan's electric cooperatives are net buyers of wholesale electricity, this legislation could create more competitive markets with additional buyers and sellers of wholesale energy, as well as renewable energy—and that should provide tangible long-term benefits for electric cooperative consumers.

This legislation could also expedite the development of newer, cleaner generating capacity for the Upper Peninsula—an area of our state that recognizes all too well what can happen when there is only one significant generation resource and no meaningful way to access bulk electricity from the Lower Peninsula, where most of Michigan's electrical generating capacity is currently located.

Further development of renewable energy, particularly wind, can also be enhanced with additional connectivity between the peninsulas. The Thumb region of Michigan's Lower Peninsula has been identified as the best region for developing wind energy. A more robust transmission link will allow us to export wind from the Thumb area to the Upper Peninsula—or perhaps export wind from the Great Plains and Upper Midwest to utilities throughout Michigan.

If Michigan legislators have the fortitude to enact this legislation and we eventually fund and construct a new, more robust transmission link between our peninsulas, I believe we will look back someday, like we often do when crossing the “Mighty Mac”, and feel a very real sense of accomplishment that we as Michiganders have done something to benefit many generations.

Time will tell. ■





ALL-AMERICAN FAVORITE BURGERS

Enjoy new twists on well-known favorites.

Bratburger Summertime Sliders



- 1 pkg. bratwurst
- 1 lb. 80/20 ground beef
- 2 pkg. pretzel dinner rolls

Onion Jam

- 3 T. butter
- ¼ c. olive oil
- 2½ lb. sweet onion, sliced thin
- ¼ c. balsamic vinegar
- 1 T. fresh thyme leaves (or 1 t. dried)
- 1 c. pure maple syrup
- salt and pepper

Remove bratwurst from casing and mix bratwurst and burger until evenly combined. Make small patties to match the size of your rolls. Salt and pepper to taste and grill or pan fry burgers to taste. Slice rolls, add burgers and top with onion jam and arugula, if desired. To make onion jam, melt butter and olive oil in a dutch oven. Add onions and sauté on low, stirring occasionally for 15–20 minutes. There should not be any “color” or browning; this process will evaporate the extra water in the onions and concentrate the sweet onion flavors. “Low and slow” is the ticket here. When the onions are soft but not quite translucent, add balsamic vinegar, maple syrup and thyme, and cook until liquid is incorporated into onion mixture. Put into 2–3 jars and enjoy! May keep in refrigerator for up to three weeks. Hot water bath or freeze and keep 6 months. Great on grilled fare, pizzas, and omelettes.

Denise Chapel, Gaylord

Bacon Blue Cheeseburger (pictured)

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| ½ lb. bacon, cut into ¼ inch slices | 1½ c. crumbled blue cheese |
| 2 lb. 90% lean ground hamburger | 8 burger buns |
| ½ t. garlic powder | lettuce |
| ½ t. onion powder | sliced tomatoes |
| salt and pepper, to taste | sliced onions |
| | your choice of condiments |

In a large skillet, cook sliced bacon until crispy. Remove from skillet and drain on paper towel; discard fat or save for other use. Mix bacon with the hamburger and add the garlic powder, onion powder, salt and pepper. Divide the burger mixture into 8 portions. Divide each portion in half and flatten into patties ¼-inch thick, using waxed paper. Place 2 T. blue cheese in center of 4 patties and top with another patty. Seal by pressing edges together. Cook in large skillet or grill until medium well, or your choice of doneness. Remove from heat and place onto bottom half of buns, and top with more blue cheese and favorite toppings. Serves 4.

Ann Brown, Niles

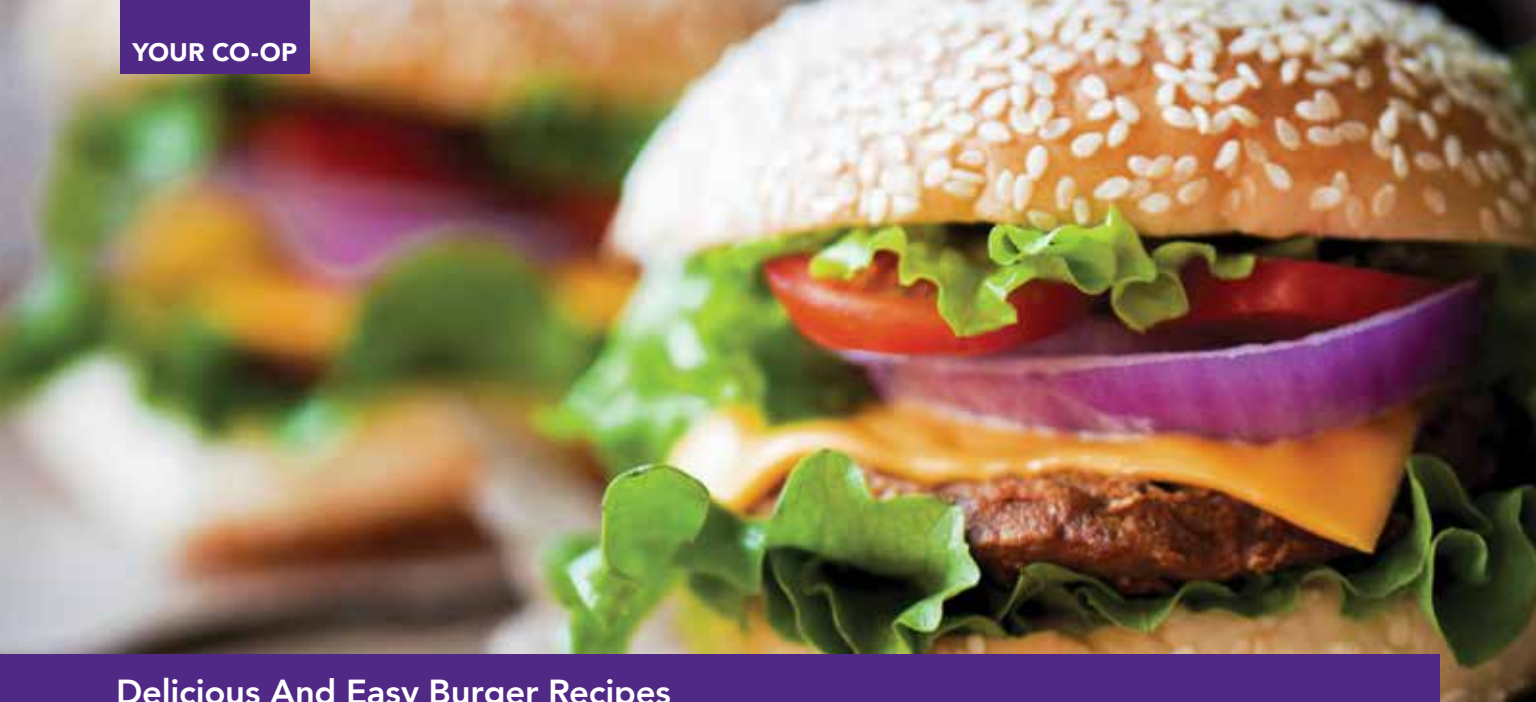
SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite “Candy” recipes by **Aug. 1** and “Easy Chicken” recipes by **Sept. 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)!

Photos—831 Creative



Delicious And Easy Burger Recipes

Hobo Burgers

- | | |
|---|----------------------------------|
| 1 lb. lean ground beef,
bison, lamb, or
a combination | 4 carrots, cleaned
and sliced |
| 4 potatoes, cleaned
and sliced | 4 onion slices |
| | black pepper, to taste |
| | ketchup |

Preheat oven to 350°. Shape burger into 4 patties; place each on foil square. Surround each burger with sliced potatoes, onions and carrots; sprinkle with pepper and ketchup. Fold and seal foil. Place on baking sheet and bake 45–60 minutes.

Robin Musselman, Charlotte

Texas Tomato Burger

- | | |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1 lb. ground beef | hamburger buns |
| 1 T. steak sauce | yellow mustard |
| 1 T. Worcestershire® sauce | sliced dill pickles |
| ½ T. Mesquite seasoning | 1 lg. tomato, cut into |
| ¼ t. salt | ¾ inch slices |
| ¼ t. pepper | Optional: Pepperjack |
| 1 can chili (no beans) | cheese, jalapeño |

Mix ground beef, steak sauce, Worcestershire sauce, and seasonings. Shape mixture into patties. Grill patties over medium heat until done, turning once. While the patties are grilling, heat chili until warmed through. During the last few moments, place buns on grill and lightly toast. Place bun bottom on a plate. Make one circle of mustard, place three sliced dill pickle chips, then ½ T. of chili, top with grilled burger, another ½ T. of chili, then tomato slice, and bun top. Add cheese for Texas Tomato Cheeseburger. Sprinkle some finely chopped jalapeño on the top layer of chili for an added bite.

Ted Herrst, Mancelona

Emeril's Essence Burgers

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------|
| ½ lb. ground sirloin | olive oil |
| ½ lb. ground chuck | |

Emeril's Essence Seasoning
(available in stores or make your own)

- | | |
|--------------------|--------------------|
| 2 ½ T. paprika | 1 T. oregano |
| 2 T. salt | 1 T. thyme |
| 2 T. garlic powder | cheddar cheese |
| 1 T. onion powder | mayonnaise |
| 1 T. pepper | sliced sweet onion |
| 1 T. cayenne | sliced tomato |

Combine ground sirloin and ground chuck. Make patties ½ inch thick; rub with olive oil. Combine all ingredients for Emeril's Seasoning and season burgers generously. Grill or pan fry to taste, turn once, then add a slice of cheddar cheese. Melt slightly. Spread buns with mayonnaise, sliced sweet onion and sliced tomato. Pass the napkins.

Barbara Steele, Charlevoix

Aunt Lena Davis' Tender Burgers

- | | |
|------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1 lb. lean ground beef | salt and pepper, to taste |
| 1 slice bread | oregano, to taste |
| 3 T. milk | chopped onions |
| 3 T. ketchup | |

Mix all ingredients together and shape into patties. Grill patties over medium heat until done, turning once.

Audrey Davis, Reed City



Capture your favorite moments and share!

1. One-month-old Braylynn Alex Simmon looks at our American flag and her dad's Special Forces patches while clutching his dog tags. Braylynn is the daughter of Reba Williams and SSG Brett Simmon, U.S. Army, an Iraq/Afghanistan War veteran. Submitted by Braylynn's grandmother and Brett's mother, Diane Smith of Fowler.
2. SSG Brett Simmon (right), U.S. Army, and Kyle Janessen run in a Memorial Day parade honoring Lt. Michael P. Murphy, a Navy SEAL who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously after exceptional service in Afghanistan. Simmon is a Fowler High School graduate and the son of Louis and Diane Smith, members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric. Photo submitted by Diane Smith.
3. "As the sun was setting, it lit up the moon," says photographer Tanya Troupe of Lake.

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

- "Country Roads", Deadline: July 15 (September issue)
- "Action/Sports", Deadline: Aug. 13 (October issue)
- "Michigan's Splendor", Deadline: Sept. 17 (Nov/Dec. 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.



Dan
Cutler

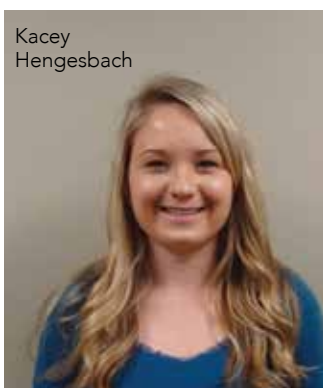
Students Help HomeWorks While Learning

As part of our commitment to education, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric works with local students to give them on-the-job insights into potential careers.

Dan Cutler of Edmore, who graduated from Montabella High School in May, reported to the Blanchard Operations Center every morning as part of Montabella's Jobs and Community program. Dan plans to pursue a career in line work.

Kacey Hengesbach, a graduate of Pewamo-Westphalia High School, is a marketing and communications summer intern at the co-op's Portland office. She is studying marketing and communications at the University of Notre Dame, and will be writing, designing publications and graphics, and taking photos.

Hunter VanRiper, a Portland High School graduate, has joined the Engineering Services department at Portland as a summer intern. He is currently working on a dual major in energy systems engineering and mechanical engineering technology at Ferris State University. Hunter will be helping with a variety of tasks, including processing Miss Dig requests, updating safety records and helping with engineering reports. ■



Kacey
Hengesbach



Hunter
VanRiper

Manting Completes Management Internship Program

Board chairman Ed Oplinger, left, presents Tom Manting with a certificate of completion from the NRECA Management Internship Program, an intense six-week program that covers all facets of managing an electric cooperative. Manting is chief information officer for HomeWorks Tri-County Electric.



People Fund Helps Buy Infant Car Seats

Meeting May 27, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made five grants, totaling \$5,183.86, including:

- \$3,000 to Housing Services of Mid-Michigan, Charlotte, for their housing assistance program;
- \$1,000 to Cornerstone Worship Center, Vestaburg, to purchase food pantry items;
- \$780 to Pregnancy Services of Ionia County to buy infant car seats;
- \$250 to the Adult Handicap Program of Eaton Regional Education Service Agency, to sponsor a session of their summer handicap bowling program; and
- \$153.86 to an Isabella County family to help with housing expenses.

How Operation Round Up Works

What happens when you participate in Operation Round Up? Let's say your monthly bill comes to \$77.56. We'll round it up to the nearest dollar, in this case it would be \$78. The extra 44 cents goes directly to the Tri-County People Fund. The average round-up for each meter is just 50 cents a month—about the cost of one daily paper or a cup of coffee.

Each month, your bill shows an amount listed for Operation Round Up, and your bill will include the extra few cents to show an even dollar amount. In January and February of the following year, your total annual contribution will be listed on your energy bill for tax purposes, since these are tax-deductible contributions.

Nearly 50 percent of all Tri-County Cooperative members and customers participate in Operation Round Up. ■

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 Aug. 10 for the August meeting, and by Sept. 21 for the September meeting.

Pay Your Bill 24/7



By Internet*:

- Go to homeworks.smarthub.coop/PayNow.html
- Key in Amount to Pay
- Select "Pay Now"
- Select your Payment Option
- Select "Make Payment"
- Key in Payment Information
- Select "Continue"
- Wait for Payment Confirmation (Note your confirmation number)

Ave time: 1 minute, 50 sec

By Phone:

- Dial 1-877-999-3395
- Select "Make Payment" Option
- Key in Account Number, followed by #
- Listen to your Current Balance
- Key in Amount to Pay
- Key in Payment Information
- Wait for Payment Confirmation (Note your confirmation number)

Ave time: 2 minutes, 45 sec

**SmartHub is your online and mobile gateway to managing your HomeWorks account. The mobile app is available through Google Play or iTunes.*

Miller Retires from 40-Year Line Career

Manager of electric operations **Matt Miller** made retirement plans to travel with his wife, Margo. But with the birth of grandson Ethan a few months ago, and another grandson due in September, his plans have changed a bit: his new job title is “Grandpa.”



Matt Miller spent a little more time at a desk once he became area supervisor at Portland.

A native of Ionia, Miller started his apprenticeship in line work in 1974, working for contractors out of the IBEW Local 876 union hall. He earned journeyman status in 1979. A few years later, he came to work at Wolverine’s small Portland power plant, attached to HomeWorks Tri-County’s office.

The plant was one of the transmission line crew outposts; Miller worked in the substation, tested poles, and patrolled lines when he wasn’t called to repair an outage.

In 1986, a job opened at HomeWorks when Bud Keusch retired, and Miller moved to the distribution side of the business. He became a crew leader, then line supervisor for Portland when Johnny Vallier retired. Then, when Harley Jaques retired in May 2010, Matt took over the entire operations department, including the Blanchard facility and engineering/dispatch.

Looking back, he sees many changes in line work, starting with technology.

“We used to get work orders on a half-sheet of paper, now they’re on computers,” he says. “We had one bucket truck, now we have four at each office—we climbed everything then, but it’s safer work now, with the buckets.”

Safety regulations have also changed how the job is done, he says. Fire-retardant clothing, climbing harnesses, and fall restraints mean the average lineworker is outfitted very differently from 30 or 40 years ago.

One thing Matt wouldn’t change is his memories of the people he’s worked with. Some of the linemen he started

working with in 1986 had worked for the co-op for over 30 years; some of the younger linemen today will be here until they retire, and he enjoys bridging that history of line work at the co-op.

“It does feel like family here, with more ups than downs,” he says. “We help each other, like after the fire (in 2004, when a fire destroyed the Portland operations building and several vehicles). Everybody pulled together to make things happen. We didn’t miss a beat taking care of the members.”

Other memories include the damage caused by straight line winds in 1998, and the Christmas 2013 ice storm. “Even with all the help we had, that took a lot out of everybody. But then we got so much help; even the members were out there taking care of us as we rebuilt their power lines.

“It’s just different working for a co-op.”

With his priorities changing from the co-op family to the Miller family, Matt is looking forward to doing some traveling. One of his favorite places is Zion National Park in Utah, where he enjoys waking up each morning to watch the sunlight move along the canyon walls.

Most travel in the immediate future, though, will be between Ionia, where daughters Tara and Gwen live with their families, including Ethan, and Minneapolis, where son Nick and his wife are expecting their second grandson. ■



Matt and son Nick on a “Bring Your Kids to Work Day” visit.

Long-Time Employees Promoted

In planning for Matt Miller's retirement, HomeWorks Tri-County's operations and engineering functions were split into two departments.

Chris Reed, the new manager of electrical operations, oversees the line departments, warehouses, contractor crews, and vegetation management program. Chris Jensen, manager of engineering services, leads the people working on mapping, work plan development, purchasing, and Portland dispatch.

Electric Operations



Chris Reed, a native of Portland, was hired in 1988 as an apprentice lineman. After becoming a journeyman, he assumed the role of crew leader in 2000, then became area supervisor in 2010. He assumed his new duties June 1.



Chris Teachout was selected as the new Portland area line supervisor. Chris has been with HomeWorks Tri-County for 20 years, starting as a truck driver-ground man and progressing through the ranks to his recent position as crew leader.



Chris Vallier was chosen to fill the open Portland crew leader position. Chris has been with the Co-op since 1999, beginning his career as a truck driver-ground man, then becoming an apprentice and earning journeyman status in 2003. He has performed the functions of crew leader off and on for the last several years, filling in when needed.

Engineering Services



Chris Jensen, the new manager of engineering services, graduated from Michigan State University in 1992 and was hired soon after as an engineering technician. He was promoted to system engineer in 1997, and in 2001, Chris was named supervisor of engineering and dispatch as part of the electric operations department.



Brian Thompson has been named the co-op's system engineer. He joined HomeWorks Tri-County in 2012 as an electric engineering technician, and is a graduate of Michigan Technological University.

Trierweiler, Thelen Join Customer Service Team



Brandon Trierweiler joined HomeWorks Tri-County in April as energy advisor and key accounts coordinator. He has technical experience from working at Davis Construction as a laborer foreman and most recently managed a wholesale distribution center in Lansing.



Sean Thelen is the latest addition to the HomeWorks Tri-County customer service support team, starting in late May. Sean is also a Portland native and has customer service experience with an area restaurant and Discount Tire and Battery.

Home is Where the Art Is

Local Co-op Artists on ArtPrize

Coined the largest open art competition in the world—Grand Rapid’s ArtPrize has made its mark on the art world. It has been covered by the likes of *The New York Times* and *GQ* and lauded as both a great art experiment and lambasted as the art equivalent of a reality TV show.

The art competition opens up to any adult artist with the \$50 entry fee and a venue willing to act as its pop-up gallery for the event. When it launched in 2009, no one knew what to expect, but after the first week local restaurants had run out of food, hotels were booked solid and over 200,000 people came from around the country to check out the phenomenon. The big twist is the two \$200,000 grand prizes and eight category awards, resulting in more than \$500,000 awarded by both the public and a jury of art experts.

Whether you love the artful canvas that Grand Rapids becomes once a year or prefer your art in a climate-controlled museum amongst whispered commentary—ArtPrize has some very real rewards for Michigan artists.

“A large number of people see my work at ArtPrize. It is a large-scale event by any measure,” says John Dempsey, who lives on the Ocqueoc River and is a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. “The number of people who come to see ArtPrize is extremely large

Acrylic on canvas of a factory ceiling by John Dempsey.



Colleen Whittaker’s Michigan map is made from authentic license plates fitted together like a puzzle.



Craig Snook's artwork, created with shredded paper, makes a kaleidoscope of colors that represents the beauty of a Michigan woodland landscape.



Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa's "urban interweave" artwork is acrylic and mixed media on canvas.

compared to all of the other exhibition opportunities available to the vast majority of contemporary artists."

A Traverse City artist and member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Royce Deans says that with the sheer volume of people having exposure to his artwork, the feedback is immediate and thrilling. "ArtPrize is a good place to try out some new ideas in front of people. It can be a little dangerous."

The opportunities that ArtPrize exposes participating artists to can be anything from potential buyers, connections with fellow artists and even future employers. Grand Rapids artist and member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, Lily Lihting Li Kostrzewa credits her current teaching position at Kendall College of Art and Design to her participation in ArtPrize. Lily's daughter, Isabella Kostrzewa, entered the ArtPrize young filmmaker awards and won second place. Her prize allowed her to purchase video equipment to continue her passion.

While exposure to a massive audience and opportunities is rewarding, many artists have also benefited on a very personal level.



Royce Deans' "kitsch 2 kunst" is a matrix of 36 panels with original paintings.

"I gained a lot of confidence as an artist," says Craig Snook, an artist who splits his time between Saginaw and Lakeview, and is a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative. "It was a great learning experience and it is fun being known as an 'ArtPrize artist'."

Colleen Whittaker, a Traverse City artist and member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative, says overhearing people comment on her artwork allowed her to capture uncensored opinions from the public. "The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, but the ones I remember are the critical comments—which I keep in mind while creating new work. Feedback from such a wide variety of people is invaluable in my quest to create art that appeals to a wide range of people while still being true to my artistic vision." ■

**ArtPrize 2015 will take place
Sept. 23–Oct. 11. Visit Artprize.org
for more information.**

Your Board in Action

Meeting at Portland May 18, your board of directors:

- Heard a report on results of a recent three-day inspection by a Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program team.
- Listened to the annual review of the Cooperative's loan portfolio.
- Learned more about the Cooperative's Information Technology Plan, including physical and cyber security measures, training, efficiency, new services, and mobile uses.
- Authorized using unclaimed capital credits and other member funds to donate to several charitable and non-profit projects serving the Cooperative's communities, and retiring the balance to donated capital.
- Reviewed the first week of district membership meetings.
- Read and approved Board Policy 304—"Use of Cooperative Vehicles" and Board Policy 305—

"Interview and Relocation Expenses," and approved moving both policies to the Employee Handbook.

- Elected the Cooperative's board to serve as the Tri-Co Services, Inc., board of directors.
- Learned there were 112 new members in April.
- Acknowledged the May safety report, listing employee training and minor employee and public incidents.

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 July 27 at Blanchard, and August 24 at Portland. Members who need directions to either office or wish to have items considered on the board agenda should call 517-647-7554. ■



Delivering Capital Credits

Director Wayne Swiler, hand-delivered the 2015 capital credits retirement check to Gabe Corey, of Carbon Green BioEnergy, LLC. The 2015 retirement was HomeWorks Tri-County's largest ever at \$2.4 million, bringing the total retired to date to \$14.3 million. Capital credits represent each member's equity in the cooperative.



Angel McCliggott, part of HomeWorks Tri-County's billing team, was recently honored with the national Touchstone Energy Power & Hope Award for her altruistic donation of a kidney last year. The Power & Hope award honors co-op employees who have gone the extra mile outside of their day-to-day responsibilities at work.

Four Easy Ways to Reduce Commercial Refrigeration Costs

Commercial refrigeration costs can be one of a business owner's greatest expenses. Check out four easy efficiency upgrades below that can help reduce your commercial refrigeration energy usage by up to 35 percent!

1. Anti-sweat heater controls

The electric heaters in cooler and freezer cases run *all the time*, while they only need to kick in when it's extremely humid.

The fix? Anti-sweat heater controls automatically sense humidity levels and selectively run the heaters as needed.

Energy Optimization rebate: \$100 per door.

2. LED cooler case lighting

Older coolers contain fluorescent lights that waste most of their energy generating heat instead of light, forcing the refrigeration system to work harder to remove the excess heat.

The fix? Light-emitting diode (LED) technology literally provides cooler light. LED case lights use significantly less electricity and produce 50 percent less heat.

Energy Optimization rebate: \$30 per door.

3. Occupancy sensors

The lights inside reach-in coolers and freezers are on constantly, whether customers are nearby or not.

The fix? LED occupancy sensors trigger lights to illuminate when a shopper approaches the cooler. Or, they can be programmed to stay on for a set amount of time and then shut off. **Energy Optimization rebate:** \$15 per door.

4. ECM motors

The fans that circulate cold air inside reach-in or walk-in coolers and freezers run non-stop, wasting energy and putting extra wear and tear on the equipment.

The fix? Electronically commutated motors (ECMs) are designed to use electricity sparingly, thereby reducing the load on your refrigerator.

Energy Optimization rebate: \$40–80 per motor.

Check out a full list of incentives at michigan-energy.org or call 877.296.4319 for more information.

Cool off with energy savings for your business

"Close the refrigerator!" Remember hearing that as a kid? Luckily, plenty of energy-efficient technologies are available today to help keep the electricity costs of commercial refrigeration low, beyond simply keeping the doors shut:

- LED cooler case lighting and occupancy sensors
- Anti-sweat heater controls
- ECM evaporator fan motors

ENERGY TIP: Energy Optimization Program rebates are available for all of the above commercial refrigeration upgrades and more.

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.



Jump In

One Last Mission

World War II seems like ancient history to a lot of folks. After all, it ended nearly 70 years ago! Never mind that 16 million Americans served, and over 400,000 lost their lives in a war spanning 61 countries. Despite the staggering statistics, school history books dedicate little more than a page or two to what many today call "The Greatest Generation."

Recently, I was privileged to join 150 WWII veterans and volunteers as they set off to rewrite a page in history during a "Tour of Honor" thanks to Mid-Michigan Honor Flight. Embarking on a one-day tour of Washington, D.C., that included stops to Arlington National Cemetery, Iwo Jima and of course, the National World War II Memorial, veterans learned first-hand the scope of this country's gratitude.

Dedicated in 2004, the WWII Memorial serves as a fitting tribute to the magnitude of this global conflict. Set between the Washington Monument and Lincoln Memorial, stone architecture, bronze sculptures and water features pay homage to both the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. More impressive, though, were the tourists who stopped to salute or shake hands with members of the Honor Flight as they walked by. Hearing young and old alike say "thank you" reminded me that in an era when history might be lost to the archives, there are still many who care.

Averaging 92 years old, many veterans pass before having an opportunity to see the monument built in their honor. Honor Flights transport WWII and terminally ill veterans to Washington, D.C., where they can visit the memorials dedicated to their service and sacrifice. Paired with an attentive guardian, each vet was personally escorted from one memorial to the next with a volunteer staff of medics on-call in case of emergency. Every effort is made to make this a once-in-a-lifetime experience. From the corridor of flags lining a path to the departure gate at Cherry Capital Airport to the Pin Curl Girls singing us off at Reagan International Airport to the welcome home celebration at the U.S. Coast Guard Base in Traverse City, no detail was overlooked.



And while attention to detail is obviously critical to the enjoyment and safety of those participating in an Honor Flight, the unplanned displays of gratitude were often the most touching. A man walking through Arlington National Cemetery dropping his bags to salute our three-bus motorcade. A group of middle school students stopping to give thanks. A tour guide inviting a veteran to share his story. A veteran commenting softly in front of the Freedom Wall, "I never thought I'd see this."

Reporting for WTCM Radio, I wasn't paired with a veteran like most others traveling that day. Still, I had a few sentimental moments of my own. As I silently thanked my dad for his service in the Pacific Theatre as a member of the Fifth Air Force in New Guinea, I had the undeniable feeling he was with me while I paid reverence to a monument he didn't live to see.

Harry Truman once said, "Our debt to the heroic men and valiant women in the service of our country can never be repaid. They have earned our undying gratitude. America will never forget their sacrifices." Within the next five years, most, if not all of our WWII veterans will be gone, and with them, a living piece of history. So the next time you see one, say 'thanks'. Because we all know freedom isn't free. And it's never too late to thank a veteran. ■



Jack O'Malley



May Photo

Mystery Photo Contest Winner

The May 2015 Mystery Photo contest winner is Michael Mattox, a Midwest Energy Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as "Turnip Rock" in Port Austin, MI, just off the shore in Lake Huron. The unique shape of the rock-island is the result of thousands of years of erosion by storm waves.

Declare Asphalt Independence with an...

AMERICAN METAL ROOF!



Order in the month of July and receive 2 upgrades worth up to \$7,500!



Upgrade from Standing Seam to Designer Oxford or Rustic Shingle plus avoid future rust with a free upgrade to energy efficient non-rusting aluminum.



Financing Available

Call Today! 844.638.2576

844.METAL.ROOFS



VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS:

FLINT - 6140 Taylor Drive • CHARLOTTE - 1875 Lansing Road

AmericanMetalRoofs.com

See dozens of pictures • Enter to win a Metal Roof • Request a Quote



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

EVERY MEMBER HAS A VOICE. EVEN THE ONES WHO CAN'T YET SPEAK.

As an electric co-op member, your household has a voice in how the co-op is run.
Learn more about the power of your co-op membership at TogetherWeSave.com.



Tri-County Electric
Cooperative

TOGETHERWESAVE.COM