

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

CAMP GRAYLING

Michigan Is Home To
World-Class Training Center

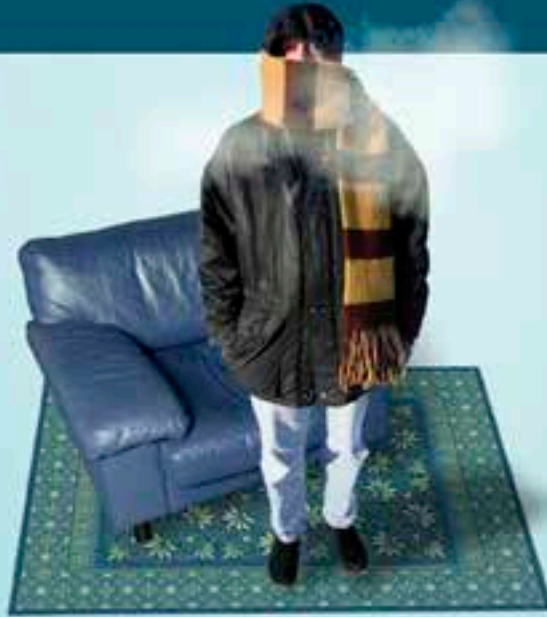
Plus!

Co-op Members Share
'Kids At Play' Photos

Titans Of Technology

The Memory Makers At
Point Iroquois Lighthouse

THE 30% FEDERAL TAX CREDIT EXPIRES AT THE END OF 2016



WATERFURNACE HAS A SMARTER WAY TO
LOWER YOUR BILLS
THIS WINTER

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

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ON THE COVER*

Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Center is the largest National Guard training center in the country, and is a member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative.

Pictured from left to right are Brigadier General John Slocum, 127th wing commander; Brigadier General Michael Stone, assistant adjutant general for installations; Brigadier General Leonard Isabelle, commander Michigan Air National Guard; Gov. Rick Snyder; Major General Gregory Vadnais, the adjutant general of Michigan; and Lieutenant General Raimonds Graube, chief of defense for the Country of Latvia.

*Some co-op editions have a different cover.
Photos courtesy of the Michigan National Guard

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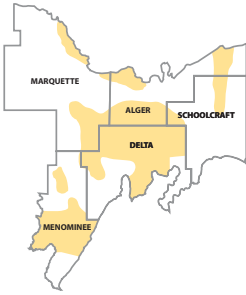
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Jack O'Malley

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Give Thanks to the One from Whom All Blessings Flow



Tom Harrell
Chief Executive
Officer

November is the month of Thanksgiving, a uniquely American holiday. Although the idea of giving thanks to God for blessing us with His goodness and bounty has spread to a few other nations and cultures, the origin of Thanksgiving as a national holiday is truly American.

The Proclamation of the U.S. Congress in 1782 says it best.

By the United States in Congress assembled.

PROCLAMATION

IT being the indispensable duty of all Nations, not only to offer up their supplications to ALMIGHTY GOD, the giver of all good, for his gracious assistance in a time of distress, but also in a solemn and public manner to give him praise for his goodness in general, and especially for great and signal interpositions of his providence in their behalf: Therefore the United States in Congress assembled, taking into their consideration the many instances of divine goodness to these States, in the course of the important conflict in which they have been so long engaged; the present happy and promising state of public affairs; and the events of the war, in the course of the year now drawing to a close; particularly the harmony of the public Councils, which is so necessary to the success of the public cause; the perfect union and good understanding which has hitherto subsisted between them and their Allies, notwithstanding the artful and unwearied attempts of the common enemy to divide them; the success of the arms of the United States, and those of their Allies, and the acknowledgment of their independence by another European power, whose friendship and commerce must be of great and lasting advantage to these States:-----Do hereby recommend to the inhabitants of these States in general, to observe, and request the several States to interpose their authority in appointing and commanding the observation of THURSDAY the twenty-eight day of NOVEMBER next, as a day of solemn THANKSGIVING to GOD for all his mercies: and they do further recommend to all ranks, to testify to their gratitude to GOD for his goodness, by a cheerful obedience of his laws, and by promoting, each in his station, and by his influence, the practice of true and undefiled religion, which is the great foundation of public prosperity and national happiness.

Done in Congress, at Philadelphia, the eleventh day of October, in the year of our LORD one thousand seven hundred and eighty-two, and of our Sovereignty and Independence, the seventh.

JOHN HANSON, President
Charles Thomson, Secretary

Printed at Exeter.¹

1. Text of the Proclamation courtesy of the History Channel.



Teresa Spence (left) and Tim Hartwick (right), of Great Lakes Energy, present Alger Delta employee Travis Templeton with his journeyman lineworker certificate.

Templeton Completes Apprenticeship Training

Alger Delta employee, Travis Templeton, completed apprenticeship training in July 2015 and has his Journeyman Lineworker certification from the Great Lakes Energy Joint Apprenticeship and Training Program.

In order to achieve journey lineworker status, apprentices must complete a training program that meets rigorous standards set by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL). This includes 7,000 hours of on-the-job-training over a four-year apprenticeship. In addition, the DOL requires 50 hours of safety training and 144 hours of classroom instruction per year of apprenticeship.

Upon reaching journey lineworker status, Templeton is fully trained and qualified to work on Alger Delta's lines and equipment, some of which are energized at 24,900 volts. Templeton also received congratulations and a Certificate of Completion from the DOL for successfully finishing the apprenticeship program. ■

Congratulations, Travis!



Trail Camera Captures Photo of Soaring Eagle

This photo was taken at Camp Dodge in Marquette County, an Alger Delta business customer, by a trail cam. The trail cam allows blazing trigger-speed snaps of wildlife at one-quarter of a second and never misses a shot, allowing all of us to enjoy the beauty of Michigan's wildlife. Amazing!

Got a great trail cam or wildlife photo? Send them to admin@algerdelta.com. Photos may be published as space allows.

**Cooperative offices
will be closed for
the holidays on the
following dates:**

Thanksgiving

Thursday and Friday,
Nov. 26–27

Christmas

Thursday and Friday,
Dec. 24–25

New Year's Day

Friday, Jan. 1

**From our families to yours,
have a happy and blessed
holiday season!**

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2015–2016 Season

Program: Winter Protection Plan
Contact: Your Local Utility Company

| # in Household | 150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1 | \$17,655 |
| 2 | 23,895 |
| 3 | 30,135 |
| 4 | 36,375 |
| 5 | 42,615 |
| 6 | 48,855 |
| 7 | 55,095 |
| 8 | 61,335 |

Add \$6,240 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

Program: Home Heating Credit
Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

| # Exemp. | Max. Income | # Exemp. | Max. Income |
|----------|-------------|----------|-------------|
| 1 | \$12,956 | 4 | 26,699 |
| 2 | 17,528 | 5 | 31,270 |
| 3 | 22,099 | 6 | 35,842 |

Add \$4,457 for each exemption over 6.

Program: Earned Income Credit
Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept., Internal Revenue Service irs.gov/EITC
 Michigan Dept. of Treasury michigan.gov/treasury

The **Winter Protection Plan** protects eligible senior and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–March 31). You may enroll between Nov. 1 and March 31. If you are an eligible low-income customer, your utility service will remain on from Nov. 1 through March 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, and
- make equal monthly payments between the date you apply and the start of the next heating season on any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (March 31), from April 1 through Oct. 31, you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill. **Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months.** You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- are age 65 or older,
- receive Department of Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- receive Food Assistance,
- receive Medicaid, or
- household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart at left.

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the Winter Protection Plan are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut off between Nov. 1 and March 31. However, seniors are encouraged to pay whatever they can during the winter so they will not have large, unmanageable bills when the protection ends.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the **2015** tax year if you meet the income guidelines listed at left, or you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs. Additional exemptions are available for seniors, disabled claimants, or claimants with 5% or more of their income from unemployment compensation.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. **Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided, or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (517-636-4486, or michigan.gov/treasury).** The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **no later than Sept. 30 each year.**

The **Earned Income Credit (EIC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EIC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EIC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year **2015** equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. Visit the website or see the **2015** MI tax booklet for details.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program
Contact: Local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) michigan.gov/mdhs

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): michigan.gov/mdhhs You do not have to be a DHHS client to apply for help with a past due bill, shutoff notice or the need for deliverable fuel through the SER. This program, available Nov. 1–May 31, provides most of its utility assistance during this crisis season. However, limited assistance is available outside the crisis season. If you receive a DHHS cash grant, you may vendor part of it towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 855-275-6424.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization
Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (200% of poverty guidelines shown above) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation. Contact your local Community Action Agency for details. Visit mcaaa.org to find one in your area.

Program: United Way
Contact: Call 2-1-1 or UWmich.org/2-1-1

2-1-1 is a free phone service operating 24 hours daily to provide information about help that may be available in a particular area with utilities and other needs. Learn more at UWmich.org/2-1-1.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection
Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for details.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty
Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You must still pay, but contact your utility company and they will help you set up a payment plan.

Program: Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program
Contact: MI Veterans Trust Fund

The Trust Fund provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families facing a financial emergency or hardship including the need for energy assistance. Michigan Veterans Trust Fund at (517) 284-5299 or michiganveterans.com

Program: MI Energy Assistance Program
Contact: Utility or 2-1-1 in late November

Agency assistance through MEAP, which includes services that will enable participants to become self-sufficient, including assisting participants in paying their energy bills on time, budgeting for and contributing to their ability to provide for energy expenses, and being energy efficient. Shut-off protection is provided Nov. 1–April 15 for all residential customers (regardless of income.)



Top 10 Rules for Kids About Electrical Safety

Electricity is a dynamic power source. Many home electrical fires, injuries and electrocutions can be prevented when we understand and practice electrical safety. This is especially true for our youngest co-op members. Remember the rules for using electricity the right way.

1. **DON'T plug a bunch of stuff into one outlet or extension cord.**

It could damage the electrical system in your house or even cause a fire. Show children how plugs work, and let them know that even if they are curious about the slits of an electrical outlet, *nothing* else should be placed inside.

Our reliance on electronics and gadgets is a risk when family members overcrowd electrical outlets, continue to use frayed wires, place devices near liquids or leave electronics on for long periods of time.

2. **Make sure all electric cords are tucked away, neat and tidy.**

Pets might chew on electrical cords, and people might trip and fall.

3. **DON'T ever climb the fence around an electrical substation.**

If a ball or pet gets inside the fence, contact your local electric utility for assistance—they'll come and get it out for you.

4. **DON'T yank an electrical cord from the wall.**

Pulling on a cord can damage the appliance, plug or outlet.

5. **Fly your kite far away from power lines or substations.**

Fly kites and model airplanes in large open areas like a park or a field, safely away from trees and overhead power lines. If a kite gets stuck in a tree that's near power lines, don't climb up to get it. Contact your local electric cooperative for assistance. The kite and the string may conduct electricity—sending it right through you to the ground.

6. **Ask a grown-up for help** when you need to use something that uses electricity.

7. **DO look up and look out for power lines before you climb a tree.**

The electricity can go right through the tree branch—and right through you!

8. **Have a grown-up put safety caps on all unused electrical outlets.**

Covering outlets will also help save energy by stopping cold drafts.

9. **Remind your mom or dad to watch out for power lines** when they're using a ladder, chainsaw or other outdoor equipment.

10. **Keep electrical stuff far away from water.**

Water and electricity never mix. Use caution before plugging in a radio, CD player, or any electrical gadget outdoors, and keep all electrical appliances at least 10 feet away from hot tubs, pools, ponds, puddles and wet surfaces.

EASY CHICKEN

Quick to prep and easy to make no-fail chicken recipes.



Salsa Chicken

Renee Possett, Middleville

- 2 lbs. fresh or frozen chicken breasts
- 1 can black beans, rinsed and drained
- 1 16-oz. jar salsa
- 1 15-oz. can corn, drained
- ½ of 1.25-oz. pkg. taco seasoning

Place chicken in the bottom of a crockpot. Sprinkle taco seasoning onto chicken. Pour salsa, then beans, then corn, over the chicken. Turn crockpot on high and leave for about 6 to 8 hours on low. Shred chicken and place on tortillas, taco shells or tortilla chips for nachos. Serve with shredded cheese, sour cream, shredded lettuce, taco sauce or more salsa.

Chicken Spinach Pasta (pictured)

Renee Coyer, Cooks

- 8 oz. rotini or penne pasta
- 10-oz. pkg. frozen spinach, rinsed and dried (fresh works fine too)
- 2 T. flour
- ¼ t. salt
- ¼ t. paprika (optional)
- 8 oz. boneless, skinless chicken breasts, cut into thin strips
- 2 T. olive oil
- ½ c. Italian salad dressing (Kraft Zesty is our choice!)
- ½ c. chicken broth
- ½ c. finely chopped onion
- 2 T. lemon juice
- 2 T. dry sherry (can be omitted)
- ¼ c. shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1 c. chef style mozzarella cheese (or six-cheese Italian)

Cook pasta until nearly done. Stir in spinach, cook additional 1 minute. Drain and set aside. Combine flour, salt and paprika in a plastic bag. Add chicken strips and shake to coat evenly. Heat oil in large skillet over medium heat. Add chicken. Cook chicken 4 minutes or until no longer pink. Add dressing, broth, onion, lemon juice, sherry and remaining flour mixture; cook and stir over medium heat for 5 minutes or until hot and bubbly. Add drained pasta and spinach to skillet. Toss and heat through. Remove from heat; stir in Parmesan cheese and ½ c. mozzarella. Transfer to plates and top with remaining cheese.

Oven BBQ Chicken

Linda Ackerman, Thompsonville

- 1 whole chicken, cut up
- 1 c. ketchup
- 1 stick butter
- ½ c. cider vinegar
- ¼ c. Worcestershire sauce
- ¼ c. brown sugar
- 2 T. yellow mustard
- juice from 2 lemons
- 1 yellow onion, chopped
- 2 t. salt
- 1 t. coarse-ground black pepper
- ½ t. cayenne pepper

Optional:

- 1 green pepper, seeded and cut into strips
- 1 carrot, peeled and cut into chunks

Combine all ingredients except chicken (and pepper, carrot if using) in saucepan, stirring to combine. Bring to a boil and let simmer, covered, 5–10 minutes. Place chicken (and pepper, carrot) in oven pan. Pour sauce over. Cover with foil. Bake at 350° for 1½ hours. Serve over rice. Serves 4.



Artichoke Chicken

Marie Mercier, Tustin

- 4 boneless/skinless chicken breast halves
- 14-oz. can artichoke hearts, well drained and chopped
- ¾ c. grated Parmesan cheese
- ¾ c. mayonnaise
- dash garlic powder

In a bowl combine artichoke hearts, cheese, mayonnaise and garlic powder. Place chicken in greased 7"x11" pan. Spread with artichoke mixture. Bake uncovered at 375° for 30–35 minutes or until chicken juices run clear.

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Gluten Free" recipes by **Dec. 1**, "Pasta" recipes by **Jan. 1** and "Side Dish" recipes by **Feb. 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprinted or typed on one side, please): *Country Lines* Recipes, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. 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)!

Save Energy While Enjoying the Holidays

Happy Holidays from the Energy Optimization Program! Below are some easy ways to save energy around your home this season. Making even small adjustments can result in big savings.

Deck the halls with LED holiday lights. Light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights use up to 90 percent less electricity and last up to 10 times longer than standard bulbs, produce almost no heat, and are nearly impossible to break. Save even more energy by putting your lights on a timer.

Become an efficient chef. Preheat your oven as late in the cooking process as possible. Also, don't open the oven door to check on your treats—use the oven light instead. Opening the door lowers its temperature by as much as 25 degrees, increasing cooking time and wasting energy.

Turn down the thermostat when you have guests. With extra warm bodies in the house, you won't need to crank up the heat. Save energy and keep your guests comfortable by turning down the thermostat.



Give your appliances a vacation. Before heading out for a long weekend, unplug as many appliances as possible (many use some energy even when they are turned off). You can also safely lower your thermostat to 55 degrees and turn your water heater to the lowest setting.

Take advantage of rebates. Before ringing in the New Year, claim your Energy Optimization rebates for energy-efficient products, such as lightbulbs, TVs, refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers/dryers, and more.

View current incentives at michigan-energy.org or call **877.296.4319** for details. ■



Last-minute energy savings

You've made your list, and checked it twice. But have you completed your energy efficiency improvements for 2015? Purchase a programmable thermostat, an efficient furnace, or spoil yourself or a loved one with a new ENERGY STAR® flat screen TV. Energy efficiency is the gift that keeps on giving for years to come!

ENERGY TIP: Submit your Energy Optimization rebate form by **December 31** to qualify for 2015 incentives.

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.

Talented Members Share 'Kids At Play' Photos



There's A Story In Every Photo

Alger Delta invites members to share their amazing photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*.

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **"Best of Selfies,"** due **Nov. 15** for the January issue; and **"Cute Pets,"** due **Dec. 15** for the February issue. Details and instructions for photo submission—including rules, topic list, publication date, and submission deadlines—can be found at <http://bit.ly/1JX5Afh>.

We look forward to seeing your best photos!

1. My Granddaughter, Genevive, playing mermaid in Lake Michigan at Rodgers park. *By Leora Pichette, Garden.*
2. Kate at the Chippewa County Fair. *By Kelly Kabat, Hessel.*
3. Some of my favorite photos of my grandkids were taken on the tire swing. In this shot, the balance shifted and Travis grabbed onto his cousin, Breanna, to hang on. *By Kim Foes, Cedar River.*
4. Enjoying the sunset. *By Patty Ordway, Sault Ste. Marie.*
5. "On the hunt for snapping turtles." Picture taken on the St. Mary's River near Sault Ste. Marie (secret spot). *By DeVere Parker, Sault Ste. Marie.*

TITANS OF

TECHNOLOGY



Over three decades ago, Lake Superior State University (LSSU), Sault Ste. Marie, established the first bachelor's degree in robotics in the nation. The program was created as the combined result of both a state grant and a visionary department chair that recognized the opportunity of getting in on the ground floor of emerging technology. Since then, robotics education and training at LSSU have evolved into a concentration for students in mechanical, electrical and computer engineering degrees, and as a robotics minor for students in the manufacturing and electrical engineering technology degrees. This robotics concentration (or minor) continues to be unique with only a handful of public universities in the nation offering such an option for undergraduate students.

"Through our training, our graduates can design and implement robotic processes for the manufacturing industry that will help to keep jobs here in the United States, and by using automation, keep it competitive

from the transfer of labor to outside of the U.S.," explains LSSU Professor Jim Devaprasad.

According to a July 2014 article in the *Washington Post*, industrial robots have advanced to the point at which they can do the same physical work as human beings. The operating cost of some robots is now less than the salary of an average Chinese worker. The more processes that can be automated, the less it makes sense to outsource activities to countries where labor is less expensive. For example, Foxconn, the world's largest contract electronics manufacturer, best known for manufacturing the iPhone®, recently announced it will spend \$40 million at a new factory in Pennsylvania, using advanced robots and creating 500 jobs.

With over \$1.5 million in state-of-the-art industrial robotics at their disposal, it is no surprise that LSSU engineering graduates in this field typically secure good full-time jobs well before graduation. Careers are typically in the design and implementation of innovative automation solutions for the

By Yvonne Whitman



LSSU Prof. Jim Devaprasad goes through the steps of the Stäubli work cell with summer robotics camp staff members Trace Hill (mech. eng), background, and Brittany Wallo (computer science), foreground. The workcell, comprised of 4 Stäubli robots, 3 shared rotary index tables, and a Bosch conveyor system, assembles and disassembles model zambonis. Witness software is used to program the procedure.

LSSU photo/John Shibley.

Professor Devaprasad with members of recent LSSU senior project teams Automation Innovation Renovation (AIR) and Precision Automated Systems (PAS).

LSSU photo/John Shibley.



LSSU students Patrick Davis (seated) and Trace Hill demonstrating the FANUC LR-Automate 'grocery bagging' robot. A Cognex vision sensor takes a picture of the object. Once the shape is recognized, the system determines the best way to attempt to pick up the item. The robot picks up the item and places it into a grocery bag using an articulated suction gripper developed by the team.

Photo—Yvonne Whitman.

Professor Jim Devaprasad, Coordinator of Manufacturing Engineering Technology at LSSU.

LSSU photo/John Shibley.

manufacturing industry. Companies that have hired LSSU graduates include Ford, GM, Boeing, FANUC and Kawasaki. According to Devaprasad, companies arrive on LSSU's campus in the fall seeking students that will graduate the following spring. Each graduating student typically receives two or three job offers with starting salaries averaging about \$60,000. "There are more job opportunities and positions to fill than we have graduates for," says Devaprasad. "We would welcome and love to educate many more motivated, incoming students."

With a curriculum heavily weighted in math and science, incoming students typically display an aptitude in these areas. But there is also the factor that cannot be defined, but is best personified by a statement from Patrick Davis, an LSSU senior engineering student from Chicago, IL. "When I was five years old my parents bought me a LEGO® Mind Storm kit and I just sort of never stopped." Fast forwarding 17 years, "I just applied to graduate school and my ultimate goal now is to work in the field of nanoelectronics."

The LSSU robotics staff and students also take their knowledge and skills into the Cloverland Electric Cooperative community by serving as mentors for local high school First Robotics Competition (FRC) teams in Rudyard, Brimley and the Sault Area Schools. FRC, the varsity Sport for the Mind™, combines the excitement of sport with the rigors of science and technology. Under strict rules, teams of students are challenged to build and program robots to perform prescribed tasks against a field of competitors. It's as close to "real-world engineering" as a student can get, and volunteer professional mentors who lend their time, talents and guidance are critical to a team's success.

For over 30 years, LSSU has led the pack in the robotics field and plans to continue leading well into the future. Contact Jim Devaprasad at jdevaprasad@lssu.edu or call 906-635-2131 for more information. ■

CAMP GRAYLING

Michigan Is Home To World-Class Training Center

By Kath Usitalo

Northern Michigan is a destination for outdoor lovers—paddlers, campers, fishermen and cross-country skiers—and for military convoys carrying camo-clad soldiers to the largest National Guard training facility in the U.S.

Camp Grayling Joint Maneuver Training Center's 147,000 acres sprawl across Crawford, Kalkaska and Otsego counties, neighboring Hartwick Pines State Park, the AuSable River, and Lake Margrethe. Since 1913, when lumber baron Rasmus Hanson donated 13,000 acres for a state military training grounds, the base has grown into a year-round facility with a \$30 million impact on the community. It is utilized by the Army and Air Force National Guard, all branches of the military, FBI, local law enforcement agencies, Department of Homeland Security and foreign military units.

The 24,000 personnel who trained there this year tallied 358,000 man-days (one soldier on the ground for one day), a 62 percent increase over 2014. It's a goal of Maj. Gen. Gregory Vadnais, Michigan's adjutant general and director of Military and Veteran Affairs, to raise that throughput by marketing Camp Grayling and improving its assets to meet changing demands.

Vadnais, a Lansing native with a bachelor's degree in sociology/psychology from Central Michigan University, has seen the Guard's role evolve since he started his career with the military in 1970. "The National Guard's mission is to fight our nation's wars—we are

the operational reserve of the United States military—defend the homeland and build a global partnership, something we've been doing for 23 years," he says. Michigan's State Partnership Program partners with Latvia and Liberia, as well as Canada, Denmark, Hungary, Poland and Estonia, and all sent military personnel to Camp Grayling for training this year.

The Michigan National Guard operates a counterdrug team and responds to national disasters like Hurricane Katrina, where Vadnais was Joint Task Force-Cyclone commander. The Guard's peacekeeping role has grown, and since



Maj. Gen. Gregory Vadnais, Michigan's adjutant general and director of Military and Veteran Affairs.

9/11 it's been mobilized to combat terrorism and put boots on the ground in Iraq and Afghanistan.

These duties require specialized training and Vadnais cites Camp Grayling's competitive package, including a counter improvised explosive device training area, firing and tank ranges, a Simulation Center with state-of-the-art virtual trainers, and one of the newest Combined Arms Training facilities in the country. "We've got 26 buildings designed for units to come in and train in an urban setting to replicate the sights, sounds, smells and environment that our soldiers would face in actual combat."

Sheer size is a plus. "It's 50 miles from north to southwest," Vadnais explains. "We can put units at the doctrinal distances that they would actually be experiencing in actual combat. We have a large airspace, particularly with the Alpena Combat Readiness Training Center." Another advantage Camp Grayling has over facilities in southern climates: winter training conditions. The base can bed 8,000 soldiers in the summer and 4,000 in the winter.

Several times a year Camp Grayling, under Installation Commander Col. Tom Perison, opens its gates for public tours. The outreach is important, says Vadnais. "The Grayling community is a part of that installation. They live with it. They've been great partners.

"I love telling our story, because it's a great story to tell." ■



Photos courtesy of the Michigan National Guard



The Memory Makers

By Yvonne Whitman



'Santa and Mrs. Claus' in front of the lighthouse fireplace. Their costumes were made by Gilly's sister, Patricia Knecht, who was the head seamstress for the movie 'Somewhere in Time'.

Visitors to the historic Point Iroquois Lighthouse often find themselves being welcomed, depending upon the time of year, by a lighthouse keeper donning a historic costume or, during a very special season, by a lighthouse-keeping Santa Claus! Volunteers Ron "Gilly" and Karen Gilmore have been happily greeting visitors while also maintaining and living at the Point Iroquois lighthouse since 2013, when they were chosen by the U.S. Forest Service (USFS) as keepers of this national treasure.

The 65-foot tower and lighthouse have stood watch for more than 160 years over the entrance where Lake Superior rushes into the St. Mary's River and on to the Soo Locks—a passage that must be navigated by every ship traveling the St. Lawrence Seaway, the world's busiest inland waterway. While the lighthouse is a local, state and national treasure, the true pride and joy of the establishment are Gilly and Karen. For over 30 years, the USFS has provided a one-of-a-kind program for any U.S. lighthouse wherein individuals can volunteer for a year to act as caretakers. This involves not only living at the lighthouse, but maintaining the grounds and greeting visitors. Community volunteers for over 40 years and recently retired, the couple was, according to Karen, "Trying to figure out what to do next. Then we



Gilly takes a batch of cinnamon rolls out of the oven. Every Saturday he bakes about 15 dozen of these from scratch using “Grandma Emma’s” recipe. He gives the rolls to lighthouse visitors that day. Visit countrylines.com to get a copy of this amazing recipe.



‘Gilly’ Gilmore in his lighthouse keeper ‘dress whites’ ready to greet visitors.

heard about the lighthouse caretaker program. With our background in community service it was a perfect fit.”

The Gilmores’ duties include cleaning the buildings, stocking the gift shop, flower gardening, lawn care, snow removal and general upkeep. From May to October, they also greet tourist buses three days of the week. Each time, Gilly dons either his lightkeeper dress blues or whites, boards the bus and offers visitors a brief history of the lighthouse. While all of this may sound like a considerable amount of work for a retired couple, the Gilmores don’t see it that way. “The joys of working here far outweigh the physical demands of caring for the lighthouse,” Gilly states. “We’d stay forever if they would let us,” Karen echoes. “We love it.”

In 2015, the Gilmores’ dedication and volunteerism was recognized when they received the prestigious “Volunteer of the Year for Leadership” award from the USFS, beating out nominees from 22 states. “What it really comes down to is their dedication,” explains their supervisor, District Ranger Robert West. “The physical aspect of what they do at the lighthouse is really just a reflection of how much they care. It is really rare to find such a good fit.”



Karen (left) and ‘Gilly’ Gilmore with granddaughter Anika Mousseau in front of the lighthouse. Anika, who lives in Fort Wayne, IN, spends two months of the summer at the lighthouse volunteering with her grandparents.

Every lighthouse caretaker brings something unique to the position, but the Gilmores may have brought the most magical touch to the environment. After acting as Santa and Mrs. Claus for community events and organizations for over 35 years, they were happy to bring the tradition to Point Iroquois. This holiday season, children can visit with the lighthouse Santa and Mrs. Claus from the weekend after Thanksgiving until the weekend before Christmas. The lighthouse gets decked out in holiday lights and decorations, and children will find Santa seated in front of the fireplace, ready to greet visitors from 12–2 p.m. on these weekends.

When asked which aspect of life at Point Iroquois is most meaningful to them, Gilly sums up their feelings easily. “We are memory makers for people. And that is the greatest joy we get from being here.” ■

The museum and gift shop are open from May 15 through Oct. 15. Hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., daily.

Call the Lighthouse at 906-437-5272 for additional information.

Santa Claus is Coming to Town!

By Jack O'Malley

Holidays are a great time for tradition. A favorite in our family was taking the kids to see Santa. With so many children all over the world waiting expectantly to meet Mr. Claus, he welcomes a little seasonal assistance! Enter A. Michael Deller, a graduate of the World Famous Santa Claus School in Midland, MI, and Santa's helper since 2002.

How does one decide to enroll in Santa School? Years ago, Deller wanted to prove to his son that his beard would grow completely white, not salt and pepper. And it did! But even with a beard as white as snow drifting around Santa's workshop, portraying Santa was not on Deller's radar until he visited Livonia City Hall. After a volunteer backed out of the holiday parade, a staffer at city hall recognized Deller (and his beard). Frantic, she asked him to ride in the parade and with a "Ho! Ho! Ho!" Deller was hooked!

Knowing peoples' expectations and how important his seasonal duties are, Deller strives to "be authentic, true to tradition." The golden rule? "Don't promise anything! Even if the parent is nodding yes. I tell children I will do my best but it will be a surprise."

What about answers to the BIG questions? "I have a magic key. Elves are always watching who's been naughty or nice. There is no such thing as a bad cookie. And yes, the reindeer like treats too!"

Genetics have given Deller "the Santa build," so a gig impersonating Saint Nick was probably inevitable. With a jolly chuckle, Deller explained that



the beard stays year-round because "it's too itchy to grow it back." So I had to ask, do kids spot this Santa when he's off duty? Of course! And this Santa is prepared. A mother approached him one day and said her children thought he was indeed Mr. Claus! "You will grow up to be good detectives!" Deller told the kids, and handed each a card with his picture on one side and "I met Santa Claus" on the other.

But his favorite story involved his own grandchildren, Kate and Ryan. When they arrived at a function the two ran up and said, "Hi Santa!"...then Kate hugged him and whispered..."Don't worry grandpa, I won't blow your cover!"



Jack O'Malley

Merry Christmas to all and to all a good night!

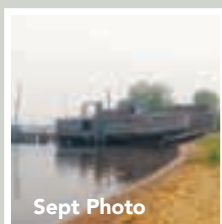
A. Michael Deller is retired and a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. ■



«« Where in Michigan is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **Dec. 10** will be entered in a drawing to win a \$50 electricity credit from their electric co-op.

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at countrylines.com or send by mail to: *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Include the name on your account, address, phone number, and name of your co-op.



Our Mystery Photo Contest Winner from the September 2015 issue is Adrian Jentoft, an Ontonagon co-op member who correctly identified the photo as "Whitefish Point" in Paradise, MI, on Lake Superior.

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