

Great Lakes Energy Cooperative

November/December 2015

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

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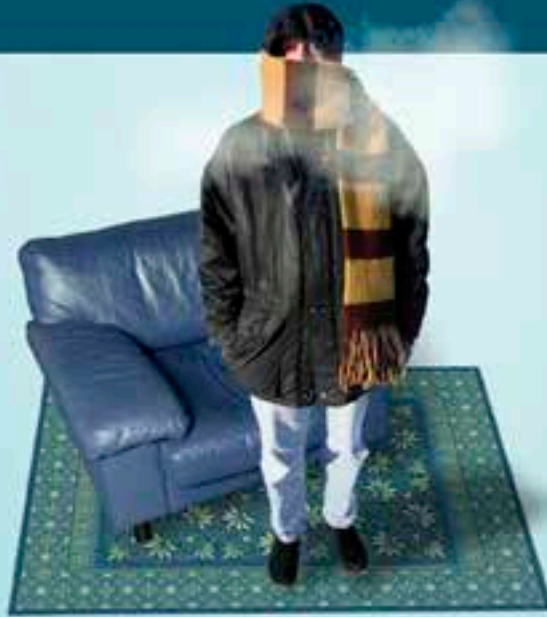
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Capital Credit Refunds Coming
More Power From Renewables
Help Others This Holiday Season



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The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

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

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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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You Get The Credit



Steve Boeckman
Great Lakes Energy
President/CEO

The credit for our ability to deliver reliable, affordable electric service goes to our Great Lakes Energy members whose investments in their co-op allow us to make needed improvements. Likewise, when we earn a profit our members get the credit, too. Capital credits, that is.

Members receive capital credits, or money back, when they belong to an electric cooperative that manages its finances wisely.

Capital credits may not be a term you'll easily remember, but you will remember getting money back on your bill. This year, Great Lakes Energy is returning over \$4.69 million in capital credits to our members. The money will appear as a credit on your bill, and amounts over \$1,000 will be sent as checks. That brings the total amount of capital credits refunds issued annually since 2003 to over \$46.1 million.

Electric co-ops are different than other utilities. Great Lakes Energy operates "at cost"—collecting just enough revenue to run and expand the business. When there's money left over, it's allocated back to our members as capital credits. You see this allocation each year on your June bill. When our financial position permits, the capital credits are retired and returned to members. Unlike other utilities, we don't have investors. You're the owner of this business and our profits are returned to you as a capital credit.

As a business owned by the members we serve, we follow the cooperative principle of economic participation, which means that members contribute equitably to and democratically control their cooperative's capital. This applies to the directors you elect, the rates you pay, and the margins or profits your co-op earns.

They are called "capital credits" because your investments allow us to obtain the capital we need to operate and expand. Much of that capital goes for building, maintaining and improving one of the largest electric cooperative distribution line systems in the country. It also includes emergency repairs when big storms happen, like the one in August that caused extensive damage to our system.

Everyone who serves you at Great Lakes Energy has a role in ensuring that your co-op remains a strong, well-run business. It's the hard work of our employees and board of directors that has made the return of capital credits possible for the past 13 years.

As an owner of this business, your membership entitles you to share in the value it provides. Read more about this year's capital credit refund on the next page. ■

Capital Credit Refund Q & A

Great Lakes Energy members who purchased electricity in 2014 or 1990 (or both) will receive a capital credit refund. Most will see the refund applied to their December bill.

See the article on page 4 for details.

Q & A About Capital Credits

Q. What are capital credits?

A. Capital credits are a key reason why you're more than just a customer. They represent your share of profits (called margins in the co-op world) that are generated when revenues exceed our operating costs. In a co-op business, margins are not kept but rather are allocated back to the members who provide the revenue through the electric rates they paid during the year. Unlike investor-owned utilities, co-ops do not have shareholder investor/owners. Our members are our investor/owners. Every time you pay your bill, you're making an investment in a business you co-own.

Q. Why is the refund on my bill different than my neighbor's?

A. Your share of the margins is based on the amount you spent for electricity during the years involved. If your neighbors spent more for electricity in these

years than you, they will receive a larger refund and vice versa.

Q. Why are the refunds based on 2014 and 1990?

A. Capital credits were retired from the oldest year (1990) and most recently completed fiscal year (2014) to allow both long-time and new members to receive the benefit. Also, all capital credits earned by members prior to 1991 have now been returned.

Q. What if I don't receive a refund?

A. You should receive a refund if you were a GLE member who purchased electricity from us in 2014 or 1990 (or both). If you did not get a refund, you may be a member who joined us in 2015 or may have assumed the electric account from a relative who is now deceased. Contact us for instructions on how to claim any capital credit refunds that may be issued in the deceased person's name.

Anyone who plans to move off our lines should provide us with their new address for our records. Your assistance will help limit the amount of unclaimed capital credit refunds.

Q. What about capital credits earned in other years? Will they be returned, too?

A. Yes, we plan to continue retiring capital credits annually, provided financial conditions allow us to do so.

Q. What do you do with the capital credits that haven't been retired and returned yet?

A. They remain part of the capital invested in the cooperative that allows us to build, maintain and improve our power line distribution system and provide the other services that you expect as a GLE member.

Q. Will I receive a refund again next year?

A. It is too early at this time to predict how well your cooperative fared financially in 2015. However, based on how well we've done in the past with returning capital credits, we expect to continue this member benefit next year. ■

How Do Capital Credits Work?

Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are returned to members in the form of capital credits.



Source: National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation

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)!

Information for All Members of

Great Lakes Energy Cooperative



Your cooperative offers a program called the People Fund, which is funded through the voluntary rounding up of your monthly utility bill to the next whole dollar.

An all-volunteer board of directors appointed by the member-elected board of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative distributes the funds throughout the cooperative's service area. The Fund supports charitable efforts in and around the communities we serve. Money from the People Fund has been distributed to educational programs, medical groups, recreational organizations serving all ages, senior organizations, and numerous other local charities. A copy of the most recent People Fund annual report, which details contributions, is available by contacting Great Lakes Energy, and

prior year reports are highlighted in previous issues of *Michigan Country Lines* magazine.

Your participation in the People Fund is voluntary. If at any time you wish to discontinue participation in the People Fund, please let us know and we will make the change. If you are participating, your monthly bill is rounded up to the next whole dollar. If your bill is \$58.42, it would be rounded up to \$59. The 58 cents would then be contributed by Great Lakes Energy Cooperative on your behalf to the People Fund, to be used as explained above. A member's average annual contribution is about \$6. Your annual contribution to the People Fund is tax deductible and is reported on your monthly statement at the end of the year.

For additional information regarding the People Fund, contact the co-op office by mail or call 888-485-2537. ■



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



1



2



3



4



5



6

1. Lane, 4 and Kyah, 12 months, use sticks with fishing line to try and catch fish on the river in Rockford. They were having a blast!
By Dana Eady, Pierson.
2. My granddaughter enjoying the mud. This was taken after a benefit mud run in Mason County. They allow all the kids to go play in the mud after the trucks are done.
By Diane Sommerfeldt, Fountain.
3. Winter snow means creative fun for this sister and brother.
By Dan Kuiper, Morley.
4. Granddaughter Kristie learning to skate.
By Janice Harvey, Boyne City.
5. Grandpa and great granddaughter at the Zoo.
By Val Soulard, Reed City.
6. A.J.'s water balloon art in honor of the 4th of July at grandma's cottage.
By Heather Celleghin, East Jordan.

See more amazing photos at [facebook.com/greatlakesenergy](https://www.facebook.com/greatlakesenergy)

Enter the 'Pay My Bill' Photo Contest!

Great Lakes Energy members whose photos we print in *Country Lines* will be entered in a drawing and one lucky member will win a credit (up to \$200) on their December 2015 energy bill. Upcoming topics for 2016 include **"Best of Selfies,"** due **Nov. 15** for the January issue; **"Cute Pets,"** due **Dec. 15** for the February issue; and **"Winter Fun,"** due **Jan. 15** for the March issue.

Visit gtlakes.com/photocontest to submit your high resolution digital photo, read contest rules and see upcoming themes for 2016. To send by mail: Include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, topic and details about your photo to: *Country Lines* Best Shots, P.O. Box 70, Boyne City, MI 49712. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos. We look forward to seeing your best shot!



Savings for Holiday Shoppers

Do your holiday shopping and save with the Co-op Connections® card available free to Great Lakes Energy members.

Use the Co-op Connections® discount card at participating area businesses. Here are just a few of the many discounts available:

- **Claybanks Pottery, New Era** – 10 percent off everything.
- **This Old House Antiques & Resale, Newygo** – 10 percent discount.
- **Country Now & Then/Up The Lazy River, Boyne City** – 10 percent off any in-stock, non-sale item over \$20, not to be combined with any other discount offer.

Find bargains online or use your Co-op Connections® card at participating businesses, which includes valuable offers from national merchants, too.

In addition, save up to 85 percent on prescription drugs and refills at participating retailers. Other healthy savings discounts are available, too. Visit healthysavings.coop for more information.

Review the discounts by visiting our website, gtlakes.com, and clicking on the Co-op Connections discount card. Or use the Co-op Connections mobile app. Visit the App Store and search for "Co-op Connections."

Don't have a card or internet access to the list of discounts? Simply call us at 888-485-2537, ext. 8957, and start saving today.

People Fund Grant Awarded

A \$10,000 GLE People Fund grant will help renovate and expand the community pavilion in Boyne City so it can be used year-round for community and family events, such as the popular farmer's market. Project organizers are nearly one-third of the way to reaching their \$700,000 fundraising goal. From left are Rebecca Harris, farm market manager; Barb Brooks, city executive assistant/harbormaster; Lori Meeder, main street manager; Mike Cain, city manager, and Shari Culver with Great Lakes Energy.



Third Quarter Reliability Update

SAIDI (pronounced SAY-DEE) says Great Lakes Energy finished the third quarter of 2015 with more average outage minutes than for the same period last year.

On Oct. 1, average outage minutes totaled 105.65 minutes compared to 99.85 minutes reported on the same date a year ago. We still remain on track to reach our 2015 reliability goal, which is to not exceed 182.1 average outage minutes.

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

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

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

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

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

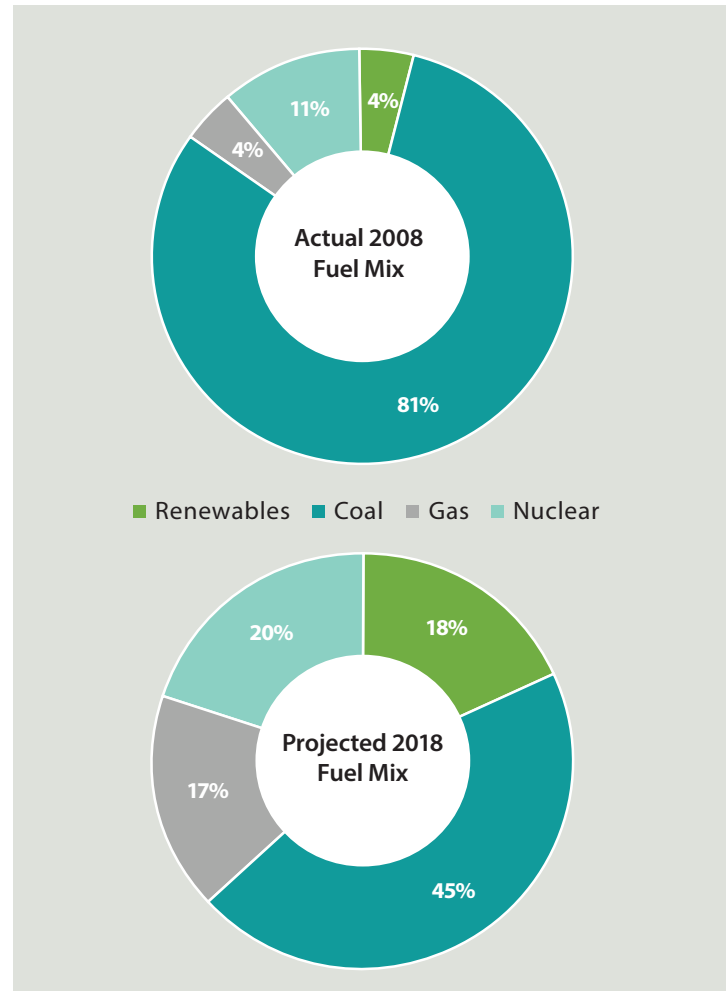
Wolverine is Michigan's Renewable Energy Leader

When it comes to renewable energy, Wolverine Power Cooperative (Wolverine) is leading the state with its increase in power supply from renewable energy resources. Providing reliable power supply to Wolverine's member distribution cooperatives, including Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, through renewable resources is a top priority.

Since December 2007, Wolverine's supply portfolio has included 50 megawatts (MW) of wind energy from the Harvest Wind Farm located in Michigan's Thumb area. In January 2015, Wolverine signed a 20-year purchase power agreement with Renewable Energy Systems Americas Inc. and will receive 150 MW of wind energy from their Deerfield Wind Energy Project, also in the Thumb area. Construction for the Deerfield Wind Energy Project will begin before the end of this year with an anticipated completion date of Dec. 31, 2016.

Zach Anderson, Wolverine's merchant operations supervisor, is encouraged by the increase in cost-effective renewables to Wolverine's portfolio. "The addition of the Deerfield Wind Energy Project will strengthen Wolverine's overall renewable portfolio, allowing us to exceed state regulations and supply our members with affordable energy from wind," Anderson explains.

Wolverine's increase in renewables is strongly evident when you look at its fuel mix in 2008 as compared to what's projected for 2018. Wolverine will continue to look for opportunities to improve its generation mix. "We believe in the impact that having a healthy renewable portfolio will have on Wolverine's members



and will persist in our efforts to find opportunities to grow our capacity in this area," said Anderson. ■

A Holiday Invitation to Help Others

Since 2007, Great Lakes Energy employees have raised over \$39,000 for local charities through their annual holiday fundraising. Over \$6,800 was raised last year alone.

Generous donations of goods and services from local businesses and other organizations make it possible for employees to hold silent auctions each year. Employees also donate items to the auctions. Proceeds go to charities throughout the Great Lakes Energy service area.

This year, we again invite local businesses and groups to donate toward this good cause. Your silent auction donations will allow us to continue this successful endeavor to give back to our local communities.

To donate a good or service to the silent auction, contact us by Dec. 1 and ask for extension 8956. ■

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.

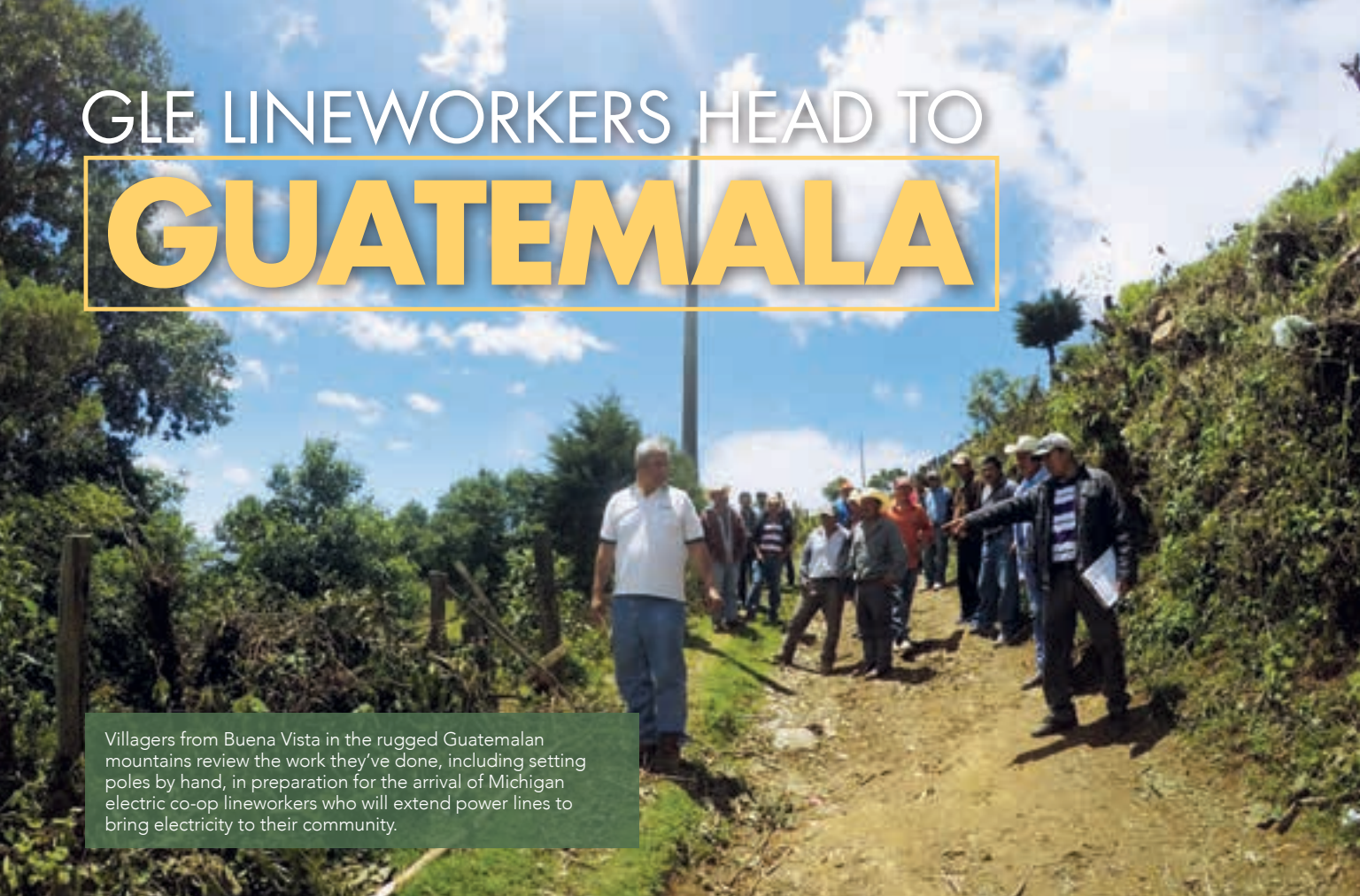
Several times a year Camp Grayling, under Installation Commander Col. Tom Perison, opens its gates for public tours. The outreach is important, says Vadnais. "The Grayling community is a part of that installation. They live with it. They've been great partners.

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



Photos courtesy of the Michigan National Guard

GLE LINEWORKERS HEAD TO **GUATEMALA**



Villagers from Buena Vista in the rugged Guatemalan mountains review the work they've done, including setting poles by hand, in preparation for the arrival of Michigan electric co-op lineworkers who will extend power lines to bring electricity to their community.

In November, a group of Michigan electric cooperative lineworkers—including three from Great Lakes Energy—will travel to Buena Vista to extend power lines 3.25 miles to bring electricity to some 50–60 homes in this remote mountain village.

It's part of a humanitarian effort by electric cooperatives nationwide to bring power and improve the quality of life for families living in underdeveloped areas in the world.

Kevin Evans, GLE engineering analyst, along with other Michigan electric co-op workers visited the village earlier this year to scout the area where power lines will be placed. In the Q&A below, he shares his experiences and the challenges lineworkers will face.

Where do they go once the group arrives in Guatemala City?

The lineworkers will travel approximately 2 hours to Tecpán to stay the first night.

The second day they will have about a 4 hour drive to Cuilco, then they will begin up the mountain to Buena Vista for another 3 to 4 hours depending on roads.

What is the condition of the roads?

It's a paved international highway to Cuilco, then shortly up the mountain it becomes rock and dirt. Depending on how bad the rainy season was, there may be washouts.

What modes of transportation are used?

It's a bus trip from the airport to Cuilco. From there, rental SUVs will take luggage/equipment up the mountain and the lineworkers will ride in the back of a pickup.

Where will the lineworkers stay while in Buena Vista?

They will stay in the two room schoolhouse. It has a generator that runs for a few hours each night which allows the villagers to cook dinner for them. Workers will have a short window for lights and power.

COVER PHOTO: Matt Monroe with Wolverine Power Cooperative (Great Lakes Energy's power supplier) was part of the first Michigan electric co-op team that traveled to Buena Vista earlier this year to scout the area where the new power lines will be built. Great Lakes Energy's Kevin Evans was also part of this team.

How long will it take to complete the line construction?

We are planning on 10 days to complete the job.

How many poles were set by hand by the villagers for this project?

All 43 poles for this project were set by the villagers. Lineworkers will string up the wire and energize it.

Will they have to climb all the poles to string wire?

Yes, there will be no bucket trucks so all framing will be done by climbing. They will have hoists for pulling the wire.

Are their areas where they will be climbing poles in steep, mountainous terrain?

Almost all primary poles are near the mountain side road, so it isn't too steep in most cases. The secondary poles string all around the mountain, and most will have drastic elevation changes, from about 8,000 to almost 9,000 feet above sea level.

How will the terrain and climate affect line construction?

The most obvious challenge will be adjusting to the elevation, which makes any task much more difficult. Also, the mountain top can have rapid weather changes with heavy fog rolling in within minutes. Pole locations vary from along the road to taking a muddy foot path up 1,000 feet. Framing the poles will require more work since they will have to climb each pole rather than work from a bucket truck. Also, they have limited access to gasoline for their power tools, so villagers will make daily trips down the mountain to buy gas. Probably the biggest challenge will be stringing the wire. Some spans are nearly 1,000 feet apart (an average GLE span is about 300 feet between poles) and are over deep ravines. There will be logistical challenges in getting the wire from one pole to the next to pull it in. Another issue with the long spans and line route is many wire pulls will have to be done individually rather than pulling multiple spans at one time, which will slow things down.

Any other challenges?

They will be roughing it up there, sleeping on cots with limited electricity, no plumbing, and limited cellular reception. The language barrier may pose a bit of a challenge but I think they should be able



Four Great Lakes Energy employees are part of the Guatemala Partners for Power project. From left are engineering analyst Kevin Evans and lineworkers Tony Reichle, William LaTourneau and Adam Brewbaker. Evans was with a team that visited Guatemala earlier this year to scout out the areas where new power lines will be built. Reichle, LaTourneau and Brewbaker are part of a second Michigan group that will build the new lines in November.

to communicate just fine. There is one villager who speaks good English and there is also a translator. Plus we have Will (GLE lineworker William LaTourneau) who is fluent in Spanish. I think there will also be some culture shock, but that shouldn't be a problem. Once lineworkers see how motivated and hard working the villagers are they will have that common ground to grow from. I also think some lineworkers may struggle with the desire to do even more when they see the way the villagers live. It hits a little hard when you compare our living conditions with theirs. ■

Historic Farm Honored

Congratulations to Joseph, Gregg and Matthew Chromicz whose farm in Emmet County received state centennial farm certification.



Great Lakes Energy is a sponsor of the Michigan Centennial Farm Program that honors Great Lakes Energy members and other Michigan residents whose farms have been owned and operated by the same family for 100 years. Once a farm is certified through the program, the owners receive a certificate as well as a display marker for their farm.

GLE members can request an application or receive more information about the program by contacting The Historical Society of Michigan, 517-324-1828, or by visiting www.centennialfarms.org under the Programs section.

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!

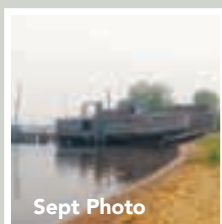
A. Michael Deller is retired and a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op. ■



«« 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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