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CAMP GRAYLING

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World-Class Training Center

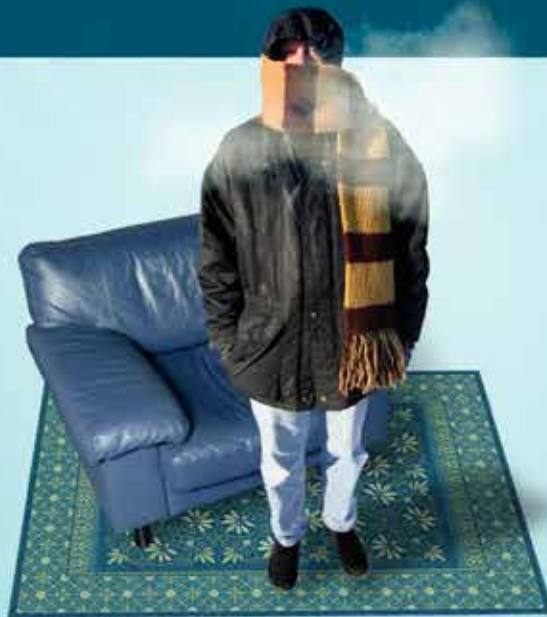
Plus!

Grant Supports Hall's Lake
Natural Area

Touchstone Energy Classroom
Grants Available

Local Ties To Camp Grayling

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



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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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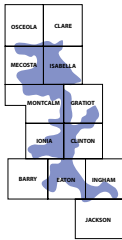
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Santa Claus is Coming to Town!
Jack O'Malley

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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Portland office:

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Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

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

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Service questions/outages:

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(24 hours for emergency calls)

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The People At The Other End Of The Power Line



Mark Kappler
General Manager

One of the great things about a cooperative is that we are owned by, and operated for the benefit of, the people we serve: you and your neighbors.

That means we work hard every day to make sure that your energy is safe and reliable, that the rates you pay for that energy are fair and competitive, and that the service you receive is personal, courteous, and knowledgeable.

We also try to treat you like an individual, a person with a name and address, rather than as an account number.

In return, we hope you think of HomeWorks as the cooperative you own, and our board of directors and employees as the people who deliver the energy your family needs for comfort and convenience.

Your board of directors is listed on this page, but here are the rest of the HomeWorks family. They join me in wishing you a joyful holiday season and a happy, productive 2016!

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- **And:** Denise Weeks, Tanya Schneider, Jayne Graham ■

Grant Supports Hall's Lake Natural Area

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative has donated \$2,500 to the Hall's Lake Natural Area, a combination of three Chippewa Watershed Conservancy (CWC) preserves and privately-owned land along the entire eastern half of Hall's Lake in western Isabella County.

The Hall's Lake Natural Area totals 175 acres of land, including the CWC's Harry E. "Gene" Neely and Olga Shiraef Neely Preserve, Kabana Preserve, and Schaftenaar Preserve, as well as land privately owned by Adonna and Steve Kennedy and Larry & Judy Schaftenaar. The Natural Area has trails throughout that are all accessible to the public for most of the year. The trails' signs will be updated and new signs will be added as well as installing a few benches along the trail. The current trail will also be expanded with the Remus History Trail opening along Old State Road.

"HomeWorks Tri-County Electric's board of directors has chosen to use unclaimed member equity to support community projects like the Hall's Lake



Chippewa Watershed Conservancy executive director, Stan Lilley, center, accepts the cooperative's gift from director Dean Floria, right, and general manager, Mark Kappler. (Photo by Kacey Hengesbach)

Natural Area," explains board chairman, Ed Oplinger, of Weidman. "When capital credits are distributed, we do all that we can in order to find members and repay their equity, but it's not always possible to find people if they have moved from the area. We feel that it is best to grant those unclaimed funds back in ways that will improve our communities." ■

Teachers: Apply for 2016 Grants!

Applications are due Jan. 15 for the 2016 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grant program.

Public or private school districts in our 13-county mid-Michigan service area that serve children of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members can



Parkview Elementary students use the LEGO kits to learn about robotics.

receive a grant of up to \$2,500 to fund innovative programs that enrich students' education.

Here are some examples of recent grants:

- \$2,400 to Parkview and Washington Elementary Schools in Charlotte, to buy LEGO robotic construction kits for kindergarten through 3rd grade;
- \$2,472 to Vestaburg Elementary for a classroom listening center using iPad minis;
- \$2,500 to Alma's Hillcrest Elementary and the Gratiot-Isabella RESD for a mobile technology cart and EyeGaze bar to help students with multiple impairments;
- \$779 to Central Montcalm Middle School to subscribe to web-based reading, writing, math and language skills programs;
- \$2,500 to Ashley High School to buy hand tools and supplies for the industrial education program;
- \$470 to Leslie High School to buy a wireless tablet with streaming device for a science classroom; and
- \$2,500 to Pewamo-Westphalia High School for individual heart rate monitors for the physical education program.

For an application form with grant guidelines, visit homeworks.org or call Jayne Graham at 517-647-1252. ■

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2015–2016 Season

Program: Winter Protection Plan
Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2015–2016	
# 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 (DHHS) michigan.gov/mdhhs

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.

SnapSHOT

Michigan's Splendor



Capture your Favorite Moments and Share

1. Tanya Troupe, from Lake, shared, "On August 1st of this year, my husband and I managed to get to the pier in Ludington as the *USS Badger* was taking off for a sunset cruise. In this photo, the *Badger* is passing the breakwater lighthouse."
2. Nancy Anna, from Edmore, also sent in a winter view. "Winter snow and ice are part of Michigan's splendor," she says. "This photo was taken in rural Edmore during the ice storm of 2014."
3. Penny Palmer, from Vestaburg, sent in this close-up of a honey bee enjoying a flower along the Fred Meijer Trail near Vestaburg.
4. Valerie Hynes McCaul, from Lake Odessa, describes this photo as "Out of the closet and into Narnia. Taken after the ice storm two years ago."

See more amazing photos 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

Upcoming topics for 2016 include "**Best of Selfies**," due **Nov. 16** for the January issue; "**Cute Pets**," due **Dec. 15** for the February issue; and "**Winter Fun**," due **Jan. 15** for the March 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.



Pohl Earns Director Certification

Director Luke Pohl, left, shown being congratulated by board chairman, Ed Oplinger, has earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director (CCD) certification through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) education program. To earn the CCD designation, Pohl attended a week-long directors' school that emphasizes foundational governance knowledge in addition to skills required of electric cooperative directors. HomeWorks Tri-County's board policies require all directors to earn their CCD within their first full term in office. The entire board is now certified, and all but the two most recently elected directors have also earned a Board Leadership certificate through further education.

People Fund Supports Christmas Food Boxes, Food Pantries, Families

Meeting Oct. 1, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made 11 grants, totaling \$18,971.53, including:

- \$2,000 to Clinton County Senior Center for nutritional foods and personal care items;
- \$1,000 to Redline Paraclete Ministries, St. Johns, to purchase food pantry needs;
- \$1,000 to the Mecosta County Senior Center in Mecosta, for parking lot repairs;
- \$6,000 to God's Helping Hands, Remus, for their Christmas food box program;
- \$1,200 to Community Christian Action Group of Eaton Rapids, to purchase food items, mittens and hats;
- \$1,000 to M-46 Tabernacle Food Pantry, Riverdale, to purchase food pantry needs;
- \$2,500 to a Clinton County family for housing expenses;
- \$1,876.88 to a Montcalm County family for housing expenses;
- \$300 to an Ingham County family for housing expenses;
- \$393.52 to an Isabella County family for housing expenses; and
- \$1,701.33 to another Isabella County family, also for housing expenses.

"Each of these grants will help organizations support many families in their communities, or lift a stressed family through a tough period. With

the support of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members, we are able to make a difference in mid-Michigan, for less than 50 cents a month," says board chairman, Richard Palermo. "We really appreciate all those members who have supported the People Fund by rounding up their electric bills every month." ■

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, MI. 48875, for an application form and grant guidelines, or visit homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by Dec. 7 for the December board meeting, and by Jan. 18 for the January board meeting.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Canadian Lakes Sept. 28, your board of directors:

- Authorized management to lease a parcel of the Blanchard property, with access easements, to Verizon Wireless.
- Approved signing a three-year letter of commitment to the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association for *Michigan Country Lines* publication services.
- Agreed to have Eide Bailly, a certified public accounting firm, perform the 2015 audits of the cooperative and its subsidiary using its normal scope of review.
- Learned tornado-related repairs at Portland are nearly complete; further damage was found as preliminary repairs were being made, expanding the project and its costs, which are covered by insurance.
- Authorized the general manager to continue negotiating for a parcel of land that would square-off the Portland headquarters property.

- Read and discussed Board Policy 115 – “Director Emeritus” and voted to make no changes in the monthly fee, based on the current Consumers Price Index.
- Learned there were 132 new members in August.
- Acknowledged the August–September safety report, listing employee training and several 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 Dec. 17 at Blanchard, and Jan. 18 at Portland. Members who need directions to either office, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda should call 517-647-7554.

Prepaid Electricity Could Work For You



Would it be easier for you to make daily, weekly, or biweekly payments, rather than one large payment each month?

It can be that easy, with HomeWorks Tri-County's new "Pay As You Go" prepaid electricity option.

Purchasing electricity before you use it allows you to control your budget and pay how much you want, when you want. There are no security deposits or late fees!

Instead of a monthly billing statement, your energy use and account balance are calculated daily. You can track your usage with a smartphone, using the free SmartHub app, or online at homeworks.org.

Here's how it works: Pay As You Go is a self-managed program; you purchase electricity before you use it. Payments can be made when you wish—online, over the phone, or in person at one of our offices.

When your account runs low, you will get an alert by email, text or phone call, at your option, letting you know it's time to pay on your account.

If the funds in your account run out, your electric service will be automatically disconnected. You will receive an alert telling you that service has been cut off. You can purchase more power online or by phone 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Your power will be restored within minutes, and you won't be charged a reconnection fee.

Active members who have a deposit on account can switch to Pay As You Go billing; the deposit will be applied to your current account balance and any remaining amount will be applied as a credit to your Pay As You Go account.

Payment options include credit card, debit card, and check payments online or via our Pay by Phone number: 877-999-3395.

Pay As You Go works best for people who want to take control of their energy budget. Statistics indicate prepay electricity programs like Pay As You Go help lower electric use due to the member's increased awareness of their usage patterns.

To learn more, or to get started with Pay As You Go, call us at 1-800-562-8232. ■

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

Nelson Recalls Guard Service At Camp Grayling



Ron Nelson, of Portland, recalls Camp Grayling as a tent city in the early 1960s, a place where his job was “ordering the biscuits and gravy” for 1,000 Michigan National Guard “beetle crushers,” or infantrymen.

He was part of Headquarters Company, 126th Infantry, 3rd Battalion, 1st Brigade, which supported three other companies—from Ionia, Holland, and Greenville—by supplying fuel, rations, ammo, and transport. His company always arrived to Camp Grayling three days before the rest of the battalion mobilized, to get supplies in place.

Nelson joined the National Guard after growing up on a Muskegon County farm and graduating from Grant High School in 1960.

He’d gone to work in a local bank, but as the Vietnam conflict escalated, a friend already serving in the Michigan National Guard recommended joining up, and Nelson enlisted in 1963. After six months of basic training at Fort Knox, he drilled with the Guard on a regular basis, plus two weeks of summer camp each year.

He came home from basic training and went to work for Gerber Research, then started college, eventually earning an agriculture degree from Western Michigan University. He began working for the Michigan Farm Bureau in 1970 as a regional representative covering seven west Michigan counties.

Meanwhile, he married Betty in 1964, and they raised a daughter and son near Portland, where they are members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric.

Between his job’s travel, and evening meetings, and his young family, his Guard service dropped in his priorities. “We were drilling one night a week and every other weekend during the Cuban missile crisis,” he recalls. After serving his original six-year enlistment and re-upping for one more year, he left the service as a staff sergeant.

Now retired, he and Betty enjoy camping and attending their grandsons’ sporting events. These days he’s also busy helping at the First Congregational Church of Portland, serving as a liaison between the church’s board of trustees and the general contractor who is repairing and rebuilding church facilities after the destructive June 22 tornado.

Read more about Camp Grayling on pages 14–15. ■



Local Member on Third Tour and Other Guard Memories



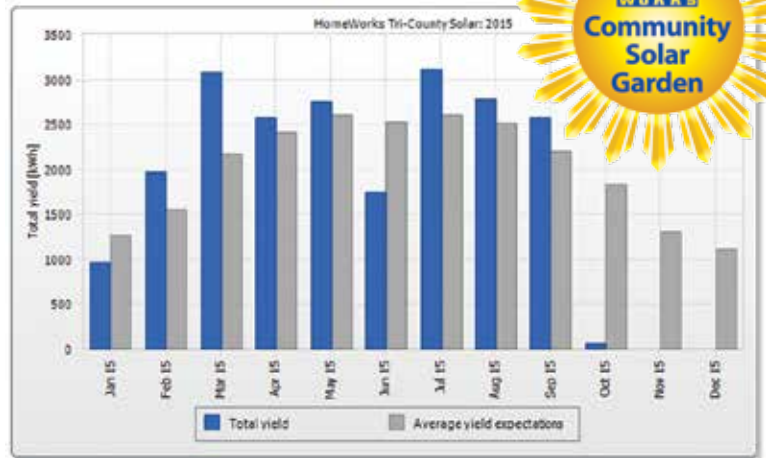
- Member Lindsay Sands responded to our Facebook post: “My husband, Captain Richard Sands, is in the Army National Guard; his unit is out of Lansing and has trained at Camp Grayling.” Sands was deployed for his third tour in mid-October 2015. (pictured)
- Field technician Kevin Blundy says “My grandpa, Gary Hutson, served at Camp Grayling in the Army National Guard from Jan. 30, 1958, until Oct. 15, 1994, retiring as a Lieutenant Colonel.”
- Director Wayne Swiler was in the National Guard from 1965 to 1971, and attended Camp Grayling for summer camp training.
- Lineman Rob Brennan, a native of Big Rapids, trained at Camp Grayling through the Army National Guard from 1985–86.
- Customer service representative Michelle Huhn says her husband, Ryan Huhn, a sergeant attached to the Grand Ledge National Guard unit, also did annual training at Camp Grayling.

Solar Garden Out-Performs Forecasts

Panels are still available—call today to reserve yours

Since it came online in February 2014, our Community Solar Garden at Portland has performed better than expectations nearly every month. In the chart on this page, the blue bars show how much electricity was produced each month, compared to the gray bars showing the manufacturer's forecasts.

In all, over 46,000 kilowatt-hours had been produced as of Oct. 1. "Producing that much power with solar energy is equivalent to avoiding the carbon dioxide emissions of driving 75,522 miles, or burning 34,070 pounds of coal," says energy advisor, Brandon Trierweiler.



Members have leased over two-thirds of the panels in the Community Solar Garden, and are receiving a monthly credit that averages about \$3 per panel for their share of the power that's been produced.

If you'd like to support green power and start getting your monthly solar credit, call Brandon Trierweiler at 517-647-1213. We still have a limited number of panels available to members. ■

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 HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, through renewable resources is a top priority.

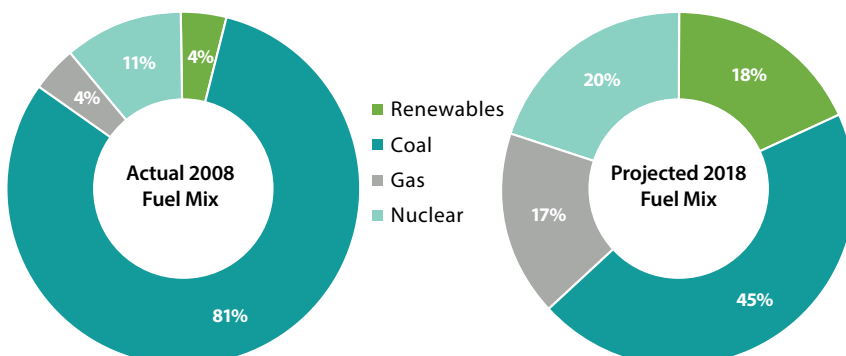
Since December 2007, Wolverine's supply portfolio has included 50 megawatts (MW) of wind energy from the Harvest Wind Farm located in Michigan's Thumb area. In January 2015, Wolverine signed a 20-year purchase power agreement with Renewable Energy Systems Americas Inc. and will receive 150 MW of wind 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," Anderson said. ■



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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