

Midwest Energy Cooperative

November/December 2015

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

CAMP GRAYLING

Michigan Is Home To
World-Class Training Center

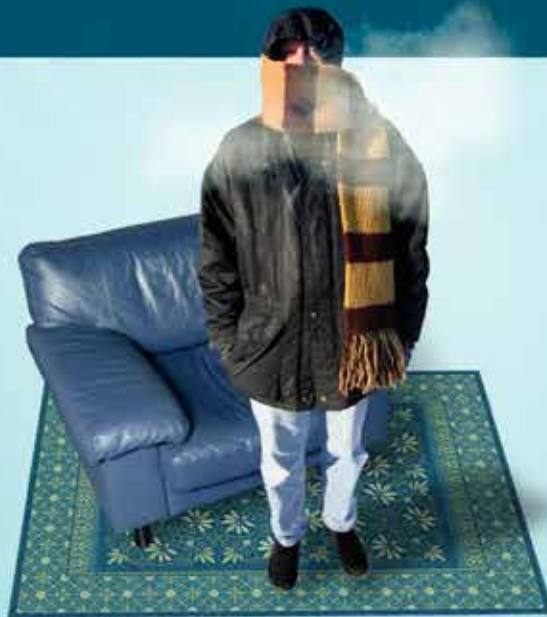
Plus!

Growing Our Safety Culture

New Photo Contest For
Members—Show Us Your
Best Shot!

Arell Chapman Joins
Co-op Board

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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Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Living and Growing Our Culture of Safety



Robert Hance
President/CEO

Safety is more than an item we check off on a monthly to-do list at Team Midwest. Lives are literally on the line everyday when our electric and propane crews hit the field. Safety is not an option, but a life-saving choice and standard of care.

In our industry, we have onerous requirements for insurance and other oversight, from training to reporting to the gear we provide our crews.

But we don't "do" safety for those reasons.

Every morning, or when called out at night or on weekends, our employees leave their families with the trust and assumption that they will come home for another day. And while tragic accidents do happen, we take no life for granted and leave nothing to chance. Safety is our culture.

First-in-class safety is far more than reducing injuries, although that's clearly a goal. Developing a safety culture means focusing on prevention, monitoring systems and practices, and instilling a commitment in all employees so that everyone accepts responsibility for his or her own safety and that of others. It's not just a line in one person's job description, but a top-down commitment requiring buy-in from every level and department.

It's serious business at Midwest, but we have additional layers of concern in the many contract crews we use to manage workload, particularly in our line clearance efforts and fiber communications service. At any given time we are managing dozens of individuals representing numerous different companies. They are working on our system, in our communities, for our members and customers, often alongside our own employees, and we must hold them to the same level of accountability that we hold our own family.

Not every company shares our commitment, but safety is our culture and we insist that our contract crews have the same level of diligence in their work that we require of our own employees. To lead that, we recently added a leadership position of safety and loss control director. Rich Drews is a 38-year employee of Team Midwest and has taken over responsibility for a top-down, coordinated approach to all company safety. This includes the obvious work of implementing and managing the practices of our own employees and contract crews, but also a more intentional approach to office and everyday safety considerations.

You may not realize it, but our employees are part of your community. They are your friends and neighbors, the coach of your child's soccer team, the Sunday School teacher, the person behind you at the grocery store. Every time we respond to your call, our safety culture follows, ultimately trickling down from our employee family and into the greater community. We're all in this together—safely. ■

Three Seats Open in 2016 Director Election

One of the seven guiding principles of cooperatives is democratic member control. Individuals who take electric service from Midwest Energy Cooperative are more than customers; they are owners who have a voice and are encouraged to take an active role in the life of the organization.

Midwest Energy Cooperative is governed by a nine-member board of directors, and each is elected to serve a three-year term. Directors are elected by and represent members living in their district. Board positions are important roles that are not taken lightly, as directors make critical decisions on behalf of their fellow member-owners.

Three seats on the Midwest Energy Cooperative Board of Directors will be up for election next year. Members interested in serving on the board should contact the cooperative to get a petition for nomination. A member securing signatures of 30 or more members on the petition will be placed on the ballot. To be placed on the ballot for one of the three terms ending in April 2016, a member must complete the petition and a biography and return them to the Cassopolis office by 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 4, 2016. Ballots will then be mailed to the district members on Jan. 25, 2016. All board members must reside in the district they represent.

In 2016, seats in Districts 6, 7 and 9 will be up for election. District 6 is currently represented by



Ben Russell



Colyne Sorsby



Harry Gentz

Ben Russell, of Constantine. The district includes North Porter, South Porter, Constantine, Florence, Mottville and White Pigeon townships in Michigan, and Washington, York and Van Buren townships in Indiana.

Colyne Sorsby, of Cassopolis, is the current director in District 7, which includes Jefferson, Calvin, Ontwa and Mason townships in Michigan, and Harris and Osolo townships in Indiana.

District 9 is represented by **Harry Gentz**, of Blissfield. District 9 includes Hudson, Dover, Madison, Palmyra, Medina, Seneca, Fairfield, Ogden, Riga and southern portions of Blissfield and Deerfield townships, in Michigan. Also, Mill Creek, Gorham, Chesterfield, Royalton, Franklin, Dover, Pike, Clinton and German townships, in Ohio.

For more information about serving on the board of directors, please call the cooperative at 800-492-5989. ■

New MoneyGram Payment Option Adds Convenience

Team Midwest strives to provide convenient payment options for members and customers. From prepaid metering to SmartHub online payment to autopay to sending your payment through the traditional snail mail system, we offer many ways for you to conduct your monthly financial transactions.

This month we're pleased to introduce MoneyGram, a new community-based option that posts your payment immediately. It's just like you walked in and paid right in one of our district service centers or used the automated phone system or SmartHub option. Our previous community-based option required several days of processing time, meaning the monies were not applied to the account right away—not always the best option for someone needing a payment to post immediately.



MoneyGram guarantees your funds. With a simple zip code search, you can easily find local retailers like Walmart, Dollar General, CVS and Speedway, where payment can be made through a simple transaction. Payments are typically only accepted by cash or check; please call ahead to inquire about other payment methods. Visit secure.moneygram.com/locations to find a local payment center. ■

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.

PHOTO CONTEST

»»»»»
enter and win

MICHIGAN
COUNTRY LINES



Midwest Launches Photo Contest for Members

Grab your camera and get ready to shoot—Team Midwest is launching an exciting new photo contest and one lucky winner will end up with a great credit of up to **\$200** on their December 2016 electric bill.

Every month we will announce a new theme and invite you to take and submit your best shot. The photo receiving the most votes each month on our Facebook contest page will be entered into the drawing for the year-end bill credit, and will also be featured in a subsequent issue of *Michigan Country Lines* for all to enjoy.

Our November theme is **"Best of Selfies."** Pull out your selfie stick, take your best shot and submit your photo by **Nov. 20**. How to submit? Just visit facebook.com/TeamMidwest and click Photo Contest from the menu tabs. Not on Facebook? You can also enter at TeamMidwest.com/photo-contest. Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too! A high resolution photo (at least 1 MB) will be required to print your photos in *Michigan Country Lines*. The winning photo from the November contest will be printed in the January issue.

Our December theme is **"Cute Pets."** Photos can be submitted from **Dec. 1 to Dec. 20**. The winning December photos will be featured in the February issue of *Michigan Country Lines*. ■

Show us your best shot!





Midwest in the Community

Neighbor helping neighbor—that's how your Team Midwest family approaches daily work and efforts to give back. We live, work and serve right here in your local community, and strive to actively live our Community value in meaningful and impacting ways. Here are just a few of our recent efforts to strengthen and support our communities and members.

Lenawee United Way Day of Action

After months of hard work and planning, five newly refurbished trails were recently unveiled at Adrian's popular Heritage Park. The trail enhancement project, designed to make the trails more user friendly for a wide range of people, from experienced mountain bikers to dog walkers, was funded with a grant from the Lenawee United Way.

A team of Midwest employees, including linemen Eric Keller and Brian Moore (pictured above), helped finish the work by digging 115 post holes and placing new trail markers during the United Way Day of Action volunteer event in September.

Customer Appreciation Days at the Zoo

Mother Nature provided a perfect backdrop for our 2015 "Customer Appreciation Days at the Zoo." With sunny skies and temperatures in the 70s, more than 5,000 members and families joined us for a picnic lunch and afternoon of fun and family memories at Toledo and Binder Park zoos over the last two weekends of September. A roaring good time was had by all! ■

Something New in Store for 2016

It's been a GREAT run with our "Customer Appreciation Days at the Zoo." Since 2009, we've offered these fall events to thank and offer a special memory to our beloved members and customers, and thousands of you participated! It's been fun and WILDLY popular, but we've decided to escape the zoo and move on to something new and exciting for 2016.

Watch for details next year!

New Member Brings Fresh Perspective to Midwest Board

About a year ago, Arell Chapman told his wife, Kellie, he was interested in getting more involved in their Lenawee County home community and began engaging with a number of community service opportunities. But when a letter arrived from Midwest Energy Cooperative seeking a member to represent district 8 on the board of directors, he knew he'd found a great way to use his background and commitment to serve his community.

The board agreed!

At their September meeting, the board selected Arell to fill the district 8 seat left vacant after the resignation of Ken Swope. Ken served the southeast Michigan district faithfully for 25 years, and resigned in August following many years of increasingly serious health issues. Ken was re-elected to a three-year term in 2015, and Arell will fulfill that term.

The Chapman family is new to Midwest membership, but not to the Lenawee County community. Arell and Kellie grew up in Adrian and moved away after high school. Being "home" and near relatives when they decided to start their own family was a priority for the couple, and they returned and made Onsted home in 2001. Three kids later, they made one more move within the Onsted community, set up home on Midwest lines and became first-time co-op members.

"As a new member of Midwest I was pleased with the online platforms and the customer service experience I received when I called to set up our new account," Arell shares. "When this opportunity to serve presented itself, I reviewed the website and saw how Midwest lives and breathes its community value and actively engages to make a difference beyond the provision of service. I was really excited by the opportunity to get involved with everything this organization is doing."

Community service is part of the heartbeat of the Chapman family. Their sons, Noah, 12, Ethan, 10, and Aiden, 7, are active in Judo, Boy Scouts and Cub Scouts. Arell has served in the Boy Scout program since 1998 as a merit badge counselor,



scout master and in various leadership positions, while Kellie actively volunteers as a Cub Scout den leader. Arell is also actively involved as an assistant to the clergy at their church.

Besides a strong commitment to community, Arell brings a wealth of professional experience to the board table. Since 2013, he has been employed as the vice president of information technology at Gleaner Life Insurance Society in Adrian, and prior to that served in similar operations and technology roles within the banking industry. "There is an ever-increasing importance for board members to understand the financial, regulator and information security risks within the organizations they serve," Arell says. "I bring a unique understanding of and experience with the deep waters of corporate security, especially as it relates to the increasing threats to physical and information security. It's something that our co-op and every business must pay careful attention to, and I'm excited to bring that expertise to the table."

Arell earned his Bachelor of Science degree in information technology and Master of Business Administration from the University of Phoenix. He is certified in Risk and Information Systems Control and is a member of the Information Systems Audit and Control Association.

"Midwest is a great organization," Arell says enthusiastically. "I'm honored by the trust of the board in making this appointment, and look forward to representing the voices of my Lenawee County friends and neighbors." ■

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

Wolverine is Michigan's Renewable Energy Leader

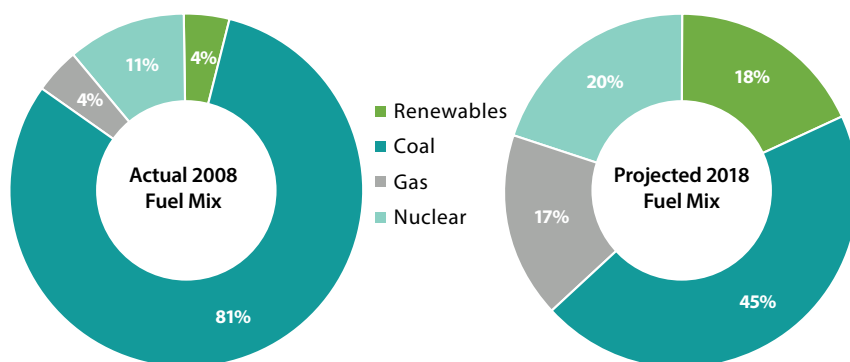
When it comes to renewable energy, Wolverine Power Cooperative (Wolverine) is leading the state with its increase in power supply from renewable energy resources. Providing reliable power supply to Wolverine's member distribution cooperatives, including Midwest Energy Cooperative, through renewable resources 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," Anderson said. ■



Save Energy This Winter With a Free Engine Block Heater Timer

Midwest Energy Cooperative's Energy Optimization (EO) program is now offering one free engine block heater timer to its farming members. This essential device allows you to start your engine heater just a few hours before you need to operate your equipment, instead of running it throughout the entire night—saving you energy and money.

Engine block heater timers are used in the winter months to increase the chances that a vehicle's engine will start (and warm up the interior of a truck or tractor faster) in extremely cold weather. A 1,000-watt heater operated for 10 hours uses 10 kilowatt-hours (kWh) of electricity per day, while a heater operated on a timer uses only about 2 kWh. The 8 kilowatt-hours you can save equates to about \$1 per day in energy cost savings.

Contact us today to receive a free engine block heater timer on a first-come, first-served basis through the EO Farm Services Program. A \$20 rebate is available for additional timers. For more information, or to claim your device, visit michigan-energy.org/heatertimer or call 877-296-4319. ■



Preferred Contractors Meet Cooperative Quality Standards

Choosing qualified and reputable contractors can be difficult. As a service to our members, we have compiled a list of Midwest Energy Cooperative preferred plumbing contractors. As part of the qualification process, we researched, interviewed and checked references on a regional pool of contractors, and included on our final list only those that we feel confident will provide the level of service that you have come to know and expect from your cooperative.

Please feel free to contact any of these contractors with confidence if you are interested in more information about their services.



Southwest Michigan Territory:

Advantage Plumbing Inc.

2400 North 5th Street
Niles, MI 49120
269-687-7192

Aqua Plumbing Services

4508 E. Milham
Portage, MI 49002
269-720-1364 or 269-903-AQUA (2782)

City Plumbing & Heating

407 State Street
St. Joseph, MI 49085
269-983-6595

Pro Plumbing Service

P.O. Box 554
Stevensville, MI 49127
269-591-7414 or 574-213-5354

Southeast Michigan Territory:

Heritage Plumbing & Heating

3286 North Adrian Highway
Adrian, MI 49221
517-263-4300

Shoemaker Heating & Plumbing

5310 US Hwy 223
Palmyra, MI 49268
517-263-9940

Whitcher Plumbing & Heating

1500 W. Maumee Street
Adrian, MI 49221
517-265-1389



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!

Midwest Energy Thanks Local Member for Service in National Guard



Major Audrey J. Brown, exercise planner, Michigan Army National Guard.

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.



Sept Photo

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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Holiday Cash

Tell A Friend Program

Over the years, our best source for new customers has always been our current family of happy and loyal customers. You know the value of our superior commitment to customer care, combined with the unique price stability that is the cornerstone of our approach.

And now we're giving you an extra reason to share the Midwest Propane difference.

For every customer that you successfully refer, we will give you AND the new customer \$100 once the tank is set and service is activated. To refer yourself, just mention our Holiday Cash program when you call to sign up for new service and you may also qualify. New customers must meet eligibility criteria and tanks must be set by Dec. 18, 2015.

844-493-4GAS (493-4427)
TeamMidwestPropane.com

Midwest Propane is not regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

