

Thumb Electric Cooperative

January/February 2016

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



**Plus!**

TEC System Improvements

Meet Your Legislators

Thumb Electric Services

Partners For  
**POWER**

Michigan Electric Co-ops Help Bring Power  
To Buena Vista, Guatemala



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(989) 774-1566

### Muskegon

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(231) 873-2665

### Muskegon

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Plmb & Htg  
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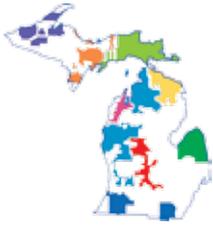
### Traverse City

D & W Mechanical  
(231) 941-1215



visit us at [waterfurnace.com](http://waterfurnace.com)





Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
[countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)

**January 2016**  
**Vol. 36, No. 1**

Executive Editor  
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Editor  
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Publisher  
**Michigan Electric  
Cooperative Association**

Design and Layout  
**Ciesa Design**

**Michigan Country Lines**, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Lansing, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

**Subscriptions** are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors.

**POSTMASTER:** SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Association officers are **Robert Kran**, Great Lakes Energy, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

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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.

## ON THE COVER\*

Ofelia De Leon (far left), of Buena Vista, with his family and lineworkers when the lights came on in their home for the very first time. Ofelia had the honor of flipping the switch, and when the light came on the room radiated with happiness—lots of laughter, and tears. Linemen (L-R) Tom Ulatowski, Cherryland, Dan King, MECA, and Tony Reichle, Great Lakes Energy.

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

Cover photo by Garrett Hubbard



## IN YOUR WORDS

Question of the Month—We Asked, You Answered.

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question: If you could have a lifetime supply of anything, what would it be? Thank you for all the responses. Here are some answers from our members...

"Love, good health, happy family & friends, great weather and a very large pay check to share."

"Burgers and fries from Clyde's Restaurant in Manistique, MI."

"If I could have a lifetime supply of anything, it would be free electricity. I am 90 years old, a World War II Veteran, and have a bronze star (along with many other medals). I've been a member of Great Lakes Energy most of my life. My wife and I have been married 70 years this coming July. God Bless."

"Wisdom."

"Unwavering Faith."

**Our new Question of the Month is:**

If you could only have one meal for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Please submit answers to [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com) by Feb. 1.

**6 OUR ENERGY AND SAFETY**  
Saving Energy In The Kitchen  
*Brian Sloboda*

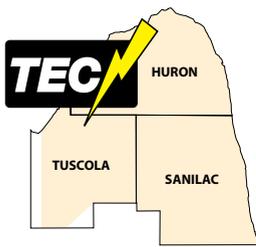
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*Jack O'Malley*

Guess Our New Mystery Photo



## Thumb Electric Cooperative

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1-800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571  
E-mail: [tec@tecmi.coop](mailto:tec@tecmi.coop)  
[www.tecmi.coop](http://www.tecmi.coop)

## Board Of Directors

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District 2—Harbor Beach

**Beth McDonald**, Secretary  
District 3—Bad Axe

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District 1—Croswell

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**Duane Kursinsky**, Director  
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District 1—Kingston

**Jonathan Findlay**, Director  
District 2—Caro

**Carl Cousins**, Director  
District 3—Millington

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**Dallas Braun**, General Manager

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## PAYMENT STATIONS

### Huron County

Bad Axe—Northstar Bank  
Pigeon—Northstar Bank

### Tuscola County

Akron—Northstar Bank  
Caro—Northstar Bank  
Mayville—Mayville State Bank  
Millington—Mayville State Bank

### Sanilac County

Sandusky—Northstar Bank

Visit Thumb Electric's website  
[www.tecmi.coop](http://www.tecmi.coop)

*Thumb Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# Out With The Old, In With The New



**Dallas Braun**  
General Manager

Best wishes to you for the New Year!

Every year at Thumb Electric Cooperative the board of directors approves approximately \$4 million in capital improvement projects to ensure that the electrical system will be capable of continuing to meet the demands of our members not only for today, but for generations.

As we get ready to close out the old year, let's look back at some of the system improvement projects Thumb employees and contractors have been busy with this past year.

**O'Connel Substation**—Complete upgrade and rebuild of 5 miles of three-phase distribution circuits along Maple Grove and Downington roads in the Forester and Bridgehampton townships of Sanilac County.

**Watertown Substation**—Complete upgrade and rebuild of 6 miles of three-phase distribution circuits along Frenchline, Loree, Walker and Ridge roads in Lower Sanilac and Washington townships of Sanilac County.

**Owendale Substation**—Constructed and energized a new 1-Mile emergency backup transmission metering TIE point with DTE, and one mile of three-phase distribution along Canboro Road in Grant Township, of Huron County.

**Decker Substation**—Complete upgrade and rebuild of 10 miles of three-phase distribution circuits along White Creek, Harris, Frenchline, Boyne, Walker, and Decker roads in Marlette Township of Sanilac County, and Koylton Township of Tuscola County.

**Elmer Substation**—Complete upgrade and rebuild of 7 miles of three-phase distribution circuits along Isles and Frenchline roads in Elmer and Watertown townships of Sanilac County.

**Tree/Vegetation Program**—Our tree trimming contractors, Kappen's and Pro-Line, continue to identify and remove problem trees while working with property owners to enhance the health of the right-of-way easements.

A big thank-you to all the members and property owners for your patience and understanding while working with us and our contractors to successfully complete these projects.

As we celebrate 2016, let's look at a few of the projects we have planned for the new year.

**Tree/Vegetation Program**—We will continue to manage the right-of-way easements while working with property owners to

*Continued on page 9*

# If You Smell Gas...

**D**id you know that propane gas has no odor? The "rotten egg" smell is added for your safety, to help alert you to any possible leaks. If you smell gas in the house, or if you have a gas alarm that signals the presence of gas, immediately follow these safety guidelines:

## No flames or sparks!

Immediately put out all smoking materials and other open flames. Do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, or cell phones. Flames or sparks from these sources can trigger an explosion or fire.

## Leave Immediately!

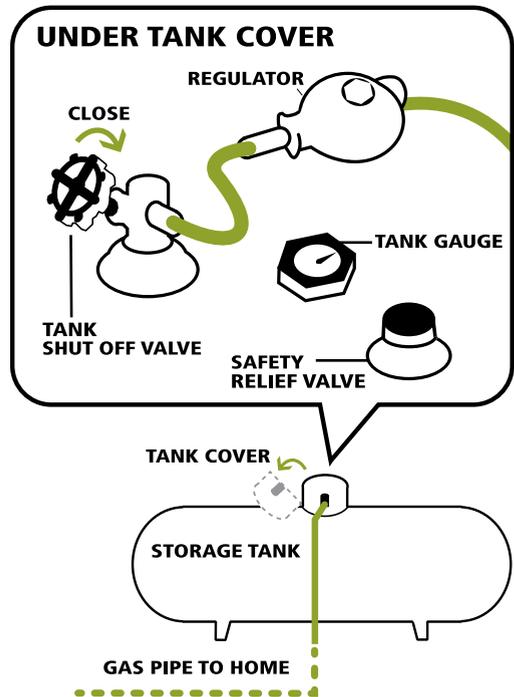
Get everyone out of the building or area of the suspected leak.

## Shut off the gas.

Turn off the main gas supply valve on your propane tank if it's safe to do so. To close the valve, turn it clockwise (see diagram).

## Report the leak.

From a neighbor's home, call Thumb Electric at 800-327-0166 right away. If for some reason you can't reach us, call 911 or your local fire department.



## Stay away.

Do not return to the building or area until we have determined that it is safe to do so. ■

# Special Election Notice For TEC Members

In March 2016, a nominating committee of nine Thumb Electric Cooperative members will meet to select a slate of candidates for one director position in each of the three counties served by the cooperative.

Positions in District 1 currently held by Louis Wenzlaff, Randall Dhyse and Kim Nunn will be voted on at the 2016 annual meeting in June.

Any co-op member interested in running for a district director position should write a letter to the Thumb Electric

nominating committee chairperson prior to Feb. 15, 2016, indicating his or her interest in being nominated.

The committee will review the prospective nominee's qualifications to determine whether they meet bylaw requirements and whether he or she should be placed on the ballot.

If you would like more information, please contact the co-op's general manager, Dallas Braun, at 800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571.

## Annual Meeting Notice

Saturday, June 11, 2016

Cass City Recreational Park

Business meeting begins at 10 a.m.



# Saving Energy In The Kitchen

By Brian Sloboda

**M**ost of us spend a lot of time in the kitchen. Whether you are considering replacing an appliance or simply looking for ways to be more efficient, here are some tips to help you save energy—and money.

Most people don't think about their refrigerator that often—as long as it's working. Older refrigerators use more energy. Upgrading this appliance can bring a major return on your investment. Look for rebate programs, too!

Cooking also uses a lot of energy. To save energy while cooking, placing the lid on a pot of boiling water will trap heat and cause the water to boil faster. And there is no need to preheat the oven when cooking a large piece of meat, like a turkey or ham (you do need to preheat when baking, or cooking smaller dishes). If you are planning on using the oven for a long period of time, consider turning

down your home's thermostat. Cooking will add warmth to the home because the heat from the oven can raise the temperature in the kitchen and surrounding rooms.

Even after the meal is over, you can save energy. Make sure your dishwasher is full before it's started. Next, make sure you are using the right setting on your dishwasher. Newer models have sensors that detect how clean your dishes are. When these "auto" cycles are used, they will get dishes clean without wasting energy or water. The sanitize setting should rarely be used since it is energy intensive. It is also a good idea to make sure the filter at the bottom of the washtub is cleaned to help the washer work at its optimal level.

As you can see, there are many different ways to practice efficiency in the kitchen, and maybe even save enough money to have dinner out sometimes! ■

# Be Prepared For Winter Storms

By Abby Berry

**W**hen winter temperatures drop and storms hit, it can be challenging to stay safe and warm. Your electric cooperative cares about your safety, and we want you to be prepared.



Heavy snow and ice can lead to downed power lines, leaving you without power. During a power outage, our crews will continue to work as quickly and safely as possible to restore power, but there are a few things you can do to prepare yourself.

- **Stay warm** – Use a safe alternate heating source, such as a fireplace or wood-burning stove, during a power outage. Exercise caution when using, and never leave the heating source unattended.

If you are using gasoline, propane or natural gas-burning devices to stay warm, never use them indoors. Remember that fuel and wood-burning sources of heat should always be properly ventilated. Always read the manufacturer's directions before using.

- **Stay fed** – Be sure to have several days' supply of food on hand. Crackers, cereal, canned goods, bread, and other foods that do not need to be cooked, are good options. Five gallons of water per person should also be available in the event of an extended power outage.
- **Stay safe** – When an outage occurs, it usually means power lines are down. Try not to travel during winter storms, but if you must, bring a survival kit along, and do not travel alone. If you encounter downed lines, always assume they are live and stay as far away from them as possible.

Winter weather can be unpredictable and dangerous, and planning ahead is important. For more winter safety tips, visit [ready.gov/winter-weather](http://ready.gov/winter-weather). ■



Photo: Garrett Hubbard

## Electric Cooperatives Donate Suitcases Packed With A Purpose

The recent Partners for Power team reached their goal to build an electric line extension in Guatemala that changed the lives of about 54 families in the small community of Buena Vista. But our team's work did not end there. The 10-person team distributed over 450 pounds of donated items sent over with the Partners For Power project.

The suitcases were filled by a team effort of employees from Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, Midwest Energy, Wolverine Power, and Cloverland Electric. The much needed items included school supplies, shoes, backpacks, toothbrushes, toothpaste, dental floss, mouthwash, stuffed animals, sweatshirts/t-shirts of all sizes, small sewing kits, stocking caps, baseball hats, soccer balls, a basketball, a football, air pumps, soccer nets, and basketball nets. The electric cooperatives were eager to help out and make a difference for the villagers in Buena Vista.

To distribute the supplies fairly, the team of linemen divided the items into three stations, grouped by age, so that everyone received something. "The villagers have worked so hard on this entire project with us," said Wolverine Power safety coordinator, Matt Monroe. "It was fun to be able to give their



families one more surprise before we headed back home."

Partners For Power also sent a basketball backboard, rim and hardware, along with individual pieces of plexiglass, glass cutters, and caulk to replace broken school windows in the village.

Read the full story about how Michigan electric cooperatives teamed up to "turn on the lights" in Buena Vista, Guatemala, on page 14. ■



## Thumb Electric Is Looking For The Next Generation Of Leaders

**W**hat do 1,500 high school students, our nation's capital and electric cooperatives have in common? The Electric Cooperative Youth Tour, of course!

Since 1964, Youth Tour was established with one thought in mind—to inspire our next generation of leaders. It all takes place in June, when hundreds of electric co-ops across the country send participants to Washington, D.C. for a chance to learn about the cooperative business model and a full week of sightseeing.

While in D.C., participants have a chance to meet with their elected officials and discuss the issues that are important back home. Without a doubt, Youth Tour has grown into an invaluable program that gives young Americans an experience that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

In the next few months, Thumb Electric will begin the interview process to select local students to attend Youth Tour 2016. If you are a high school junior interested in traveling to Washington, D.C. to experience the trip of a lifetime, please contact Thumb Electric for more information.

Youth Tour has so much to offer students. Students have repeatedly shared that this experience has helped them grow into successful professionals. It has also benefited our local communities. Youth Tour participants return home with a deeper understanding and skillset of what it takes to be leader, and as a result, they put these skills to use right here in our community.

Help us find the next generation of leaders by sharing the Youth Tour experience with a promising student. For more information about Thumb's Youth Tour program, call 989-658-8571 or visit [miYLS.com](http://miYLS.com). ■



## Energy Optimization Program For 2016

Our Energy Optimization programs will continue this year, with a few changes. Rebates and programs will be handled locally, in-house as opposed to being performed by an outside contractor.

We will continue to offer energy-saving rebates for such things as lighting, Energy Star appliances, efficient upgrades to heating and cooling systems, and other programs.

Please continue to check *Country Lines* magazine, bill inserts, and the TEC website for news and more detailed information as updates occur. For more information, please contact us at 800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571 and ask for information on Energy Optimization.

## Tree Trimming Update

Tree trimming will continue at an aggressive rate in 2016, as we are seeing fewer outages and shorter duration on outages that do occur.

Priorities will continue to be historically problematic line sections, followed by overgrown line sections, and finally less severe circuits will be maintained. Due to a disease in the ash tree, which is a very popular species in our service territory, we have had to adjust our trimming locations from time-to-time. It has made planning a challenge at times, but we will make every effort to contact members ahead of



the trimming. We will generally send out a post card to members to let them know trimmers will be in the area, and at times we will try and call members to let them know what is going on. If you, like a lot of people, have changed phone numbers, please give us a call with the new contact information.

## Annual Meeting June 11, 2016

Thumb Electric Cooperative's annual meeting will be held June 11, 2016 at the park in Cass City. Save the date and come out to join your cooperative members. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and the business meeting will start at 10 a.m. Be a part of the democratic process at your electric cooperative and plan on attending and casting your ballot for the board of director election. As always there will be entertainment for the kids, such as balloons, face painting, pony rides and bucket truck rides. ■

## Out With The Old, In With The New

*Continued from page 4*

ensure that our members' expectations for reliable and affordable electricity are met. Priority work will be on poor-performing and other identified circuits.

**Replace**—Approximately 250 identified distribution and transmission poles throughout the system.

### **Ubly To Kinde 41.6 KV Transmission Line**—

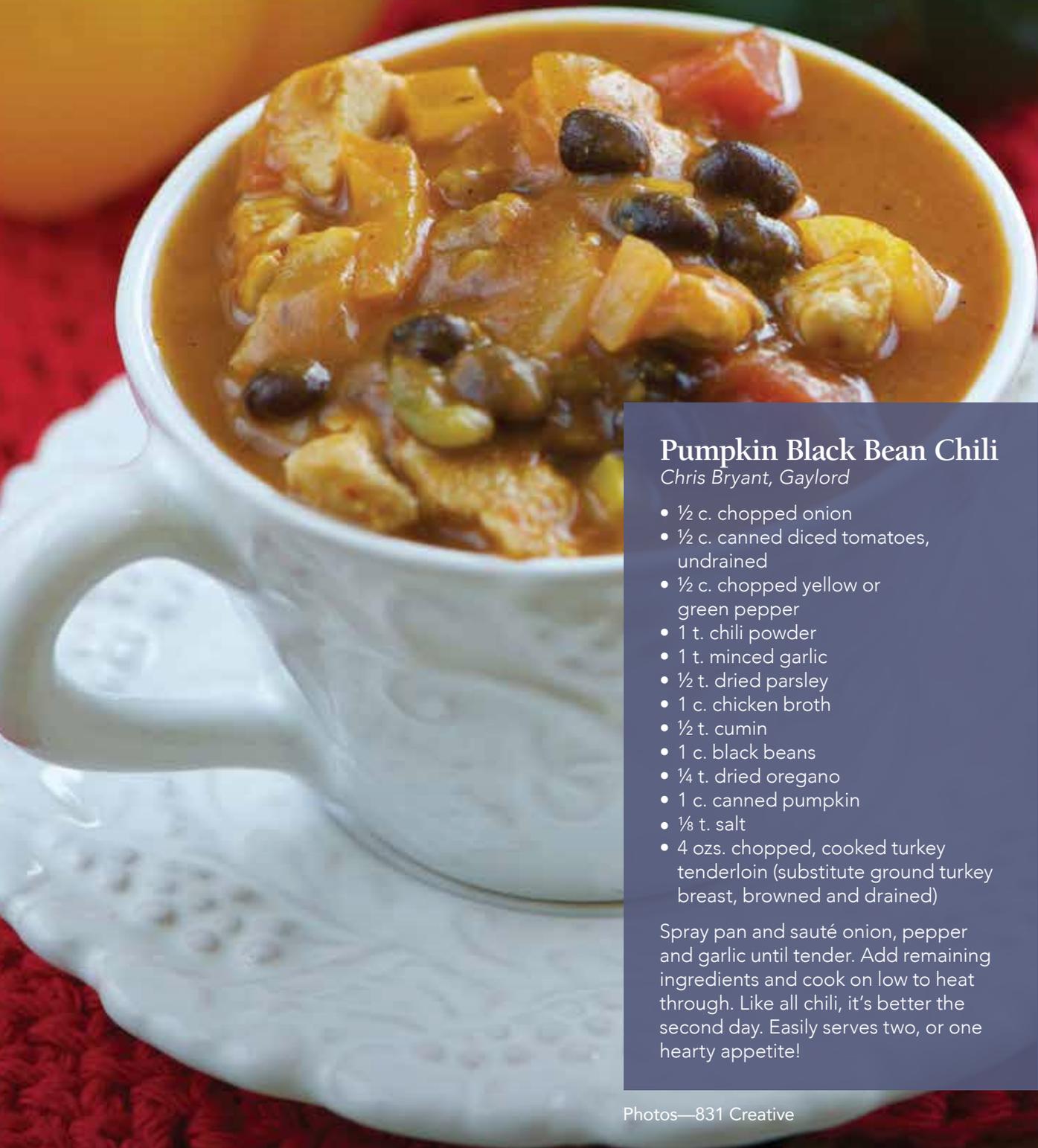
Complete upgrade and rebuild of 17 miles of the 41.6 KV transmission circuit with three-phase under-build distribution along M-19, Carpenter, Richardson, Filion and Hellems roads in Lincoln, Verona, and Bingham townships of Huron County.

One other change worth noting for the upcoming year will be the way our Energy Optimization (EO) programs are administered. Starting in 2016, we will be implementing and administrating our EO programs completely in-house using TEC employees. We see this as a positive opportunity to work directly with our members to help them become more energy efficient and save money.

We look forward to another safe and successful year and wish the best for all. ■

# CHILI

Warm up this season with these comforting chili recipes.



## Pumpkin Black Bean Chili

*Chris Bryant, Gaylord*

- ½ c. chopped onion
- ½ c. canned diced tomatoes, undrained
- ½ c. chopped yellow or green pepper
- 1 t. chili powder
- 1 t. minced garlic
- ½ t. dried parsley
- 1 c. chicken broth
- ½ t. cumin
- 1 c. black beans
- ¼ t. dried oregano
- 1 c. canned pumpkin
- ⅛ t. salt
- 4 ozs. chopped, cooked turkey tenderloin (substitute ground turkey breast, browned and drained)

Spray pan and sauté onion, pepper and garlic until tender. Add remaining ingredients and cook on low to heat through. Like all chili, it's better the second day. Easily serves two, or one hearty appetite!

# Congratulations



to Ann Brown of Niles. Her name was drawn from all readers whose recipes we printed in 2015 and *Country Lines* will pay her January electric bill (up to \$200) as a prize.

Ann and her family have been Midwest Energy Cooperative members since her father built their home back in 1940. Her winning "Campfire Chicken" recipe was an original created by her mother. "My dad liked to grill and camp. When we couldn't go camping he would cook out in the backyard and this was a favorite recipe." Ann is a home healthcare nurse and enjoys cooking, sewing and knitting.



## White Chicken Chili (pictured)

*Donna Theriault, Petoskey*

- 3 boneless, skinless chicken breasts
- 1 T. olive oil + extra for drizzling on chicken
- 2 lg. onions, sliced
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 2 c. chicken broth
- 1 c. dry white wine
- 2 cans Navy or cannellini beans, drained and rinsed
- ½ c. lime juice
- 1 small can green chilies
- 1 T. ground coriander
- 1 t. ground oregano
- ½ t. ground cumin
- ¼ t. cinnamon
- 1 c. Monterey Jack

Drizzle olive oil, and sprinkle salt and pepper on chicken. Roast seasoned chicken on cookie sheet at 350° for 40 minutes, or until cooked through. Cool chicken and shred with fingers. Put 1 T. oil in large pot. Add onions and garlic and stir until onions are golden, about 20 minutes. Add broth and remaining ingredients, except cheese. Simmer for 15 minutes. Add cheese to melt just before serving.

## Angie's Chili

*Mary Scodeller, Lansing*

- 1 ½ lbs. 80/20 ground beef
- 1 small onion, chopped
- 2 28-oz. cans whole tomatoes
- 2 15.5-oz. cans kidney beans
- 15.5-oz. can mild chili beans in chili sauce
- Spartan chili mix envelope
- 1 pkg. French's original chili seasoning mix
- ¼ t. salt
- ¼ t. pepper
- ¼ t. seasoning salt
- ¼ t. garlic powder
- ¼ t. chili powder
- ¼ t. ground cumin

Brown meat with the chopped onion. Drain fat, crush tomatoes and add to meat. Add all beans, seasoning mix, and other seasonings. Simmer on medium to high heat for 20 minutes, stirring constantly. Reduce heat and simmer another 30 to 45 minutes. Very good and great for a crowd.

## SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all our readers who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Side Dish" recipes by **Feb. 1** and "Snacks and Appetizers" recipes by **March 1**.

## A RECIPE WINNER EACH MONTH IN 2016!

Contributors whose recipes we print each month will be entered in a drawing and *Country Lines* will pay the winner's electric bill with a \$50 bill credit! A winner will be selected every month!

Enter your recipe online at [countrylines.com](http://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.

# Renewable Geothermal Heat

Geothermal is a simple technology that uses the earth's renewable energy to provide high-efficiency heating and cooling. In winter, the system draws heat from the ground and transfers it to your home. In summer, it extracts heat from your home and transfers it to the ground. **Contact the energy experts at Thumb Electric Cooperative at 800-327-0166** for honest answers on your energy choices, or call any of the trained and certified installers listed here.



## All-Temperature Geothermal Systems

1103 E. Caro Rd., Caro, MI 48723  
989-673-5557

## Ameriheat, Justin Faber

2891 E. Forester Rd., Deckerville, MI 48427  
810-376-4534

## B & D Heating, Cooling & Plumbing

1148 North Van Dyke, Bad Axe, MI 48413  
800-515-1117

## Burkhard Plumbing & Heating

638 E. Huron Ave., Bad Axe, MI 48413  
989-269-7532

## Certified Temperature Innovations

3107 Custer Rd., Carsonville, MI 48419  
810-300-7748

## ES Sheetmetal, Gene Root

9450 Belsay, Millington, MI 48746  
989-871-2067

## Geo Renew Systems, Inc.

3045 Grange Hall Rd., #7, Holly, MI 48442  
248-531-0325

## Geomasters, Inc., Plumbing & Heating

57 Ward St., Crosswell, MI 48422  
810-679-2251

## Geothermal Systems of Lapeer, LLC

6689 Orchard Lk. Rd. #188  
West Bloomfield, MI 48322  
810-240-2116

## Holland Heating and Cooling

9160 Lapeer Rd., Davison, MI 48423  
810-653-4328

## Ingell Refrigeration

1115 4th St., Port Huron, MI 48060  
810-982-4226

## J & B Plumbing & Heating

7641 Pigeon Rd., Pigeon, MI 48755  
989-453-3931

## Jack McCain Plumbing & Heating

9651 Weale Rd., Bay Port, MI 48720  
989-453-2277

## Kowaleski Heating & Cooling, LLC

3977 Ruppel Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468  
989-428-3371

## Kulek Heating & Air Conditioning

14421 Jeddo Rd., Yale, MI 48097  
810-387-4452

## Kundinger & Kroll

31 E. Main St., Sebawaing, MI 48759  
989-883-2770

## Lakeshore Improvements Plumbing & Heating

7825 Big Gulley Rd., Palms, MI 48465  
989-864-3833

## Michigan Energy Services

8445 Main St., Whitmore Lake, MI 48189  
888-339-7700

## NRG Control

3690 Washburn Rd., Vassar, MI 48768  
989-670-2543

## Newton-Johnson Plumbing & Heating

114 Enterprise Dr., Vassar, MI 48768  
989-823-2341

## Orton Refrigeration

31 W. Sanilac Rd., Sandusky, MI 48471  
810-648-2252

## Preferred Heating

7736 Arendt, Melvin, MI 48454  
810-378-5454

## Priority Service by Porter & Heckman

3056 Davison Rd., Lapeer, MI 48446  
810-644-8576

## Shetler Plumbing & Heating

7184 Nitz St., Pigeon, MI 48755  
800-547-3651

## Superior, Inc.

3442 Cemetary Rd., Cass City, MI 48726  
989-872-3305

## Thumb Cooling & Heating

5599 Pochert Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468  
989-428-4948

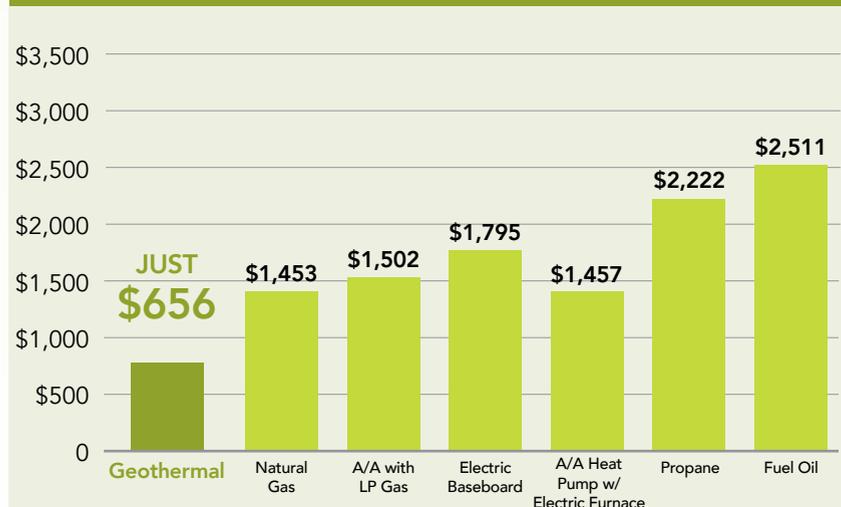
**And:** 837 South State, Caro, MI 48723

989-672-4948



## Annual Operating Costs

For an Average 1,800 Sq. Ft. Home  
(45,000 BTU heating load, 20,000 BTU cooling load)



Factors Used: **Electric Baseboard**, **Air-Source Heat Pump** and **Geothermal**—based on TEC's 7.196¢/kWh dual-fuel rate. **LP gas**—based on \$1.60/gal. and 90% efficient furnace. **Fuel Oil**—based on \$2.25/gal. and 80% efficient furnace. **Natural Gas**—based on \$1.08/therm., 90% efficient furnace including \$9/mo. service charge. (Electric baseboard costs do not include air conditioning.)

# Who's Your Legislator?

As a guide to help you understand who represents you in the Michigan Legislature, we have listed here all the legislators (both House and Senate) that represent districts that include the Thumb Electric Cooperative service area. Whatever their background, most represent districts with large rural populations, which are areas where electric co-ops serve. In fact, several legislators are electric co-op members themselves.

Legislation affecting cooperatives and their members most likely originates in those committees covering utilities, energy, technology, transportation, environment, land use, safety and taxes.

## Michigan House of Representatives

In the House, Republicans continue to hold the majority. Visit [house.mi.gov](http://house.mi.gov) for more information.



**Rep. Paul Muxlow**  
(R-Brown City)  
83rd District  
(517) 373-0835



**Rep. Ed Canfield**  
(R-Sebewaing)  
84th District  
(517) 373-0476

## Michigan Senate

In the Senate, Republicans also continue to hold the majority. Visit [senate.mi.gov](http://senate.mi.gov) for more information. ■



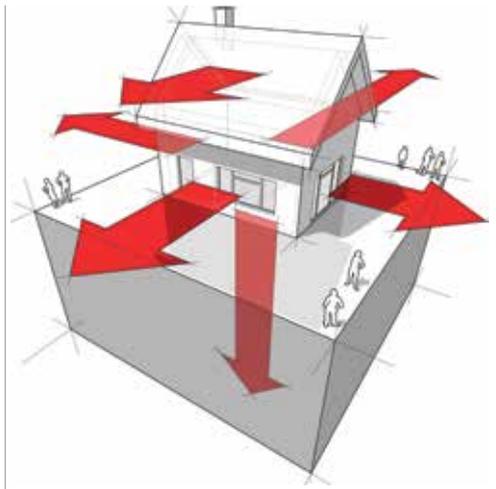
**Sen. Phil Pavlov**  
(R-St. Clair Township)  
25th District  
(517) 373-7708



**Sen. Mike Green**  
(R-Mayville)  
31st District  
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# It Really Does Take A Village

## Partners For Power

By Emily Haines Lloyd

Photo: Garrett Hubbard



In rural Guatemala, not far from the border with Mexico, is a tiny village called Buena Vista and it is just that—a “good view.” Set amongst the mountains, with peaks poking through the clouds—it’s a magical sight. At least during the day.

At night, the small town disappears into the fog banks and darkness due to a simple reality—Buena Vista did not have electricity.

Which is why in early 2015, Michigan electric co-ops partnered with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International, an organization that helps developing countries gain access to safe, reliable and affordable electricity, to bring power to approximately 54 families in Buena Vista. Lineworkers from five electric co-ops in Michigan packed over 1,500 pounds of luggage, equipment and tools and traveled to Buena Vista to do just that.

“On the day we arrived, we realized that all of the villagers—men, women and children—had gathered there to greet us. It was humbling to see so many smiling faces, all filled with such joy and gratitude, because they knew we had come to help bring them electricity,” said Brad Parkhouse, HomeWorks





Photo: Garrett Hubbard

Tri-County lineworker. “They expressed how grateful they were to us for coming, and we told them how happy we were to be there. It was emotional, really.”

The Michigan lineworkers discovered that local residents had already hand-dug and set all of the electric poles. With the mountainous terrain, the lineworkers remarked how difficult that task was, particularly without the power tools that would have been used stateside for such an undertaking.

Over 12 days, the Michigan lineworkers and their unofficial team of about 40 local residents prepared poles (by climbing them the old fashioned way, no bucket trucks here) and hanging wire.

“I thought I was a hard worker until I met these people,” said Trevor Stratton, Wolverine Power lineworker. “They’re pulling wire into the valleys where the elevation drop is incredible...I don’t know how we could ever do this job without them.”

While electric power is taken for granted by those in the United States, it is seen as nothing short of a lifeline to this community—which is likely why the local people were so committed to making it happen

in their small town. It promises improvement in health care, safety, education and economic growth. Power is the spark that changes communities, provides opportunities, and ignites imaginations. While the social and economic impact is nothing short of staggering—the experience for the team of 10 linemen did not lie in the metrics, but the experience itself.

“One of the locals, Ofelia De Leon, invited several of us to be with his family when the lights came on in their house for the very first time,” said Dan King, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association safety instructor. “You could feel the anticipation in the air as we all gathered together inside their small mountain home. Ofelia had the honor of flipping the switch, and when the light came on everyone began clapping. The room radiated with happiness—there was plenty of smiling, laughter, and even some tears. It was a very emotional experience, and by far my proudest moment in 26 years of linework.” ■

**For more information about Partners for Power and to see more amazing photos please visit [partnersforpower.org](http://partnersforpower.org).**

# Your Electric Co-op Is Not Just An Electric Provider

**A**s a member of Thumb Electric Cooperative (TEC), you are a partial owner of your electric company. As such, over the years, many programs and services have been developed to add value to that membership and help you and your cooperative save money, which adds equity to your co-op and leaves more money in your pocket. Many of you are already participating in some of these programs, but you may not fully understand what they can do for you and your co-op neighbors. Here is a quick summary of the services offered (see a full list on page 17) and why they exist.

**Demand response.** This is a phrase you may have heard, but don't fully understand. At certain times of the day, week, month or year, utilities can see a spike in electric use or "demand." The most common spike at your co-op is when the average person gets home from work in the evening and starts cooking, cleaning, showering and doing laundry. Unusual weather events such as extreme cold or heat can also cause a spike in "demand."

In response, utilities may need to curb some of this usage by shifting it into another part of the day, such as after the average person has gone to bed.

One of the best tools to use in a demand response program is an electric water heater. When sized properly, it acts like a battery and stores the heated water. We can turn off the power to it without it affecting you, because you have 50, 80 or 120 gallons to use already heated and ready to go. Because of this, TEC developed a water heater program that may fit your budget. You can pick up a properly-sized water heater from us and have it installed at your home. We will then install a load control switch on it, and depending on the length of control we will bill your account for the water heater and credit you back money for letting us control it. We currently have over 4,500 of your co-op neighbors taking advantage of this money-saving program.

Another part of this program is our electric heating and air conditioning programs. We offer a separately metered, demand response controlled rate for members who want to take advantage of the many benefits of electric heat.

What is considered electric heat? Several things. Geothermal heating and cooling is probably the most popular. Why? Because efficiencies are approaching 600 percent, which can be less than

one-quarter the cost of propane or fuel oil, and most geothermal units also help make hot water, which is another cost savings. Air-Source heat pumps are another popular choice and can be up to 225 percent efficient. Paired with an electric, propane or fuel oil furnace, savings can be substantial. One of the most-used electric heating systems—due to the low installation cost—is baseboard electric heat. It is 100 percent efficient and allows for individual room control, so rooms that are not being used can be turned lower.



Closely aligned with these programs is the In Home Energy Audit. Since all heating systems work better when insulation levels are sufficient. Your co-op offers these energy audits, free of charge, to show you ways of saving energy and money in your home.

We also have energy efficiency loans available for up to \$15,000 for approved efficiency upgrades.

In addition to electric heating options, TEC offers propane service, which includes a metered service that no one else in the area offers. Imagine not having to pay out large sums of money each time your tank is filled. Just read the meter at the end of the month, and we'll send you the bill for that month.

In addition, we have automatic bill payment options, along with online and phone apps available to pay your bill and submit your readings.

In the future, we also anticipate more programs to help members manage their energy use and save money. Why? Because it truly is *your* electric co-op, and you have come to expect a greater level of service. For more details on these and other available programs, see our website at [tec.mi.coop](http://tec.mi.coop) or call 800-327-0166. ■

# Thumb Electric Cooperative

Your co-op offers many services.

**A**s a member-owned utility, your electric co-op provides a number of extra values that enhance the service you receive and help you save energy and money—here's a convenient summary so that you can make sure you are taking advantage of all our programs that may benefit you and your family or business:

## Energy Efficient Electric Heating & Air Conditioning Program

- Separately metered rate is currently Dual Fuel 7.196 cents per kWh for Dual Fuel and 7.675 cents per kWh for Interruptible Heating & Cooling Service.
- Second fuel source heating system required on Dual Fuel.
- Qualifying systems: geothermal, air-source heat pumps, electric baseboard, boilers & duct heaters.
- Water heaters allowed on rate with geothermal systems if geothermal makes hot water.

## In-Home Energy Audit

- Available to Thumb Electric co-op members free of charge.
- Assess heating and cooling requirements of home for any fuel type.

## Electric Water Heater Control Credits

- \$8 credit per month for 6-hour control period—500 kWh per month required.
- \$6.25 credit per month for 4-hour control period—350 kWh per month required.



## TEC Water Heater Program

- Water heater credits purchase a TEC water heater on 0 percent interest.
- 10-year warranty on tank.
- Lifetime warranty on parts.
- Water heaters connected to geothermal: payment 48 months with 0 percent interest.
- Water heaters with no control: payment 48 months with 0 percent interest.



## Energy Efficiency Loans

- Qualifying members may borrow up to \$15,000, 7 percent annual interest with payment terms up to 7 years. Loans may be used for the installation of energy efficient heating and air conditioning systems, including geothermal and electric heat systems, insulation, and windows and doors.

## Private Contract Tree Trimming

- Program offers professional tree trimming for work on TEC members property.

## Bill Payment Options

- Have payments automatically withdrawn from checking or savings account.
- Have payments automatically charged to your credit card.
- Online and smartphone app options for payment and meter reading entry.

## Propane Service

- Metered propane service allows you to pay for the propane after you use it.
- Scheduled fill and budget plans.
- Pre-buy plan available through August each year.

## Surge Protection System

- Protect against voltage spikes.
- Both buy and lease options available.

**Call 989-658-8571 or 1-800-327-0166 today to learn specific details. ■**

# The Quilt Lady

By Jack O'Malley

Eleanor Howard's story began when she was eight years old and asked her mother how to quilt. As a team, they pieced together Eleanor's first quilt and 87 years later, she still has it. "I've used that quilt on all my children's beds. I pert near wore it out!"

Speaking of children, Eleanor has five. And 15 grandchildren, along with 20 great-grandchildren. Each one has a quilt lovingly stitched by grandma. In addition, Eleanor donates many of her quilts to charity. How many has she made? "Oh, too many to



count!" Of the dozens of quilts assembled in her 95 years, one in particular stands out.

She made the quilt for her son, Albert, carefully patching each piece over two years. The result? A quilt depicting the state of Michigan, including all 83 counties, each painstakingly cut to its exact shape and featuring the product or service it's



Jack O'Malley

known for. Using appliques, stenciling, embroidery and hand painting, Eleanor had no pattern. She bought the biggest map she could find and went to work on figuring scale. The detail of Eleanor's Michigan quilt catches everyone's eye and has won multiple medals and ribbons. ■



## «« Where In Michigan Is This?

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

We do not accept Mystery Photo guesses by phone. Enter your guess at [countrylines.com](http://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.



Nov/Dec Photo

Our Mystery Photo Contest Winner from the November/December 2015 issue is Brian Thompson, an Alger Delta co-op member who correctly identified the photo as "U.S.-31 Outlet Bridge in Charlevoix with the Emerald Isle boat."

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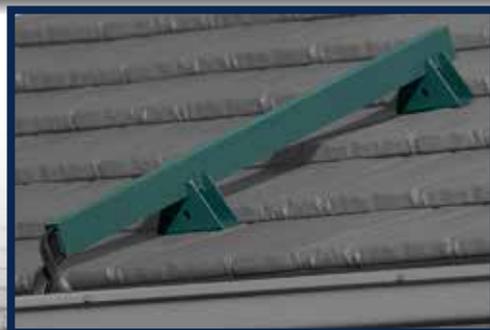


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