

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

utility
of the
future

Plus!

Growing Pains In Cassopolis

Be Prepared For Spring Storms

Midwest Employees Give Back



**Act now to receive a
30% Federal tax credit**

7 Series
*Ultimate comfort
and efficiency*



Time is running out to take advantage of a 30% tax credit for geothermal

You may not realize it, but right beneath your feet is an almost unlimited reservoir of stored solar energy. A WaterFurnace geothermal system taps into this free and renewable resource to provide savings of up to 70% on heating, cooling, and hot water—with a comfort you have to experience to believe. Right now you can save thousands on installation thanks to a 30% federal tax credit. But hurry, the credit is only available through the end of 2016. Contact your local WaterFurnace dealer today to learn more!

YOUR LOCAL WATERFURNACE DEALERS

Bad Axe

B & D Htg
(989) 269-5280
bdheating.com

Berrien Springs

WaterFurnace
Michiana
(269) 473-5667
gogreenmich.com
geothermal.com

Big Rapids

Stratz Htg & Clg, Inc.
(231) 796-3717
stratzgeocomfort.com

Caro

AllTemp
Comfort, Inc.
(866) 844-HEAT (4328)
geo4less.com

Carsonville

Certified Temperature
Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Clifford

Orton Refrig & Htg
(989) 761-7691
sanduskygeothermal.com

DeWitt

S & J Htg & Clg
(517) 669-3705
geothermalservices.com
ofmichigan.com

Grand Rapids

Total Comfort
Resource, LLC
(616) 406-3182
totalcomfortresource.com

Hart/Ludington

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
adamsheatingcooling.com

Indian River

M & M Plmb & Htg
(231) 238-7201
mm-plumbing.com

Jackson/Adrian

Comfort 1
Htg & A/C
(517) 764-1500
comfort1.net/geothermal

Kalkaska

Kalkaska Plmb & Htg
(231) 258-3588
kalkaskageothermal.net

Mt Pleasant

Walton Htg & Clg
(989) 774-1566
waltonheating.com

Muskegon

Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
adamsheatingcooling.com

Kiessel Geothermal

Htg & Clg
(231) 747-7509
kiesselsgeo.com

Portland

ESI Htg & Clg
(517) 647-6906
esiheating.com

Sunfield

Mark Woodman
Plmb & Htg
(517) 886-1138
mwphonline.com

Traverse City

Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000
watergeofurnace.com

D & W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215
dwgeothermal.com



waterfurnace.com/Credit

WaterFurnace is a registered trademark of WaterFurnace International, Inc. ©2016 WaterFurnace International, Inc.



Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

March 2016
Vol. 36, No. 3

Executive Editor
Casey Clark

Editor
Christine Dorr

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.

CONTACT US/LETTERS TO EDITOR:

Michigan Country Lines
201 Townsend St., Suite 900
Lansing, MI 48933
248-534-7358
cdorr@meca.coop
countrylines.com



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.

Cover photo by Dre Photography

IN THIS ISSUE

- 6 OUR ENERGY**
Down Home Comfort With Geothermal Heat Pumps
Ted Clutter
- 7 SAFETY**
Staying Safe In A Car Accident With A Utility Pole
- 10 HOME COOKING**
Perfect Pasta Recipes!
Christin McKamey & Our Readers
- 14 FEATURE**
Art On Ice With Stephanie Miller
Emily Haines Lloyd
- 18 READERS' PAGE**
Surf's Up—In Michigan!
Jack O'Malley
Guess Our New Mystery Photo

IN YOUR WORDS

Question Of The Month—We Asked, You Answered.

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question: What is the best compliment you have ever received? Thank you for all the responses. Here are some of your answers:

Something that I would have abhorred as a teenager but treasure now —"You remind me of your mom."

The best compliment I ever received was, "You're as pretty as a keeper rainbow trout on the end of the line on opening day." James and I have been best friends for 40 years and married for over 38 years.

You are a good listener.

Our new Question of the Month is:

If you could be any age for a week, what age would that be?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by April 1.



A PROGRAM OF AMERICA'S ELECTRIC COOPERATIVES
WWW.VOTE.COOP

Don't forget to vote in the presidential primary on March 8.
Visit vote.coop for more information.



CASSOPOLIS DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

901 E. State Street (P.O. Box 127)
Cassopolis, MI 49031-0127
M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

PAW PAW DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

59825 S. LaGrave, Paw Paw, MI 49079
M-F, 8 a.m.–1 p.m. and 1:30 p.m.–4:30 p.m.

ADRIAN DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

1610 E. Maumee Street, Adrian, MI 49221
M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

CONTACT US

MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

800-492-5989 • TeamMidwest.com

MIDWEST CONNECTIONS

844-493-4237 • TeamFiber.com

MIDWEST PROPANE

844-493-4427 • TeamMidwestPropane.com

E-mail: info@TeamMidwest.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Clarence "Topper" Barth, Chairman, Three Rivers

269-279-9233
Clarence.Barth@teammidwest.com

Ben Russell, Vice Chairman, Constantine

269-435-8564
Ben.Russell@teammidwest.com

Colyne Sorsby, Secretary, Cassopolis

269-476-2718
Colyne.Sorsby@teammidwest.com

John Green, Treasurer, Dowagiac

269-470-2816
John.Green@teammidwest.com

Ron Armstrong, Lawton

269-299-0239
Ron.Armstrong@teammidwest.com

Arell Chapman, Onsted

517-292-3040
Arell.Chapman@teammidwest.com

James Dickerson, Bloomingdale

269-370-6868
Jim.Dickerson@teammidwest.com

Harry Gentz, Blissfield

517-443-5537
Harry.Gentz@teammidwest.com

Fred Turk, Decatur

269-423-7762
Fred.Turk@teammidwest.com

PRESIDENT/CEO

Robert Hance

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Patty Nowlin

 Find us on Facebook:
[facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest)

Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Growing Pains And #UtilityoftheFuture



Robert Hance
President/CEO

I was a young newlywed when I stepped into adulthood and independence and bought my first house. It felt nothing short of perfect as Mary and I seamlessly combined our collective worldly possessions into one wonderful shared space.

Then along came Justin, Jamie and Josh, and our perfect newlywed space quickly became cramped family space. Once spacious closets were crammed full of everything from clothes to toys to supplies, and the cars that previously enjoyed protected garage space took residence in the driveway.

We're dealing with similar growing pains in Midwest Energy's Cassopolis office. It was constructed in 1940 and renovated in the mid 1990s. It was appropriately sized for the time, but no one could anticipate the opportunity and growth that would face the organization two short decades later.

As I've shared in recent columns, we're on a fast-growth track as we build your "Utility of the Future." In 2013, we committed to upgrading the utility infrastructure with a robust, two-way fiber communications system that will greatly improve your service experience and position us to offer developing automation technologies that will provide you new levels of comfort and convenience.

One year later, in response to heavy and persistent member demand for high-speed options, the board directed leadership to leverage that system and fully deploy a fiber communications solution in five years across our southwest Michigan footprint.

Two major projects that will add unimaginable value to your membership, both requiring the addition of significant human and physical resources. The renovated newlywed space worked in the late 1990s when we had 68 employees in Cass, but today's 93 employees are cramped and we've applied as many makeshift changes as we can. Over the next five years we're adding 32 employees related to these projects, and project another 32 people over the next 15 years. Doing nothing is not an option.

We've created and are implementing a vision for something more for our members, and are on a clear path to differentiating ourselves as "THE" Utility of the Future. That utility requires a new home. Like investing in our electric distribution grid, we must invest in the infrastructure that houses other critical resources; namely the people, systems and physical assets behind your service experience. This investment will create operational and functional efficiencies while showcasing innovative technologies and energy efficient building design, all of which will be relevant and offer benefit to our members.

Read more about our #UtilityoftheFuture project on page 5 and visit UtilityoftheFuture.coop for details. ■

utility of the future

Frequently Asked Questions

The Need

Q: How did you determine a new building was necessary?

A: We're simply out of space. As shared on page 4, earlier renovations were more than adequate for the time, but we're now on a fast growth trajectory as we create your #UtilityoftheFuture. Doing nothing is not an option as we must add resources to accommodate short- and long-term goals.

Q: Did you seek professional expertise in coming to that conclusion?

A: We engaged with Cooperative Building Solutions (CBS) to ensure we were being good stewards of existing resources and member dollars. CBS completed a comprehensive site, facility and needs assessment. The results revealed that facilities are inadequate for current space needs (not to mention future!); existing buildings require moderate to significant modifications for safety and building code requirements, and repairs/replacements to improve physical conditions and energy efficiency; overall layout and traffic flow compromise operational efficiencies; and serious safety and security concerns are present.

Q: What options were considered?

A: CBS presented two options, both resulting in a similar rate impact: new and renovated facilities at the current site or new facilities on a new site. They recommended the latter as it offered

opportunity to create a layout and flow that maximizes efficiency and accommodates future growth. The board approved the plan to proceed at their November 2015 meeting.

Next month: Where is the new office, and how did an AEP project help confirm the decision to build elsewhere?

The Opportunity

Q: What's in it for co-op members?

A: As we create the space that will house your #UtilityoftheFuture, we will incorporate and showcase many emerging home/office automation technologies, as well as leading energy efficiency solutions. We will share relevant information, and provide you opportunities to learn and interact to determine what's meaningful for your own home or office environment.

We are also being very intentional with building layout and design decisions to create functional and operational efficiencies that will positively impact the bottom line. Again, being good stewards of member resources.

Follow our blog at UtilityoftheFuture.coop to see what we incorporate and how it is relevant to you.

The Impact

Q: How will you finance the new building?

A: We make annual strategic investments in our distribution system to ensure a reliable experience for our membership. We're taking a similar approach with this project as it's an investment in the infrastructure that houses other critical resources; namely the systems, supports and people behind your service experience. We have three commercial banking partners who provide long-term, low-interest financing, and will work with one or more of those partners to secure the best financing opportunity and approach.

Q: What's the financial impact?

A: Our #UtilityoftheFuture path adds great value to your membership, but that comes with a cost. However, this is not a one-time expense, but an investment that will be depreciated over a 40-year period. We expect a maximum 2 to 3 percent rate impact beginning in 2018, and it will be spread among all members who will benefit for many years into the future.

Visit UtilityoftheFuture.coop for a complete listing of Frequently Asked Questions. ■

Down Home Comfort

Using the earth for heating and cooling makes sense.

By Ted Clutter, The Geothermal Exchange Organization

There's a movement afoot, but don't worry—the ground isn't shaking. It is quietly heating and cooling tens of thousands of homes and commercial buildings across Michigan with ground-source—or geothermal—heat pumps.

Geothermal heat pumps are renowned by both the U.S. Department of Energy and the Environmental Protection Agency as our most efficient and environmentally friendly heating and cooling technology for homes, businesses and institutional spaces of all sizes. Indeed, by tapping the free

During the winter months, the process is reversed. The earth heats the water circulating through the pipes, which flows through the geothermal system to provide indoor space heating. With additional equipment, geothermal heat pumps can also provide hot water for a variety of uses at little extra monthly cost.

Geothermal Benefits

Geothermal heating and cooling saves energy and reduces fossil fuel use, either on-site or at power plants. Geothermal heat pumps reap huge savings on ratepayer energy bills because they use less electricity than conventional equipment.

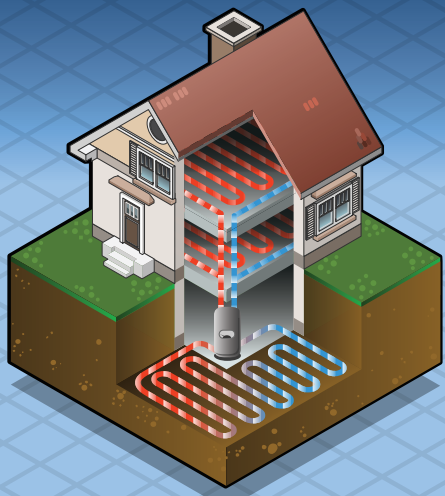
Geothermal heat pumps are a comfortable, "green energy" solution and an easy way to act locally, while thinking globally about the environment. Indeed, they shrink the average carbon footprint of a typical American home by nearly 50 percent. Best of all, geothermal heat pumps are "Made in the USA" by an innovative industry that is creating jobs all across America.

Geothermal Incentives

The federal government offers a 30 percent tax break for homeowners who install a GHP (10 percent for commercial jobs). Those credits expire at the end of 2016, but the Geothermal Exchange Organization (GEO) is working with Congress to extend them through 2022. For the time being, you can still take advantage of the credits if your project is in service before the end of the year.

And be sure to check with your electric co-op about any rebates they might offer for a geothermal system. Your trusted local geothermal heat pump contractor will be able to help you with that information.

For more information and member contractors in your area, visit the Geothermal Exchange website, geoexchange.org. ■



renewable energy of the ground, geothermal heat pumps (GHPs) can save consumers up to 70 percent on their monthly energy bills.

How Geothermal Heat Pumps Work

Geothermal heat pumps use a series of plastic pipes—called ground loops—buried beneath the surface where temperatures are a constant 50° throughout the year (depending on where you live). The fusion-sealed pipes are connected to geothermal heating and cooling equipment inside the home or building.

Water circulating through the system carries heat to and from the ground, depending on the season. During the summer months, unwanted heat indoors is transferred outside to the ground for cooling by the earth. The cool water flows through the GHP system to provide air conditioning.

Please note this article focuses on one type of system, there are other types of energy-saving heat pumps, such as pond loop or air-to-air types. Discuss options with a trusted heat pump contractor.



Staying Safe In A Car Accident With A Utility Pole

Winter wonderlands are beautiful, but they can be a driving nightmare. Snow, slush, ice and wind make driving more stressful and hazardous. If you are in an accident involving a utility pole, your vehicle may be charged with electricity. If this is the case and you step out of the car, you will become the electricity's path to the ground and could be electrocuted.

While downed lines sometimes reveal they are "live" by arcing and sparking with electricity, this is not always the case. Power lines do not always show signs that they are live, but they are just as lethal.

Stay in the car if you are in an accident with a power pole. Warn those who try to help that they must stay far away from the vehicle. Call 911 for help, and wait until a utility professional tells you it is safe to leave the car.

The exception to this rule is if your car is on fire. In that case, jump clear of the vehicle without touching it and the ground at the same time. Then "bunny hop" away with your feet together to safety. This way there will not be a voltage difference between your two feet, which would give electricity the chance to flow through your body. ■



ENERGY STAR: Your Best Defense Against Energy Waste

Looking for new ways to save energy, but not sure where to start? Team up with the Energy Optimization program and take your outdated, energy-wasting lightbulbs, appliances, and electronics out of the game. The Energy Optimization program helps you upgrade your home by providing rebates toward the purchase of highly-efficient ENERGY STAR® products.

What is ENERGY STAR?

Established as a joint effort between the U.S. Department of Energy and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, ENERGY STAR is a trusted brand for quality products that use significantly less energy than required by minimum federal standards. The ENERGY STAR label can be found on hundreds of items, including lightbulbs, electronics, major appliances, and even certified homes and buildings.

ENERGY STAR products provide the same features you're used to, but can use up to 75 percent less energy than

standard models. In order for a product to bear the ENERGY STAR label, it must:

- Contribute significant energy savings.
- Deliver features and performance that customers demand.
- Back up energy savings claims with testing.

View all rebates at michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for details. ■

Below are just a few ENERGY STAR products eligible for Energy Optimization program rebates:

Product	Efficiency comparison (vs. a new standard model)*	Energy Optimization program rebate**
Clothes washer	Uses 35% less water and energy	\$100
Computer	Uses 60% less energy	\$50
Dehumidifier	Uses 15% less energy	\$75
Dishwasher	Uses 5% less energy and 15% less water	\$75
Chest Freezer	Uses at least 10% less energy	\$50
Refrigerator	Uses 9% less energy	\$50
Television	Uses at least 25% less energy	\$50–100
Room air conditioner	Uses 15% less energy	\$50

*All data according to energystar.gov. **Rebate amounts are subject to change.

The ball's in your court.

Your game plan for 2016: Start saving energy. Get off the bench and score big when you purchase ENERGY STAR® lighting and appliances! The Energy Optimization program provides rebates on bulbs, smart power strips, ceiling fans, dishwashers, TVs, and more.

ENERGY TIP: For the fastest way to receive your rebate, use our new online application.

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.

A large, stylized graphic of a basketball hoop and backboard. The words 'Slam Dunk' are written in large, bold letters across the bottom of the hoop. 'Slam' is in red and 'Dunk' is in white. The background shows several basketballs in the air, suggesting a game in progress.

Slam Dunk

Midwest 'Winter Fun' Photo Contest Winners



Photos With The Highest Facebook Votes!

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the winning photo (and some great runners-up) from our February photo contest. Winners were selected from 65 Facebook entries receiving over 1,400 votes! Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

1. **Winner:** Janine Borgert, Blissfield – North Pole Please
2. Linda Wolf, Jones – Family Love
3. John Hassle, Dowagiac – First Michigan snowfall
4. Tammy West, Jones – The Little Woodsman
5. Tammy West, Jones – Lake Michigan Ice Cubes

Visit teammidwest.com/photo-contest/ to view all the photos submitted.



Enter Your Photos And Win!

Team Midwest's photo contest is under way and one lucky winner will end up with a credit of up to \$200 on their December 2016 electric bill. Every month, we will announce a new theme and invite you to 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.

How to submit? Just visit facebook.com/TeamMidwest and click on "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs. Not on Facebook? You can also enter at TeamMidwest.com/photocontest. 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*. We look forward to seeing your photos!

The March theme is "**Saluting Our Armed Forces.**" Photos can be submitted from **March 1 to March 20**. Photos with the most votes will be featured in the May issue.

Our April theme is "**Fishing.**" Photos are accepted from **April 1 to April 20**. Photos with the most votes will be featured in the June issue.

PERFECT PASTA!

Try these inspiring pasta recipes full of flavorful ingredients!



Pasta Bacon Toss

Joy Frazee, Portland

- 1 lb. bacon, cut up
- 4 c. chicken broth
- 2-14.5-oz. cans Italian-style diced tomatoes
- 1 med. onion, chopped
- 4 garlic cloves, minced (or more, if desired)
- ½ t. crushed red pepper flakes, optional
- 16 oz. box uncooked linguine pasta
- 4 ozs. cream cheese
- 5 ozs. parmesan cheese, shredded

Cut bacon into 1-inch pieces and fry; remove from skillet. Put approximately 1 T. of bacon grease in a pot. Add minced garlic and pepper flakes; cook for 10–20 seconds. Add onion; cook 2–3 minutes or until onion is tender. Add broth, diced tomatoes and about a handful of fried bacon pieces, reserving the rest for later. Add uncooked pasta, simmer for 9–10 minutes stirring occasionally, covered, or until pasta is cooked. Mix in the cream cheese until blended well with the pasta and the sauce is thickened. Serve and top with some bacon and shredded Parmesan. This is great for two nights; for the second night, top the remaining pasta with mozzarella and/or Parmesan cheese and bake at 350° until heated through and cheese is melted. Top with cooked bacon.

Greek-Style Scampi (pictured)

Patrick Simmer, Dewitt

- 6 oz. uncooked angel hair pasta
- 1 t. olive oil
- ½ c. chopped green bell pepper
- 2 t. bottled minced garlic
- 14.5 oz. can diced tomatoes with basil, garlic, oregano; undrained
- ⅓ t. black pepper
- 1 lb. peeled & deveined medium uncooked shrimp
- ⅓ t. ground red pepper
- 6 T. crumbled feta cheese

Cook pasta according to package directions, omitting salt. Drain pasta and keep warm. Heat oil in a large nonstick skillet over medium-high heat. Add green bell pepper to pan; sauté 1 minute. Add garlic and tomatoes; cook 1 minute. Add black pepper and shrimp; cover and cook 3 minutes or until shrimp is done (don't overcook). Stir in red pepper; remove from heat. Place 1 c. pasta on each of four plates. Top each serving with 1 c. shrimp mixture and 1 ½ T. feta cheese.

Pasta Salad

Becky Beard, Portland

- 1 lb. tri-color spiral pasta
- ¼ c. red or green pepper, chopped
- ¼ c. green olives
- ½ c. cucumber, chopped
- ¾ c. cherry or grape tomatoes, cut in half
- ½ c. feta cheese
- ¼ c. red onions, chopped
- ¼ c. pepperoni slices, cut in quarters
- 1 c. Zesty Italian dressing (or more if needed, to taste)

Cook the pasta according to package directions. Drain and rinse with cool water. Mix with remaining ingredients in a large bowl. Refrigerate until chilled.



Pistachio Pesto Pasta

Christin McKamey

- 8 oz. pasta (gluten free, if desired)
- 2 c. fresh baby spinach, packed
- ½ c. shelled pistachios, roasted and unsalted
- 2 c. fresh basil leaves, packed
- 2 garlic cloves, minced
- ¼ c. extra virgin olive oil
- 1 T. white wine vinegar
- 1 T. fresh lemon juice
- ½ t. ground sea salt, or to taste
- ¼ t. freshly ground black pepper

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and set aside. In a food processor or high powered blender, add the remaining ingredients. Blend until chopped and thoroughly combined. Mix the pesto with the hot pasta and stir to combine. Serves 4. Will last in the fridge about four days.

Creamy Ranch Pasta Salad

Karen Beard, Portland

- ½ box shaped pasta
- 1 head broccoli, chopped
- 1 c. frozen peas, thawed
- ½ pkg. mini pepperoni slices
- 4 oz. Monterey Jack cheese, chopped into small pieces or shredded
- 12 small carrots, chopped
- Ranch dressing (we use the packet and make our own...tastes much better)

Cook pasta according to package directions. Drain and run cold water over pasta to cool it. Combine rest of ingredients, except the ranch dressing, into a bowl. Pour cooled pasta into the bowl, then stir in dressing (as much as you like).

SUBMIT YOUR RECIPE!

Thanks to all our readers who send in recipes. Please send in your favorite "Quick and Easy" recipes by **April 1** and "BBQ" recipes by **May 1**.

Enter your recipe online at countrylines.com or send to (handprint or type 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.

A RECIPE WINNER EVERY MONTH!

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



BE PREPARED

Before Mother Nature rears her ugly head with spring storms, take time to think through what you need in the event of an extended power outage.

Following are suggested items to keep on hand, and tips to help you be prepared. Be sure to consider your own unique individual and family circumstances as you create your emergency plan.

- **Water:** At least 1 gallon per person, per day for drinking and sanitation. Don't forget the pets!
- **Food:** Keep a good supply of non-perishable food, especially items that don't need to be cooked. A hand-operated can opener is helpful!
- **Lighting:** Have flashlights, candles and matches accessible.
- **Batteries:** Maintain an extra supply for your back-up needs.
- **Telephone:** Cordless phones won't work during a power outage, so have a corded phone available, and make sure cell phones are fully charged if outages are possible.
- **Communications:** Midwest regularly updates regional news media in major outages, and posts those on TeamMidwest.com and other social media platforms. If outages are imminent, be sure your mobile devices are fully charged so you can stay up to date. A battery-powered radio is also helpful.
- **Medical:** Have a first-aid kit ready, and be sure to fill prescriptions and have any needed medical supplies on hand.
- **Battery-powered or wind-up clock.**
- **Extra blankets.**
- **Personal sanitation:** Moist wipes, hand sanitizer and garbage bags.
- **Tools:** Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.

Learning more about current outages

During any major outage or emergency situation, we regularly update local media outlets to keep you informed about outage numbers and locations. The same updates are posted on the red emergency banner at TeamMidwest.com, and shared via our Facebook and Twitter platforms.

Our Outage Central map, available at TeamMidwest.com and in the SmartHub app, provides a quick snapshot of outages by zip code. ■

Outage reporting at your fingertips

When you're in the dark and trying to report your power outage, there's nothing more frustrating than a fast busy signal or sitting in a crowded phone queue waiting for the next available customer care rep. Midwest offers easy and convenient ways to report your power outage.

Online and Mobile Power Tools: SmartHub allows you to report your outage from the comfort and convenience of your computer or mobile device. Log in to your account to report your outage through the online portal at TeamMidwest.com, or use the free SmartHub app available through your iTunes or Google Play store. You can also text your outage. A short registration process is required for new users of these convenient platforms. Learn more by clicking on the Power Tools ad at TeamMidwest.com.



Telephone: The telephone system at your co-op is equipped with an automatic outage reporting system, an easy and efficient way to report your outage. Dial 800-492-5989 and follow the prompts. We must have an up-to-date telephone number on your account for you to use this system. Please update your account information using SmartHub, or by calling our office.

We have a limited number of incoming lines that are more than adequate for regular business operations, but may become taxed in a major outage situation. If you call and receive a fast busy signal, that means our phone lines are at capacity. In that event, please use one of the alternate methods to report your outage, or hang up and try again later.

Please do not use email or social media to report your outage as these platforms are not staffed 24/7.

Midwest Employees Give Back

Commitment to community is more than a corporate value at Team Midwest; it's a way of life for the family of employees.

In January, employees presented checks of \$5,347.20 each to Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Wounded Warrior Project through the Midwest Employees Give Back (MEGB) Program. An additional \$7,900 had been donated over the previous year to organizations and individuals through employee-sponsored grant applications. These aren't funds that come out of the Midwest expense budget, but dollars committed by employees for the express purpose of giving back.



Pet Refuge is a no-kill animal shelter. With MEGB funds, the non-profit organization was able to provide scholarship assistance for their summer camp program, giving kids an opportunity to learn about and interact with animals.

Midwest Employees Give Back was launched by Midwest employees in 2010 as a way to give back. It's a charitable giving fund operated, governed and voluntarily funded by the employees of Team Midwest. Two-thirds of the annual funds collected

are donated to select beneficiary partners as determined by the employee base, and the remaining funds are reserved for distribution to local organizations and efforts as requested by members of the employee family and approved by the Employee Involvement Committee.



Midwest employees donated a saddle to the We Can Ride 4-H Saddle Club through the MEGB fund. The club offers therapeutic horseback riding lessons for mentally and physically disabled children and adults.

"Our employee family does amazing things in the course of every work day to provide exceptional service experiences for our members and customers, but this employee-initiated effort to donate their own hard-earned dollars to support community organizations and initiatives is unlike anything I've ever experienced. I couldn't be more proud to be involved with this employee family," says Bob Hance, president/CEO.

Since 2010, employees have donated more than \$88,000 to the fund. Beneficiary partners have included American Cancer Society, Make-A-Wish Michigan, St. Jude Children's Hospital, Wounded Warrior, Hospice, and Ronald McDonald Charities. ■

A young girl is shown from the chest up, looking down and smiling. She is wearing a vibrant, sequined ice skating costume that transitions from magenta at the top to yellow at the bottom. The costume is covered in small, reflective sequins. The background is a soft, out-of-focus white and blue, suggesting an ice skating rink. The title 'Art on Ice' is written in a large, blue, cursive font on the right side of the image.

Art on Ice

By Emily Haines Lloyd

When she was younger, Stephanie Miller wanted a career in education—art, to be exact. She never became an art teacher, but she most definitely became an artist and a teacher.

For over 25 years, Miller has built her life around one of her true passions—ice skating. Spending many years at ice rinks around Metro Detroit, Miller became a successful competitive skater and an impassioned stylist. Bored with the uninspired costumes available to her, she started beading her own skating outfits. Before she knew it, other skaters were begging her to help them spruce up their costumes.

"I'm the unlikely story. I got my 'degree' in skating," said Miller. "I was a skater who had an artistic eye and before I knew it, I had a career."

Accident or not, the trajectory of Miller and her partner, Luanne Williams' business is nothing short of impressive.

Once a week, Miller leaves her small town of Kingsley, just 15 miles outside Traverse City, and travels to the Detroit Skating Club, where she and Williams (from Grass Lake) take over the rink's Club Room. There, skaters wait in line to meet with the designers about upcoming competition costumes and what will make them stand out on the ice.

The two have created costumes for an impressive list of world-renowned skaters, including Olympic gold medalists Meryl Davis and Charlie White. Davis wore one of Miller's designs when the duo won their gold medal in Sochi. She has designed Davis' costumes for nearly 20 years—a testament to the trust and respect the skating community has for Miller and Williams.

"I am always on the skater's side," said Miller. "I listen to their music, to what they like or don't like



and I encourage them to listen to their gut. They are the one that has to go out and perform in this costume. They have to love it."

While many have recommended that Miller collaborate with an apparel shop to mass-produce her designs, the costume veteran can't fathom it.

"My heart is in custom, original designs," she explains. "I love having a new piece of artwork to focus on. Otherwise, I would be bored out of my mind."

When she's not creating fresh designs and meticulously adhering stones, Miller is a coach at the Traverse City Skating Club. She's become the teacher she always wanted to be—grooming a new generation of skaters and possibly even clients.

When she drives home at the end of a day of coaching, she's inspired by any number of things, a billboard or the pure aqua blue of Traverse Bay. Before she knows it, there's a new idea for a costume for the artist/teacher who always seems to be working.

"I see something like the water in the bay and all I can think is how great that color will look on the ice." ■

Above: Wearing costumes designed by Miller, are Frances Rossiter (left), 12, a national skater from MI, and Anna Rossiter, 11, a top regional skater who started at age 3.

Photos—Dre Photography





The Power Of Information In Your Hands

As energy costs continue to rise, consumers are more motivated to find creative new ways to reduce consumption and take control over their use. But where do you start?

So much of what we do in daily life is ultimately connected to a wall outlet, and all of those applications contribute to the monthly bill. So, determining how different appliances impact your overall bill is a huge first step to understanding and controlling your energy use.

Midwest Energy Cooperative offers a tool that puts the power of information in your hands. The Kill-A-Watt meter records various power measurements of a selected appliance, including volts, power factor, hertz, watts and amps. Simply plug your electric device into the Kill-A-Watt meter and the easy-to-use tool begins accumulating data on the appliance. The units come preprogrammed with our rates and ultimately project the cost of running whatever device is connected for various periods of time, including an hour, day, week, month and year. It gives you real data on how the use of different devices impacts your bill, allowing you to make educated changes to better manage your overall consumption.

Kill-A-Watt meters are available to borrow from Midwest at no charge for two week periods. Interested members may visit one of the co-op's three district service centers, where a customer care representative will explain and demonstrate the unit. If the unit is not returned within the two week period, or is returned damaged or broken, you may be charged an \$80 replacement fee.

Please call us at 800-492-5989 before visiting to make sure a unit is available. ■

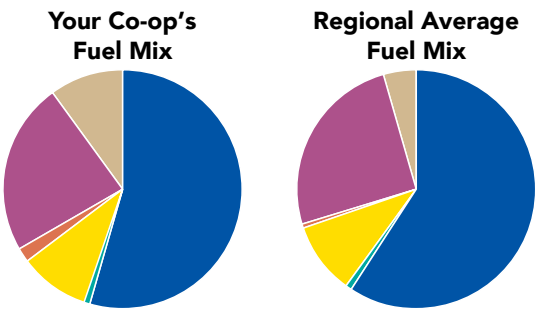
Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Midwest Energy Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/15.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	53.0%	55.0%
Oil	0.5%	0.6%
Gas	16.1%	12.8%
Hydroelectric	1.3%	0.7%
Nuclear	21.6%	25.7%
Renewable Fuels	7.5%	5.2%
<i>Biofuel</i>	0.9%	0.7%
<i>Biomass</i>	0.4%	0.5%
<i>Solar</i>	0.1%	0.1%
<i>Solid Waste Incineration</i>	0.1%	0.0%
<i>Wind</i>	5.6%	3.4%
<i>Wood</i>	0.4%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas; and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix, but does not include renewable energy credits (RECs) that bring the total for renewable fuels above 10%.



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.9	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,637	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.9	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0070	0.0083

* Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the twelve-month period ending 12/31/15.

Midwest Energy Cooperative purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc., which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Country Lines, Your Partner In Communication



For over 35 years, our co-op members have received *Michigan Country Lines* because it is the most effective and economical way to share information with our members. This is our most empowering communication tool to keep members up-to-date about everything going on within their electric co-op. Each issue contains information about our

services, director elections, member meetings, and the staff and management decisions you need to know about as an owner of the co-op.

The magazine also includes legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Michigan Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its important principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members.

The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Michigan Country Lines* on your behalf at an average cost of \$3.91 per year, paid as part of your electric bill. The current magazine cost is 48 cents per copy—less than the cost of a first class stamp. *Michigan Country Lines* is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

Free Recycling For CFLs

Not sure what to do with your compact fluorescent bulbs when they burn out? Let us help!

Midwest Energy Cooperative offers a free recycling program. Just bring your burned-out CFLs in to one of our district service centers, and we will take it from there. The CFLs must be standard to small in size; we cannot accept long, tube style models or bulbs that are cracked or broken.

District service centers:

901 E. State Street, Cassopolis
1610 E. Maumee Street, Adrian
Monday–Friday from 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

59825 S. LaGrave Street, Paw Paw
Monday–Friday from 8 a.m.–1 p.m. and 1:30–4:30 p.m.



Cooperative offices will be closed on Friday, March 25, in observance of the Good Friday holiday. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.

From our family to yours, have a happy and blessed holiday weekend.

Statement of Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the responsible Agency or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Surf's Up!

While most of us prepare for a snow storm by stopping by the gas station or grocery store, one Northern Michigan native is waxing her surf board. Her surf board? Yes, and a few adventurous souls like Ella Skrocki, 21, catch waves on the Great Lakes year-round.

A student at Northern Michigan University majoring in environmental studies, Ella grew up in the small coastal town of Empire where her parents own Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak Shop. Brought up with the heart of a surfer, Ella attended surf camps in California where fellow students found the idea of surfing the Great Lakes far-fetched.

But there's nothing improbable about it, and many seasoned Great Lakes surfers prefer the winter waves because of their size and frequency. Ella caught a few 30 footers during a recent storm, describing the experience as "very rewarding." Put in perspective, the waves on Lake Superior that



sank the Edmund Fitzgerald in 1975 reached heights of up to 35 feet.

Waves big enough to sink a freighter present additional challenges including frostbite, dirtier water, and shorter wave periods (7 seconds between crests versus an average of 20 seconds on the ocean). So, why does Ella do it? "When I find the motivation to get out there during a blizzard and catch that one wave, it's so empowering!"

Sure, winter surfing can be brutal but Ella has the proper gear to stay warm and though she admits her "face will get a little numb" on occasion, a touch of grease on her cheeks takes the sting out of winter's icy chill.

If surfing the Great Lakes sounds like an activity worth exploring, Michigan's surfing community is a great place to start. A tight-knit group, they are happy to offer encouragement, tips and lessons. And while we're grumbling during the next



Jack O'Malley

winter storm warning, a small contingent of extreme sports enthusiasts will be gearing up for a wave even the most seasoned ocean surfer would be stoked to catch.

Visit Sleeping Bear Surf and Kayak Shop at sbsurfandkayak.com. ■



<<< Where In Michigan Is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **March 18** 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 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.



January Photo

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the January 2016 issue is John Stocki, a Cherryland Electric co-op member who correctly identified the photo as the Marilla Museum and Pioneer Place.





AMERICAN METAL ROOFS Customer Stories...



“It was a great experience...”

Sharon Somers is talking about her roof. Yes, her roof.

And shouldn't the purchase and installation of every new roof be a great experience? Unfortunately, for many homeowners it's not.

That's why Frank Farmer started American Metal Roofs back in 2000. After more than 10 years in the home improvement business, he knew the winning formula. If he could combine a superior product with a well-thought-out installation process and outstanding customer service, he knew that homeowners would flock to do business with him.

Fifteen years and over 3,000 roofs later, American Metal Roofs is still creating great roofing experiences all over the state of Michigan. Permanent, beautiful and guaranteed, our roofs offer you peace-of-mind not available with a temporary roofing solution. Whether in one of our showrooms, on our website or talking with one of our experts, we invite you to look into an American Metal Roof for your home.

It's a great experience.

VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS:

FLINT - 6140 Taylor Drive • CHARLOTTE - 1875 Lansing Road

Call Today! 844.638.2576 844.METAL.ROOFS

Read More Customer Stories and Watch the Video at:
AmericanMetalRoofs.com
See Dozens of Pictures • Enter to Win a Metal Roof • Request a Quote



Keep Our Expanded Crews Busy This Month-
Save \$125.00 per square on Designer Metal Shingles,
Standing Seam Metal Roofs, Pole Barn Roofs, and Agricultural Roofs!
Give us some flexibility on the installation date and we will give you an additional \$1,000 off your order.



ENERGY COOPERATIVE

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

TeamMidwest.com

#UtilityoftheFuture

See page 4 for more information