

Thumb Electric Cooperative

March/April 2016

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LIVES

Art
on
Ice



Plus!

Member Regulation Is
Opportunity For Change

Be A Shutterbug–New Photo Contest

April 11 Is National Lineman
Appreciation Day



**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

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(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

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S & J Htg & Clg
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geothermalservices.com
ofmichigan.com

Grand Rapids

Total Comfort
Resource, LLC
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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

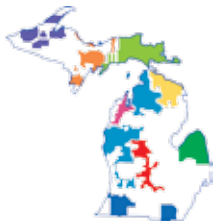
Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000
watergeofurnace.com

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



waterfurnace.com/Credit

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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

March 2016
Vol. 36, No. 3

Executive 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.

Cover photo by Dre Photography

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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:

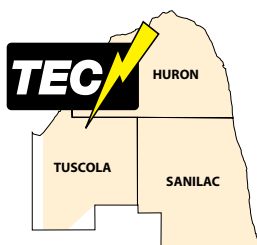
If you could be any age for a week, what age would that be?

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.



Thumb Electric Cooperative

2231 Main Street
Uby, MI 48475-0157
1-800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571
E-mail: tec@tecmi.coop
www.tecmi.coop

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Dallas Braun, General Manager

PAYMENT STATIONS

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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

Thumb Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Opportunity for Change—Member Regulation



Dallas Braun
General Manager

Your cooperative has an opportunity to go back to its original roots and remove a layer of bureaucracy that currently exists between the member-owners and the cooperative's operation. Let's take a look at the past, the present, and the future.

Electric cooperatives were organized in the 1930s to provide power to rural areas. Thumb Electric Cooperative began its history in 1937 by signing up over 5,000 farmers to become the first members of the cooperative.

From the beginning, Thumb Electric was owned by those it served and for nearly 30 years was also successfully regulated by that same membership. The co-op board of directors, elected by the members, made the decisions about rates and charges, billing practices, service standards, and other issues.

In 1965, after years of investor-owned utilities taking customers from co-ops, Michigan co-ops sought "protection" from the state. In exchange for "territorial protection" by the Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC), the co-ops agreed to allow the MPSC to regulate all of their business. This is still the case for your cooperative today.

A change in Michigan law makes it possible for a board vote to remove this layer of bureaucracy. In 2008, the Michigan Legislature unanimously passed and the governor signed into law the "Electric Cooperative Member-Regulation Act," or Public Act 167. This law allows not-for-profit boards of directors to establish their own rates, charges, accounting standards, billing practices, and terms and conditions of service, while the MPSC continues to retain jurisdiction over safety, interconnection, code of conduct, customer choice, territorial service area, distribution standards, and quality of service.

Electric co-ops in most states are already member-regulated, with only 12 states choosing to rate-regulate co-ops. Member-regulated co-ops are similar to more than 40 Michigan municipal utilities, like Croswell and Sebawaing, that are not rate-regulated by the MPSC for electric service (or water or sewer); cities and villages establish their own utility rates and charges via democratically elected leaders.

Your board of directors is carefully looking at the possibility of becoming member-regulated. If it becomes member-regulated, Thumb Electric expects to employ the same common sense business solutions and rate-setting methods it does today, but without the expense and delay of obtaining approval by the MPSC.

The idea of "member regulation" will be a common discussion point in 2016 and we look forward to gathering input from you, our members, on this important matter. Please contact any board member or myself with your questions, concerns or comments. Keep reading *Country Lines* for additional information on member regulation, as well as information on upcoming dates for member district meetings and the annual meeting. ■

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 Thumb Electric 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, since this work is resulting in fewer outages and shorter duration on outages that do occur.

Priorities will continue to be historically problematic circuits, followed by overgrown circuits, 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 occasionally, 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 your 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 fellow Thumb Electric Co-op 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 in the board of directors election. As always, there will be entertainment for the kids, such as balloons, face painting, pony rides and bucket truck rides. ■

THUMB ELECTRIC

Energy Optimization Rebate Program

Energy Star Rebate	For Energy Star appliances, LED bulbs and fixtures, Energy Star televisions, and much more.
In-Home Energy Audit	Get knowledge on the energy usage of your home and some free energy saving items, as well!
HVAC Rebates	Installing a new furnace or AC system? Certain energy efficient upgrades qualify for incentive dollars.
Appliance Recycling	Got an old refrigerator or freezer eating up your energy budget? Have it recycled and get cash back. *Window AC & dehumidifiers qualify under certain conditions.

Agribusiness and Commercial programs also available.

Call 989-658-8571 or 1-800-327-0166, or visit our website tecni.coop today to learn specific details.

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.

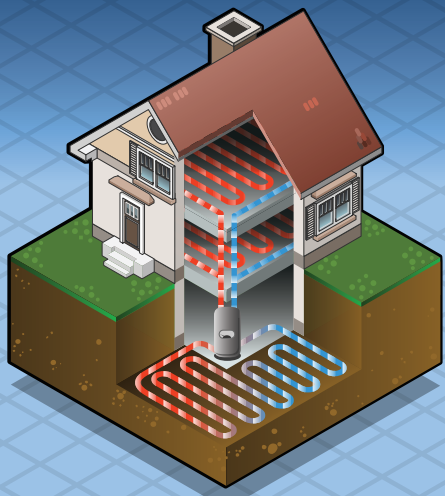
For more information and member contractors in your area, visit the Geothermal Exchange website, geoexchange.org. ■

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.





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. ■



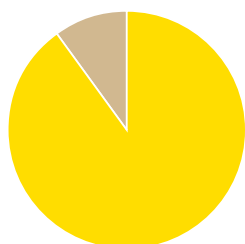
Fuel Mix Report

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

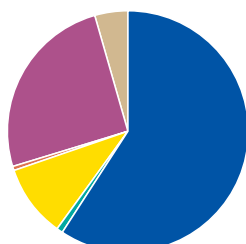
COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	0%	59.4%
Oil	0%	0.6%
Gas	90%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	0%	0.6%
Nuclear	0%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	10%	4.2%
Biofuel	0%	0.5%
Biomass	10%	0.5%
Solar	0%	0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0%	0%
Wind	0%	2.7%
Wood	0%	0.5%

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Average Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	0.25	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	897	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	0.23	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0	0.0083

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

The fuel mix data presented by Thumb Electric is the data from CMS Energy which supplies nearly all of Thumb Electric's purchased power.

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 (MECA) in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

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.

Shutterbugs Share 'Winter Fun' Photos



There's A Story In Every Photo

Thumb Electric invites members to share their amazing photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*. Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **"Saluting Our Armed Forces,"** due **March 25** for the May/June issue, and **"All About Michigan,"** due **May 25** for the July/August issue.

Details and instructions for photo submission—including rules, topic list, publication date, and submission deadlines—can be found at <http://bit.ly/1JX5AfH>. We look forward to seeing your best photos!

Remember <http://bit.ly/1JX5AfH> to submit

1. The Lucy Hill Natural Luge Track outside Negaunee, MI. It is the country's only natural luge track and has hosted local, national, and North American Continental competitions. An international World Cup luge competition was held at this track in 1995 and one will be held here in 2017. The public can slide on this track on weekends with all necessary equipment and instruction provided by the U.P. Luge Club. *Photo by John Porter, a national luge coach and international luge competition judge for 25 years.*
2. Brothers, Jack and Maximus, playing in their winter fort. *Photo by Jeanne Wolf*
3. Angie and daughter, Abby, out for a morning snowshoe walk. *Photo by Wayne Brown*
4. Adam Granger kiteboarding on Long Lake.

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.

Metering and Service Equipment

Thumb Electric Cooperative is responsible for repairs to the meter itself. We are also responsible for the service drop, which is the line either above ground or underground running from the utility pole to your home or commercial facility. You are responsible for all other equipment at the meter location, including the service entrance cable. Contact a licensed electrician to complete any repairs that are your responsibility.

METER EQUIPMENT

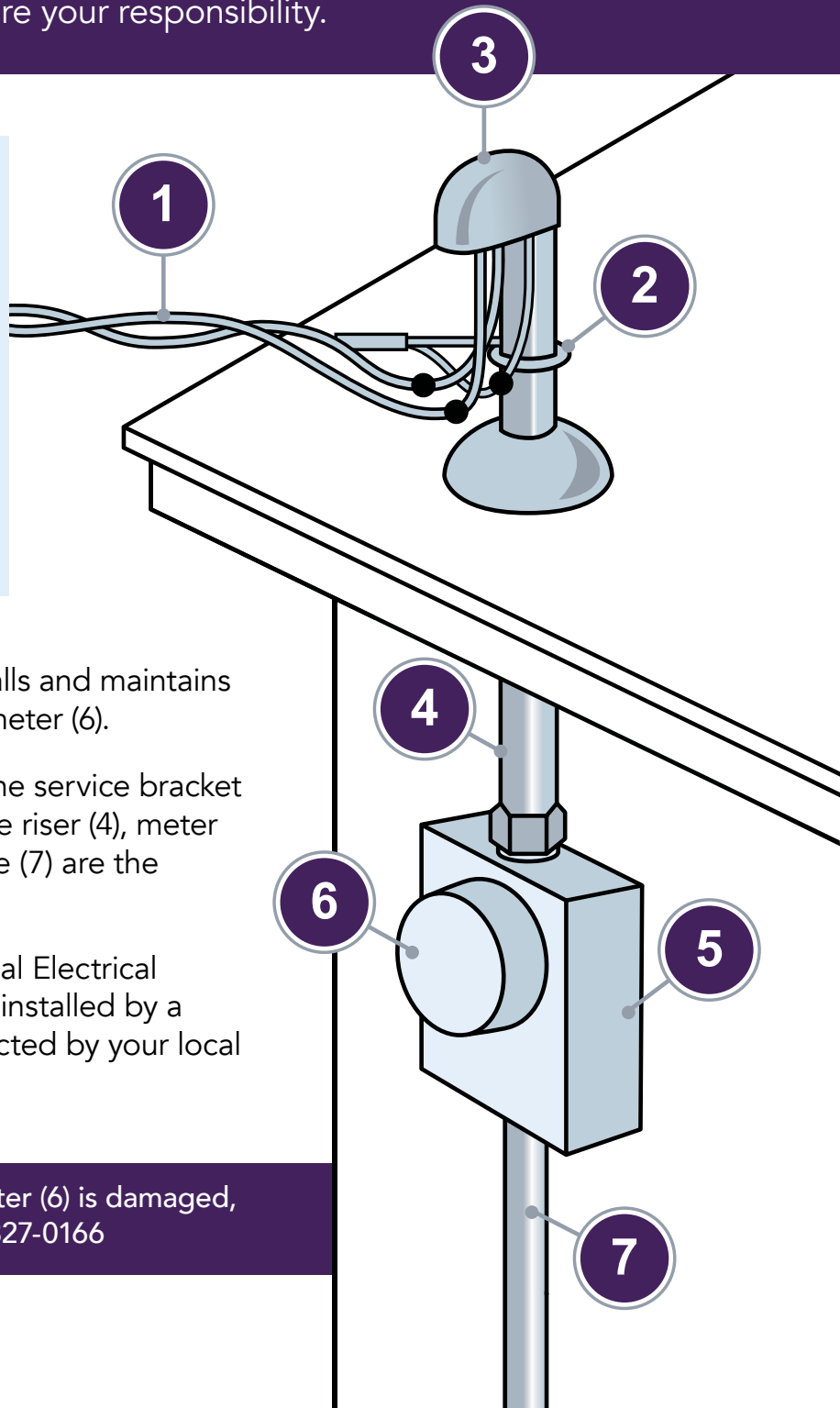
- 1** Service Line
- 2** Service Bracket or Hook
- 3** Weather Head
- 4** Pipe Riser
- 5** Meter Can
- 6** Electric Meter
- 7** Service Entrance Cable

Thumb Electric Cooperative installs and maintains your service line (1) and electric meter (6).

Installation and maintenance of the service bracket or hook (2), weather head (3), pipe riser (4), meter can (5) and service entrance cable (7) are the member's responsibility.

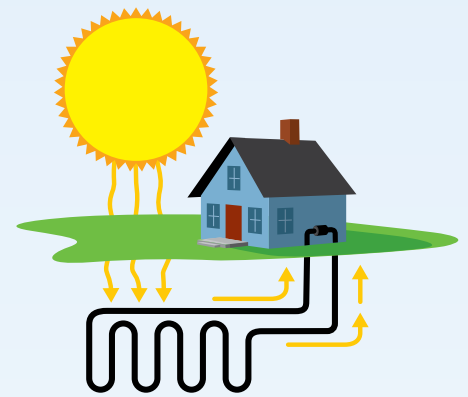
These items fall under the National Electrical Code and by regulation must be installed by a licensed contractor and be inspected by your local inspection authority.

If your service line (1) or electric meter (6) is damaged, please call (989) 658-8571 or (800) 327-0166



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
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Kowaleski Heating & Cooling, LLC

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989-428-3371

Kulek Heating & Air Conditioning

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Kundinger & Kroll

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989-883-2770

Lakeshore Improvements Plumbing & Heating

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989-864-3833

Michigan Energy Services

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888-339-7700

NRG Control

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989-670-2543

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989-823-2341

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Thumb Cooling & Heating

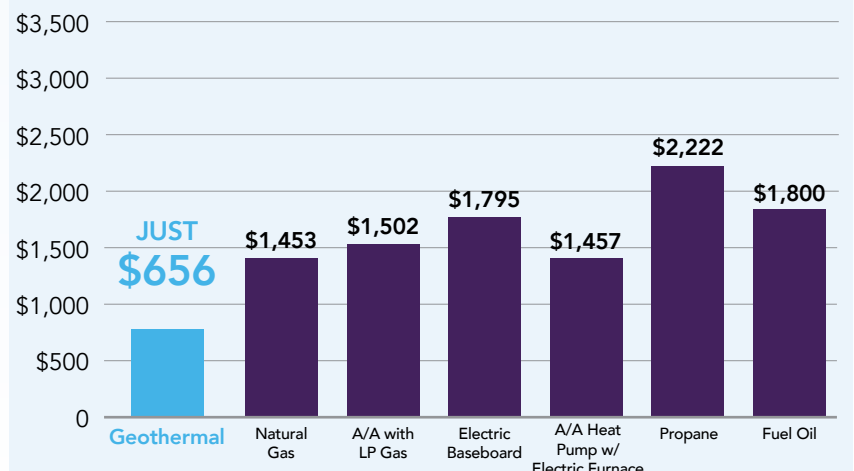
5599 Pochert Rd., Port Hope, MI 48468
989-428-4948

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 \$1.60/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.)



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



Career Opportunities Are Sky High For Utility Tech Graduates

Not everyone has the courage or desire to strap on the gear and climb a 40-foot power pole. But for those who do, the elevated views—and career opportunities—are spectacular! Alpena Community College's (ACC) utility technology programs are a great way to get the training needed to get a start in the industry.

Good job opportunities are expected in the next five years. Highly skilled workers with apprenticeship training or a two-year associate's degree in telecommunications, electronics, or electricity should have the best job opportunities. Employment opportunities should be particularly good for electrical power line installers and repairers, as many current workers in this field are expected to retire.

"The utilities that the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) safety team visit are reporting that it has become increasingly difficult to find journeyman lineworkers. Some have decided to hire their own apprentices that are coming out of

apprentice schools," notes Joe McElroy, director of safety & loss control for MECA. "The Michigan Energy Development Workforce Consortium has stated that Michigan will need over 500 new lineworkers in Michigan by 2020," McElroy adds.

Started in 1990, ACC's one-year utility technician vocational certificate focuses on practical theory and hands-on training using actual equipment and materials in classroom, laboratory, and



field settings. An AAS degree can be earned by completing an additional 24 credit hours of general education and program-related courses. Both programs are designed to prepare students to construct, install and repair electrical distribution, telephone, and CATV transmission systems. It also helps prepare students to take the Michigan commercial driver's license test.

As a fun application of their studies, ACC students regularly compete in lineworker's rodeos across the U.S. In May 2015, nine ACC students participated in the 13th Annual College Lineman Rodeo in Kansas City, KS. One of the two ACC teams took first place overall, along with first place finishes several events. In the individual events, ACC students took four of the top 10 lineworker positions.



This year, ACC is hosting the 2016 College Lineman Rodeo, April 29, on the Alpena Campus. The public is invited to attend.

Another great development in the Utility Tech area is the debut of ACC's Electrical Systems Technology (EST) Bachelor's of Science degree starting this fall. The four-year EST program will train individuals to install, modify, maintain, troubleshoot and perform functional tests on electrical grid systems equipment for employment in the fields of electric distribution, transmission and generation. This includes grounding grids, power transformers, circuit breakers, lightning arresters, switches, and various protective relay equipment, including electromechanical and microprocessor-based hardware.

Applications are being taken right now for fall semester 2016! Contact ACC's admissions office at 989-358-7339 to learn more or visit alpenacc.edu. ■



Help Us Celebrate National Lineman Day

**Powering your life through rain, sleet
and snow over 2.5 million miles of line.**

As the "first responders" of the electric co-op family, lineworkers perform around-the-clock in dangerous conditions and challenging situations to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety. That's why electric co-ops have designated a National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year, April 11 is the day we honor the hard-working men and women who keep the lights on.

Resolutions adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) explain it best:

"Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on;

Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure;

Whereas there would be no electric co-ops without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of lineworkers."

"Electric lineworkers do not often receive the recognition they deserve," says Thumb Electric general manager, Dallas Braun. "They work all hours of the day, often in hazardous conditions far from their families, going above and beyond to restore power to their communities. Our lineworkers, and those across the nation, truly deserve this special day of recognition."

Thumb Electric invites you, as a co-op member, to take a moment to "thank a lineworker" for the job they do and show support for those who help light our lives. ■

**April 11, 2016, is National
Lineman Appreciation Day.
#ThankALineman**

Photo courtesy—Midwest Energy Cooperative

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.

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