

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

## Casting A Line

*With Kevin VanDam*

**Plus!**

Prizes, Food And Fun At  
The Annual Meeting In June!

Nominate Members For  
'Good Neighbor Award'

The Cooperative Difference –  
Operating At Cost



## Both of these devices create hot air but which uses less power?



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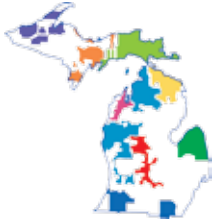
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
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**Change of Address:**

Please notify your electric cooperative.  
See page 4 for contact information.

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## IN YOUR WORDS

Last month, we asked electric co-op members a question:

**If you had to be trapped in a TV show for a month, which would you choose?**

Thank you for all the responses. Here are some of your answers...

**Hands down 'Andy of Mayberry' HAPPY, SAD, FUNNY, LOVE, just a lot of good old life lessons in this good old TV show.**

**The original 'Batman' series with Adam West. He never loses a fight, has an awesome car, and the ultimate man cave.**

**The 'Waltons' TV show.**

Our new Question of the Month is:

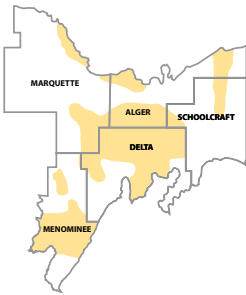
**If you could ask your future self one question, what would it be?**

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by June 1.

### ON THE COVER\*

Kevin VanDam, often called simply, "KVD," is a professional bass fisherman from Kalamazoo, MI. In the world of professional bass fishing, KVD is at the pinnacle, and arguably the best in the world.

*\*Some co-op editions have a different cover. Photo-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.*



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## Office Hours

M–F, 8 a.m.–4 p.m. (ET)

*Alger Delta Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

**algerdelta.com**

# The Culture Of Safety At Alger Delta



**Tom Harrell**  
Chief Executive  
Officer

**M**ay is National Electrical Safety Month and a good time for Alger Delta members to learn about how we address safety at your co-op.

Until 2007, co-ops were experiencing an increase in the number of “lost-time” accidents, which are accidents that result in an employee missing time at work. Lost-time accidents can range from a sprain to the ultimate tragedy of a work place fatality.

This increase caused our insurance company, Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, to initiate a nationwide campaign to focus on the “Culture of Safety.” The campaign was designed to increase awareness of all work-related safety practices at electric co-ops.

Federated brought together co-op CEOs, operations supervisors, safety directors and lineworkers to better understand how each group viewed safety. These groups helped identify differences in perceptions about safety and initiated conversations and evaluations of how to raise awareness and improve local safety cultures. One result is the “Speak Up, Listen Up” program, which empowers any employee who sees an unsafe situation to *speak up* and encourages everyone to *listen up* to their concerns. The results have been dramatic, with more than a 30 percent decline in the number of accidents over the past nine years.

Thankfully, Alger Delta has a good safety record, overall. Your co-op instills a “Culture of Safety” by making time for regular safety meetings, offering plenty of training opportunities for employees, and making sure they have the right tools, protective equipment and skills to do their jobs safely.

Members have a role to play, too. Anytime you see a potentially dangerous situation—like a wire on the ground, a tree leaning or laying on the lines, a cracked or broken pole, or anything that looks unusual—you should report it to your co-op.

The Culture of Safety program demonstrates that if we are all intentional about our actions, we can change the culture in our organizations. The same is true for our families, teams and any groups we may belong to. Improving our safety culture also signifies that we care about our employees, our members, and the communities we serve.

Alger Delta Cooperative has the best business model because it puts you, the member-owner, at the center of our efforts. We enjoy being your safe, reliable and affordable electricity provider. ■

# Nominate An Alger Delta Member For 'Good Member Award'

**A**lger Delta Cooperative would like to honor three of its members with its prestigious "Good Member Award." These awards recognize good members for their outstanding contributions, volunteer service and commitments to the co-op principle of "Concern for Community."

Alger Delta wants to recognize and support members who have given their time and service to a worthy cause. We will honor their Concern for Community by donating \$100 to a local organization or charity of their choosing. The winners of the "Good Member Award" will be announced at the June 18 annual meeting.

You can nominate an Alger Delta member who you believe is deserving of consideration for this award. Members must be nominated by someone other than themselves, and must be a member of Alger Delta Cooperative. You can complete and submit the form online. If you prefer to complete a paper form, call one of our member service representatives at 906-428-4141 and a form will be mailed to you.

Don't wait, please nominate a deserving member today! ■

## Prizes, Food And Fun At The Annual Meeting June 18

**I**t is that time of the year for another exciting Annual Meeting for Alger Delta Electric members. Similar to last year, we will again have a bounce house, face painting, prize drawings every 20 minutes, good food and of course, a report on the state of the cooperative. Following all that, you will have a chance to win one of nine incredible grand prizes. Don't miss out, there will be something for everyone to enjoy. Grand Prizes add up to \$4,000 in value and are being underwritten by WPPI Energy, Alger Delta's power supplier.

### NOTICE OF THE ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MEMBERS OF THE ALGER DELTA COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION

Pursuant to the Bylaws, notice is hereby given that the Annual Meeting of the members of the Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association will be held on Saturday, June 18, 2016, in the Miracle of Life Building at the Upper Peninsula State Fairgrounds; 2401 12th Ave. North, Escanaba, MI. The Annual Meeting shall commence at 11 a.m. Eastern Time. The business portion of the Annual Meeting shall be called to order at 1 p.m. Eastern Time and actions shall be taken on the following matters:

1. Seating of elected directors
2. Presentation and consideration of reports
3. New business

Dated at Gladstone, Michigan this 20th day of April, 2016.



Our Annual Meetings are about showing appreciation to you, our member, for your loyalty and support. So, please join us for an afternoon of free food and fun with your family and ours! ■



# Clean Power Plan Update



**Craig Borr, CEO**  
Michigan Electric  
Cooperative  
Association

**A**s a result of a Feb. 9 ruling by the U.S. Supreme Court, the State of Michigan has stopped efforts on its development of a plan to meet the demands of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan (CPP). The CPP is a federal regulatory action that requires states to reduce carbon emissions from power plants by approximately 30 percent by 2030.

## What Does This Mean?

The Supreme Court's "stay" of the CPP means that it has no legal effect while the courts are reviewing the carbon reduction rules to determine whether they are lawful. During this time, the EPA cannot enforce any of the CPP deadlines or requirements. While the granting of a "stay" does not guarantee victory for opponents of the plan, it greatly increases the odds of the courts ultimately determining that the CPP is unlawful.

For the past several months, Michigan's electric cooperatives were engaged with the State of Michigan in developing an implementation plan that would have, prior to the Supreme Court ruling, had Michigan on a trajectory of submitting an initial carbon reduction plan to the EPA this fall. Those development efforts have now been suspended.

The Court's ruling means that "certainty" for our state and its electric utilities may not be forthcoming until sometime in 2018—a rather ominous sign, given the fact that several of Michigan's old and dirty coal-fired power plants will be retired in the next three to five years by companies like Detroit Edison, the Michigan South Central Power Agency, and the Lansing

Board of Water & Light. At present, just two cleaner, natural gas-fired power plants are under construction in our state—one in Holland by the City of Holland and one near Gaylord by Wolverine Power Cooperative.

This recent court action is a keen reminder of the statement uttered by former U.S. Rep. John Dingell, the architect of the current U.S. Clean Air Act, when commenting about the EPA's regulation of carbon via rulemaking rather than legislation enacted by Congress. Dingell said that the EPA's regulation of carbon would be "a glorious mess." Sadly, I believe Mr. Dingell was right. It's the job of the U.S. Congress to regulate carbon emissions, not a federal regulatory agency led by political appointees.

## Michigan Co-ops Well Positioned With Renewable Energy

The other ironic twist is that Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, are very well positioned to potentially benefit from new carbon rules. As our state's unquestioned leaders in renewable energy, the State of Michigan and the cooperatives could be "economic winners" from implementation of the current CPP.

This is due to the fact that by 2017 Michigan's electric co-ops will serve nearly 1,000 megawatts of electrical load and have nearly 400 megawatts of renewable energy in our power supply basket to serve that load. My math says that puts Michigan's electric cooperatives, as a group, at nearly 40 percent renewables, with the state standard currently at 10 percent.

That's called leadership. ■



# For Safe Digging, Call Miss DIG

**M**ISS DIG has been the first step in utility damage prevention and excavation safety in Michigan for over 45 years. MISS DIG is a nonprofit organization funded by utility owners and municipalities, and serves as a single point of contact for those performing excavation anywhere in the state.

MISS DIG is available around the clock, 365 days a year, so whether it's the excavation of a new housing development, or something as simple as installing a new mailbox, contacting MISS DIG is a fast and free way to start your project.

Contact MISS DIG by dialing 811, or online via [missdig.org](http://missdig.org), three business days prior to beginning work. You will be asked questions regarding your project such as, location, date, work being performed, and more. That information will be passed on to utility owners in the area who will locate and mark the underground lines on your work site or yard. They will also provide information



on how they've handled your request through MISS DIG's Positive Response program. After three days have passed and the marks are laid, you are free to begin with your project, provided you respect the marks and work carefully around them. If a question about your request or the marks comes up, MISS DIG is ready to assist.

So be smart, be safe, and know what's below. Contact MISS DIG before you dig.

For more information about MISS DIG or utility damage prevention, please visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org). ■

## ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

**For your safety and for the protection of underground utility lines, always follow these steps before starting any digging project.**

1. Contact MISS DIG at 811 or [missdig.org](http://missdig.org)
2. Wait 3 days for utility owners to mark their lines
3. Respect the marks
4. Dig with care



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**

visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org) for more information



# Stay Cool And Save Energy This Summer

**G**orgeous summer days filled with swimming, popsicles and picnics are all within reach! But along with all the wonderful things summer brings comes the costly effort of keeping our homes cool and comfortable. Prepare your home for the summer heat and save energy while earning cash incentives from the Energy Optimization (EO) program.

**1. A/C tune-up:** Ensure your central A/C runs as efficiently as possible by scheduling a tune-up. A tune-up can help reduce energy usage, prevent costly breakdowns, and allow you and your family to enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air. **EO program cash incentive: \$50**

**2. New central A/C or air-source heat pump system:** If your central A/C system is more than 20 years old, it's time to upgrade. Install a new ENERGY STAR® central A/C system and save up to 20 percent in cooling costs annually, or opt for an air-source heat pump system to save even more. **EO program cash incentive: \$250-\$500**

**3. New thermostat:** Stop wasting energy by running the A/C excessively while you're sleeping or away.

Standard programmable, Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats allow for the customization of daily schedules with varying temperature settings. Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats allow users to remotely program and adjust temperatures, while smart thermostats can program themselves after "learning" your behaviors. **EO program cash incentive:** \$20 for standard programmable; \$100 for Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats

## Combo Cash Incentives Now Available!

Save even more when you purchase a combination of qualifying energy-saving equipment:

Cash Incentive	Equipment	Bonus Incentive	Maximum Total Incentive
HVAC Combo Bonus	New furnace + central A/C unit	\$100	\$800
Smart HVAC Combo Bonus	New furnace + central A/C unit + Wi-Fi enabled or smart thermostat	\$150	\$950

Visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or call 877-296-4319 for additional energy-saving information and rebates. ■



## Get your ducks in a row.

Summer is almost here, which means it's time to prepare your home for the cooling season! Schedule a tune-up for your central A/C today in order to:

- Save energy
- Prevent costly breakdowns
- Enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air

**ENERGY TIP:** Act now to receive a \$50 cash incentive toward a central A/C tune-up!

**ONLINE:** [michigan-energy.org](http://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](http://michigan-energy.org).



# Saluting Our Armed Forces Photo Gallery



## Photo Fun

Alger Delta invites members to share their amazing photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*.

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **"All About Michigan,"** due **May 25** for the July/August issue and **"Sports/Outdoor Fun,"** due **July 25** for the September 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 photos!

1. We taught our son, Conner, from an early age that you place your hand on your heart when you hear the National Anthem or say the Pledge of Allegiance. When he was handed this flag on Independence Day, he knew exactly what to do. *Photo by Elsa Green*
2. A big "Thank You" to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces! *Photo by Ted Neuner*
3. This patriotic little one is waiting for daddy. *Photo by Wendy West*
4. Father and son marched in a Veteran's Day parade. James received his Eagle Scout status and had the privilege of marching with his dad, Glenn, who is a physician in the IN Air National Guard. *Photo by Theresa Mandeville*
5. "In Memoriam." *Photo by Aubrey Kitzmiller*

# SNACKS & APPETIZERS

Party-worthy recipes for your next gathering.

## Bacon Wrapped Water Chestnuts

Connie Bowman, Manistee

- 1 c. ketchup
- 1 c. brown sugar
- 1 lb. bacon, cut into thirds
- 2 small cans whole water chestnuts

Preheat oven to 350°. Mix together ketchup and brown sugar. Wrap ½ piece of bacon around each chestnut. Place in a 9x13 pan. Pour ketchup mixture over wrapped bacon/chestnuts. Bake at 350° for 45 minutes.

Photos—831 Creative

## Jalapeno Popper Boats (Pictured)

Ted Herrst, Mancelona

- 25 medium, fresh jalapeño peppers\*
- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 1 pkg. bacon bits
- 3 c. finely shredded cheddar cheese
- 2 t. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 T. olive oil
- ¼ c. cornmeal

Preheat oven to 400°. Spread olive oil evenly over a cookie sheet. Sprinkle cornmeal evenly over cookie sheet. Cut jalapeño peppers in half lengthwise; remove all seeds and membranes. In a small bowl, beat cream cheese, bacon, Worcestershire sauce, and 2 cups cheddar cheese until smooth. Spoon 2 teaspoons of mixture into each jalapeño half, and place on the oiled cookie sheet, then roll each jalapeño lightly in cornmeal. Top with remaining cheese. Bake for 5–10 minutes or until cheese is melted. Serve warm. Optional: For milder peppers, after cutting, boil peppers in water for 2–5 minutes. Drain, rinse and allow to cool.

\*Wear plastic gloves while working with jalapeño peppers; DO NOT touch face, especially eyes.



## Buffalo Chicken Dip

Patsy Dalrymple, Lake Isabella

- 8 oz. cream cheese, softened
- 10 oz. can chicken breast, drained
- ¼ c. hot sauce
- ½ bottle blue cheese dressing
- 8 oz. pkg. sharp cheddar cheese, crumbled

Mix all ingredients together and place in microwave. Cook 1 minute at a time until all cheese is melted (you can also use a mini crock pot). Serve warm on crackers.





Gather Round

# The Co-op Kitchen Table

A **NEW** and **EXCLUSIVE** online cooking community for our electric co-op members.

**MI CO-OP KITCHEN** is a place to share your recipes and food ideas with lots of other like-minded members. You will also get a chance to win awesome prizes.

In every *Country Lines* issue, members can submit recipes online for a chance to win a **\$50** electric bill credit. While that's pretty cool by itself, there's more! We will print the winning recipe in *Country Lines* (complete with a professional photo of the dish), and create an instructional "how to" video for [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com).

Ready to pull up a seat?

**GREAT!** Go to [MICOOPKITCHEN.COM](http://MICOOPKITCHEN.COM) and register.

Please submit your favorite "Dessert" recipes by July 1.

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

[micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com)







# The Cooperative Difference – Operating At Cost

**E**lectric cooperatives aren't like other utilities—you, as a consumer and a member, own a portion of the business. One benefit of that membership involves the allocation of margins, in the form of capital credits. Electric co-ops operate at cost—collecting enough revenue to run and expand the business, but with no need to raise rates to generate profits for distant shareholders. Whatever money, or margin, remains at the end of each fiscal year is assigned, or allocated, back to you and other members as capital credits. In future years and when the co-op's financial position permits, the co-op retires, or pays, the capital credits to members in the form of cash or as a bill credit.

Alger Delta has retired \$893,490 in capital credits to members since its founding. Of that amount, \$752,036 (84 percent) was retired in 2014 and 2015. "Retiring capital credits is one of the things that sets cooperatives apart and demonstrates that members have an economic role in the business," says Tom Harrell, Alger Delta's CEO.

Nationally, in 2014, electric cooperatives retired \$974 million in capital credits to current and former members. Since 1988, co-ops have retired \$12.8 billion, based on data from the Federal Rural Utilities Service and the National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC), the premier private market lender to electric cooperatives.

"The whole concept of capital credits is one of the most important and least understood elements of the cooperative business model," Harrell explains. "Allocating and retiring patronage capital helps distinguish cooperatives. People may not understand the model, but they definitely understand getting a check in the mail. And, this

helps support our communities by putting money back into the local economy—and into the pockets of those we serve. It makes our business model special.”

Members provide some of the capital necessary to operate and expand the business when the cooperative holds on to, or retains, the members’ capital to cover some of the operating costs. Members get a credit for what is retained and that’s where the term “capital credits” originates. Alger Delta uses that capital to cover some of its normal operating costs. This action decreases the need to raise rates and helps reduce the amount of borrowed money to pay for the infrastructure. After a number of years, if financial conditions permit, Alger Delta retires, or pays back, a set amount of that capital. Member-owners of the cooperative are annually allocated capital credits based on the amount of electricity they consume during each year.

“Margins earned from electric revenues are the only real source of equity for not-for-profit electric cooperatives,” says Rich Laroche, CFC senior vice president of corporate relations. “Investors in CFC look to the underlying financial strength of our member electric co-ops—and strong and consistent equity levels are one key aspect of financial strength. So, it’s essential for a co-op to maintain the right balance between retiring capital credits to members and retaining sufficient equity on its balance sheet. Co-ops do a good job of striking that balance,” Laroche adds. “That contributes to CFC’s ability to offer attractive rates on loans to co-ops, which in turn help co-ops keep costs low.”

“Retiring capital credits is just one more way Alger Delta is looking out for you,” says Harrell. ■

## Did You Know?

Electric cooperatives have retired \$12.8 billion to members since 1988—\$974 million in 2014 alone. Because electric co-ops operate at cost, any excess revenues, called margins, are allocated and retired to members in the form of capital credits.

**\$974 million in 2014**  
**\$12 billion since 1988**

Source: National Rural Utilities  
Cooperative Finance Corporation

## A Rewarding Search For Welker’s Lodge Past Owner

“Alger Delta staff has spent several hundred hours researching unclaimed capital credits,” says Alger Delta’s chief financial officer, Amanda Seger. “We want to do everything we can to get the money back in our members’ hands. The first place we start looking is to verify if the member is still alive and if they have children.”

When doing this research, the staff typically uses ancestry.com, the census bureau and local death records. A recent investigation was especially rewarding. Welker’s Lodge and Restaurant in Grand Marais was due a significant capital credit retirement, but the lodge had changed hands many times since inception and the original owners were deceased. Seger began by searching death records, which led her to California resident, Diann Pirlot, the owner’s daughter.

“I spoke to Diane about Welker’s Lodge. Diane took the lodge over from her parents and continued living in Grand Marais for a number of years, before moving to California. She was wonderful to speak with and offered more information about the lodge, restaurant and cabins. We talked about her time living in Grand Marais, and I found out she was also a member we were looking for who had unclaimed capital credits in her own right. She was very thankful we put in the extra work to find her and said she would look at the ‘unclaimed’ list to try to help us find others,” says Seger.

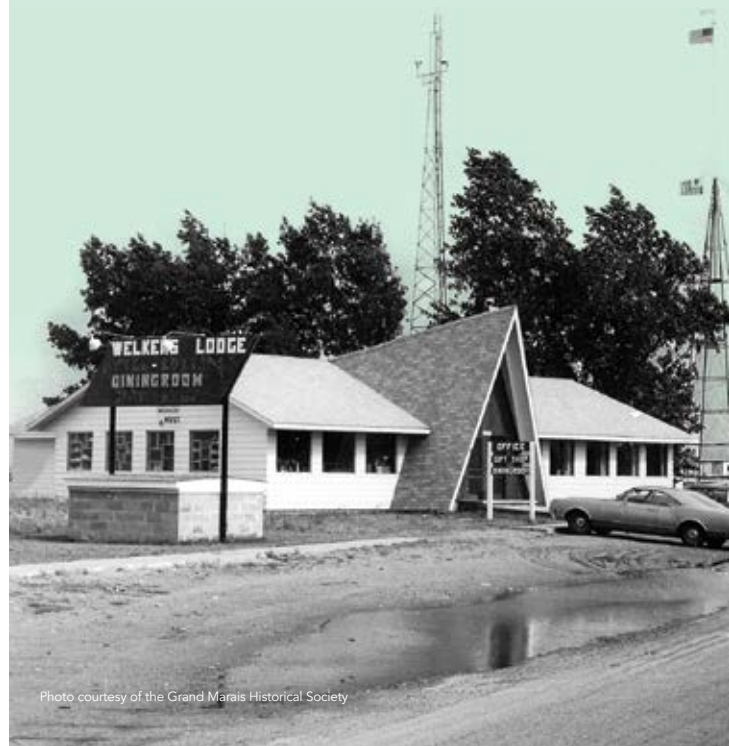


Photo courtesy of the Grand Marais Historical Society





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"That's the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there's a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite."

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# Casting A Line

*With Kevin VanDam*

By Emily Haines Lloyd





**W**hen you're talking to Kevin VanDam you don't get the feeling you're speaking with an internationally recognized angler and arguably the best bass fisherman in the past 20 years. You just feel like you're talking to "Kevin"—the Kalamazoo guy who grew up on the lakes, streams and rivers of southwest Michigan. He sounds like a guy you went to school with, who just happens to travel 250 days a year to compete in bass tournaments and promote the sport he loves.

"Fishing has always been a part of my life. I have a memory of going ice fishing with my dad and I was maybe three years old," VanDam recalls. "So, even when I started competing at the professional level, it took me a long time to think of this as my career. It was just always something I did."

It could be this single-minded and humble mindset that made VanDam the multiple championship winner in professional bass fishing. If you know the sport—you know VanDam. If you thought anglers worked with protractors—let's catch you up. The Bassmaster Classic is the most coveted bass fishing title. In his 263 Bassmaster Classic events—VanDam has won 20, finished second 13 times and landed in the top 10 a remarkable 100 times. He was also the very first Outdoorsman of the Year ESPY award winner, at the ESPN awards in 2002. Not that you can get him to muse on his accolades. VanDam is more likely to brag on his home state when asked why he still lives in the area where he grew up.

"Michigan is home," VanDam says. "I love the four seasons, and my family loves being outdoors. In the summer, you'll find us on the lake boating or fishing. In the winter, I love taking my sons hunting. There's so much diversity in the landscape. Michigan has so much to offer. I can't imagine living anywhere else."

When asked to give up some of his favorite fishing spots in Michigan, VanDam chuckles.

"That's the beauty of Michigan—pretty much everywhere you look there's a lake, river or stream with something willing to bite," he answers. "But I really think the best fishing anywhere is Lake St. Clair on the east side of the state. It's my favorite



tournament location. Having said that—there's nothing like heading up to Traverse City and casting a line."

As VanDam continues his 2016 season of tournaments, sports shows, promotions and product design meetings—you get the feeling his thoughts are always in Michigan—secretly thinking about that next day on the lake with his wife and sons, lazily casting a line without the pressure of a championship title, just a guy named "Kevin" hanging out and having fun. ■

Photos-Seigo Saito, Seven Seas Creation, Inc.



# Perseverance Carves Out Yooper's Place in Dictionary

By Frances Donnelly, *Detroit News* Staff Writer

Opening a package in 2011, an editor at Merriam-Webster slowly realized what it contained—a bribe. What she didn't know: The briber was a county prosecutor.

The parcel contained a keychain, refrigerator magnet and chocolate bar, all bearing the word "Yooper."

For 12 years, package-sender Steve Parks had tried to get Yooper into the dictionary. Clearly, the man was getting desperate.

He was ultimately successful and the word, which means a native or inhabitant of the Upper Peninsula, joined the lexicon last year, ensconced between "yore" and "yoo-hoo."

The way such an unassuming word made the big time, ascending to the premier dictionary of the U.S., is quite a story, residents say. It involves blandishments, false identities, wild tales, Scrabble, and enough perseverance to fill the peninsula.

"It was really quite a ride," said Parks, 60, who now is a district judge in the U.P.'s Delta County.

Residents, past and present, are tickled to be included in such an august tome.

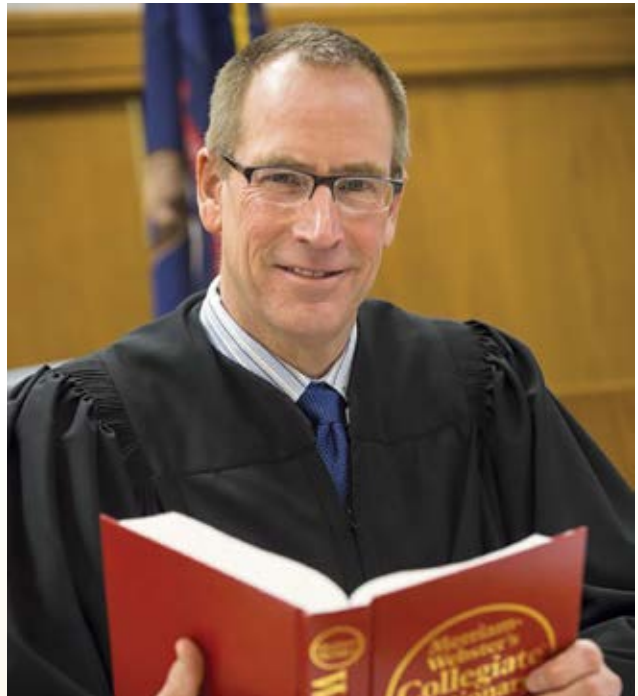
Janet Stupak, a librarian in Springfield, Mass., who grew up in the Upper Peninsula, said she has been teaching co-workers and friends about the word for years. Now she can just point them to the dictionary.

"I'm totally loving this," she said.

The story begins in the U.P., Naubinway, to be exact, where Parks was playing Scrabble in 2002.

He used the word "Yooper" and, after a friend objected, Parks was stunned when he couldn't find it in the dictionary. The term was common in Michigan, he said. Its usage dates to 1977, said lexicographers.

The puckish Parks thought it was an oversight that would be easy enough to fix.



He wrote to Merriam-Webster in 2002 objecting to the absence of Yooper in a dictionary that had swear words and "big words no one uses."

He was told that while Yooper may be popular in Michigan, it wasn't common anywhere else. He wrote again the following year but received the same reply. Try again in five or 10 years, harrumphed the dictionary.

## 'Yooper' Usage Documented

When Parks resumed his campaign in 2010, the Merriam-Webster worker he had dealt with was no longer with the company. His new contact was associate editor, Emily Brewster.

Brewster, who grew up in Pennsylvania and lives in Massachusetts, had never heard of a Yooper.

She searched and found the word in newspapers in Florida, California and New York, and in national magazines *Harper's* and the *New Republic*.

How conservative Yoopers ended up in the liberal *New Republic* sounds like it could be a story in itself.

The word seemed to be shedding its regional bonds and moving toward general discourse, Brewster told Parks. She encouraged him to keep at it.

"It was a good candidate," she said.

Whenever Parks came across usages of the word, he contacted Brewster.

Rush Limbaugh said it on a radio broadcast. Stephen King wrote it in his novel "Duma Key." The Boston Globe used it as a clue in a crossword puzzle, which Parks' mother clipped and mailed to him.

Parks also sent Brewster items with Yooper on them: mug, postcard, T-shirt, more chocolate. He said he wasn't trying to bribe the editor, but did offer to make her an honorary citizen of the Upper Peninsula.

Brewster, who said her work cubicle never looked so good, wasn't sure what to make of the titular title.

"I haven't found a way to cash that in," she chuckled.

Parks regaled Brewster with tall tales of U.P. characters who ate pasties and played mumblety-peg, where one player puts a knife in the ground and the other retrieves it with his mouth.

One Yooper nearly lopped off his leg with a chainsaw. Another dealt with the travails of a backed-up septic tank.

A third, a sarcastic lawyer, told Parks he had as much of a chance of getting Yooper in the dictionary as swimming across Lake Superior.

Parks wrote under pen names, Clayton and then Claymore Parks. Claymore was the dutiful son carrying on the quest of his late father, who was a member of the elite airborne unit, the Super Duper Yooper Troopers.

### **Word Declared Dictionary Worthy**

In 2013 Merriam-Webster's director of defining rendered his judgment: Yooper was a worthy word. It would be in the company's Collegiate Dictionary the following year.

Brewster relayed the good news to Claymore Parks.

One week later Brewster was mildly alarmed to receive a call from a county prosecutor in the U.P.

It was Steve Parks confessing there was no Claymore or Clayton or Clay-anything.

Parks, a private practice lawyer when his quest began in 2002, became a prosecutor in 2005 and district judge last year. He changes jobs as often as *nom de plumes*, but the jobs are real.

"They allowed me to take on a different persona," he said about the pseudonyms.

Yoopers celebrated their entry into the dictionary by holding a ceremony at the U.P. State Fair in Escanaba last year.

Gov. Rick Snyder attended the event, held next to the fairgrounds' Barn Yard Review Stage. Brewster was there, too.

News of the word's inclusion traveled far and wide. Parks' brother-in-law called from California to say it was trending on Facebook, then had to explain what the meaning of "trending on Facebook."

While Parks had fun with his quest, its aim was serious.

An Owosso native who moved to the U.P. in 1985, he's proud to be a Yooper. His dad was one, too.

"The word has meaning to people up here," he said.

The entire peninsula feels like home to him. He loves everything about it: the land and lakes, the hunting and fishing, the distinct identity and culture. Residents in the rural outback are resilient, independent, hard-working and community minded, he said.

While Parks succeeded in getting Yooper into the dictionary, he still can't use it in Scrabble.

As a proper noun, it's ineligible. ■

*Reprinted with permission, The Detroit News.*





# Hug A Lineman

By Jack O'Malley

The lights flicker once, twice. You wait for it. Boom! A crack of lightning illuminates the night sky as thunder simultaneously rolls over your neighborhood, taking the power with it. Most of us start scrambling for flashlights, candles and the battery operated radio. But across town, a lineman grabs his gear in preparation for what could be a long night of restoring electricity.

I recently visited with a line crew from Cherryland Electric Cooperative. Dustin Ockert, a journeyman lineman, talked about those days and nights when the power goes out. "Leaving my family at home with no power can be stressful. They're home in the dark without me and I'm out working to get the lights back on." However, it's work that Dustin finds enjoyable, despite its risks.

Every day, Dustin and his crew face a number of occupational hazards, including high-voltage contact, confined spaces, and challenging weather conditions, often while working at great heights. Deceptively simple-looking, power lines are connected by a complex arrangement of small parts that crews learn to manipulate while wearing heavy protective gloves. Handling up to 7,200 volts of electricity at any given moment, losing concentration for even a second could result in serious injury. When asked what wind speed would prevent him from taking the bucket up, Dustin confidently replied, "That hasn't happened yet!"

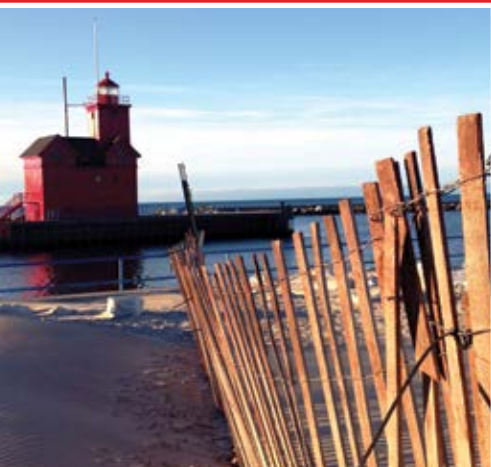


Fortunately for Dustin and his crew, most days are quiet and filled with routine maintenance work and installations. Safety remains the crew's first priority, even on normal days. But all concerns for family and safety aside, Dustin loves his job. During an outage, "The world is dark when we get where we're going and by the time we leave, the lights are back on. That's the glory of our job."

If you're like me you take your power for granted, forgetting the men and women who work in the dark, rain, wind and snow, ensuring that we can turn the lights on each morning. So take a minute, thank your local linemen, and do as Dustin suggests the next time you see his crew pulling up, "Stand back and watch what happens!" ■

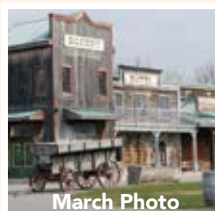


Jack O'Malley



## «« Where In Michigan Is This?

Every co-op member who identifies the correct location of the photo at left by **June 18** will be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 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.



March Photo

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the March 2016 issue is Norman Schultz, a Great Lakes Energy co-op member who correctly identified the photo as the Back Forty Ranch at the Double JJ Resort in Rothbury, MI.

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# **ALGER DELTA COOPERATIVE'S ANNUAL MEETING**

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