

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

Casting A Line

With Kevin VanDam

Plus!

Cathy Foster Retires After 38 Years

Board Approves Capital Credit Refund

Meet Your Board Candidates

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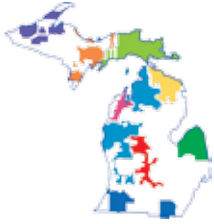
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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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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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:

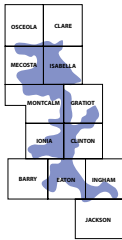
If you could ask your future self one question, what would it be?

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.*



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue
Blanchard MI 49310
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue
Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232

Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333
(24 hours for emergency calls)

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E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

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Find us on Facebook.

facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Democracy Depends On You



Mark Kappler
General Manager

This is a great year to be part of a democracy.

Not the democracy that votes for seats in Lansing or Washington, D.C., or even in your township, city or county, but a working democracy that you and your neighbors own—our electric cooperative!

In May each year, HomeWorks Tri-County staff brings the co-op to your neighborhood, with seven district member meetings where you can learn what's going on with *your* electric utility.

It's kind of like a town hall. You come out and visit with your neighbors, enjoy a light meal, then conduct the business of your cooperative, whether you're electing district officers or your district's representative to the board of directors, and learn about the co-op's operations.

We'll have plenty of staff on hand so you can ask questions about your service, or about our solar garden, Energy Optimization programs, payment options, propane business, *Country Lines* magazine, and more.

We'll bring our CFL recycling bucket, and you can plan to buy LED bulbs and smart power strips with our instant rebates from Energy Optimization.

We have activities for youngsters, and a prize drawing for kids ages 5 to 16. For adults, there's a nice grand prize at each district of a 32-inch smart TV, plus drawings for energy billing credits, and a gift at the door for all who attend.

We usually start serving supper by 5:30 p.m., and unless there are a lot of questions, you'll be back on the road by 7:30 or so. So it's a quick evening, and we try to make it fun and informative.

But it's not a democracy without you there, taking part in running your cooperative. We'd love to see you, whether you've never been to a district meeting before, or if you've been to 50 of them.

Come out and see if we measure up, as your democracy. ■

Cathy Foster Retires From 38-Year Career

By Lesa Barker

Customer service supervisor Cathy Foster will officially sign off in May, after 38 years in HomeWorks Tri-County's Blanchard office.

A native of Blanchard, Cathy started her career with the co-op in May 1978. Family friend Beverly Galer, already employed by the cooperative, called to see if she would be interested in a position there. Cathy left her waitressing job and never looked back.



Three leaders: Cathy Foster with Stacey Kirby (center), the new Blanchard office supervisor, and Beverly Galer, retired office supervisor.

She started as an assistant for both the warehouse and in customer service; later transitioned into customer service full-time; and eventually stepped into her current role as customer service supervisor in February 1989.

Over the years, Cathy has experienced many

changes at HomeWorks Tri-County. She says the biggest change has been in technology. Cathy recalls that at the beginning of her career the office had a typed file card for each member with their membership information.

"It had their name, pole number, account number and address on it, everything we needed to identify them. When a member called or came into the office, we used those cards to look them up."

She also recalls using a ledger to write payments, handwriting all service orders, and eventually, sharing a computer to input work at the end of each day.

Cathy says that aside from remembering the usual happy events such as marriages, new babies, birthdays and retirements, she also recalls moving from the old building, where the Millbrook-Rolland fire hall is now located, to the new building as one of her greatest memories.

"That old building was built in the '50s, and it was like working in a tin can," she recalls.

As retirement approaches, Cathy is looking forward to "doing anything she wants." She has plans to travel with her sister and also looks forward to spending more time with her family and close circle of friends.

She also plans on being a volunteer for the Commission on Aging, helping prepare taxes, and hopes to assist more in her local community.

"I've been so lucky to have had a career that has let me learn something new nearly every day. As my dad told me to do: make friends that will last a lifetime. To watch our little cooperative in the middle of Michigan grow and be progressive has been a blast, and I will cherish these memories for a lifetime," Cathy says. ■



Cathy Foster, in a photo taken before the "new" office was built across the street in 1988.

Clean Power Plan Update



Craig Borr, CEO
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

As 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

MISS 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, 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. ■

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
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 for more information

Stay Cool And Save Energy This Summer

Gorgeous 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 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
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.



Capture Your Favorite Moments And Share

- 1 Sherry Cole of Mecosta shared "a photo of our son, Brian Burnett, at his Turning Blue ceremony in Fort Benning, GA, in 2007, prior to being sent overseas to Iraq."
- 2 David Stevens of Bannister sent in a photo he took at a Lansing Lugnuts game. "There were recruits taking the oath on the field, our son was one of them," he notes.
- 3 Marian Kurncz of St. Johns is a proud great-grandmother to Gavin Barker, son of Bob and Alex Barker of Grosse Pointe. Gavin was snapped after finding and trying on his dad's Marine cover.
- 4 Andrea Kowatch of Portland took this photo of Scouts honoring veterans at the Portland Cemetery.

See more amazing photos at facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Submit Your Photo!

Contributors whose photos we publish in 2016 will be entered into a drawing and *Country Lines* will choose two winners for a bill credit of up to \$100 each on their December electric bill, due in January 2017!

Upcoming Snap Shot Contests

"All About Michigan," Deadline: **May 15** (July-August issue)

"Sports," Deadline: **July 15** (September issue)

"Best Friends," Deadline: **Aug. 15** (October issue)

"Country Roads," Deadline: **Sept. 15** (November-December issue)

Go to homeworks.org/content/snapshots to submit your high resolution digital photos and see additional themes. It's fast and easy. To send by mail: Include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, and details about your photo. Mail to Attn: *Country Lines* Snap Shots, 7973 E. Grand River, Portland, MI 48875. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos.

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.



MI
co-op
KITCHEN

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.

Ready to pull up a seat?

GREAT! Go to **MICOOPKITCHEN.COM** and register.

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

Enter your recipe online at 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

Now Is The Time, Sign Up For Budget Billing

By Lesa Barker

Would you like the peace of mind of knowing that you have the same amount to pay for your utilities year-round? HomeWorks Tri-County Electric offers convenient budget payment plans. This program helps smooth out the seasonal ups and downs that some of us experience.

You qualify for the budget plan if:

- You have no past due balance
- Your account remains current throughout the budget year
- You have at least 12 months of electric use history for us to use in calculating your budget payment
- You sign and return a contract agreeing to these terms

We review each budget account monthly to ensure that you won't have a large "catch-up" amount to pay at the end of the budget year. If an adjustment needs to be made, we'll contact you before making a change to discuss the options for your account.

You should sign up for the budget plan no later than June to take advantage of the full budget season.

Combine your budget peace of mind with the convenience of auto-pay, or our eBill service, and save paper too, with electronic billing. For further information on any of these programs, please call our customer service team at 800-562-8232. ■

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland, March 28, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the 2015 audit report with the independent auditor, Eide Bailly.
- Read and approved Board Policy 402—"Allocation of Non-Operating Income from Subsidiary"; Board Policy 403—"Long Range Financial Management Plan"; and Board Policy 404—"Retirement of Capital Credits." Learned there were no identity theft incidents reported during the past quarter, in a report required by Board Policy 316—"Identity Theft."
- Authorized staff to allocate the cooperative's 2015 margins, totaling \$883,345 along with a \$200,000 dividend from Tri-Co Services, and \$2,693,700 in Wolverine Power Cooperative margins, to members based on their energy purchases during 2015.
- Further authorized staff to make a general retirement of \$919,000 in cooperative capital credits (including the \$200,000 dividend from Tri-Co Services) from 1989-1991 and 2015; and \$324,000 in Wolverine capital credits from 1997-1998 and 2015, to members as credits on the May energy bills, as well as retiring up to \$200,000 in cooperative and Wolverine capital credits to estates, upon request, at present worth value.
- Learned six members have been nominated to seek board seats in the May election (see pages 16-17 for more information about the candidates).
- Learned there were 72 new members in February.
- Acknowledged the March safety reports, listing employee training and minor employee incidents.

People Fund Helps Stock Local Food Banks

Meeting March 9, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made four grants totaling \$4,158.68, including:

- \$1,650 to Barryton Area Mobile Food Pantry, for food truck delivery expenses;
- \$980 to Project Starburst, Big Rapids, for food truck delivery expenses;
- \$500 to First Congregational Church of Portland, to support Monday night community meals; and
- \$1,028.68 to a Montcalm County family, for vehicle repairs.

To learn more about the Tri-County Electric People Fund, visit the People Fund tab at homeworks.org.

How to Apply for a Grant

The Tri-County Electric People Fund provides grants to individuals and organizations in the co-op's service area for food, shelter, clothing, health, and other humane needs, or for programs or services that benefit a significant segment of a community.

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI 48875, for an application form and grant guidelines, or visit homeworks.org.

Note: Applications must be received by May 23 for the June board meeting, and by July 1 for the July board meeting.

Watch May Bill For Your Capital Credit Allocation, Refund

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric member-owners will see the benefit of cooperative principle #3—Member Economic Participation—on their May energy bills.

The board of directors authorized an allocation and retirement of capital credits after the audit was approved in March.

First, because we operate on a nonprofit basis, margins will be allocated back to members based on their energy purchases during 2015. This includes the co-op's margins of \$883,345; a \$200,000 dividend paid to the co-op by its subsidiary, Tri-Co Services; and \$2,693,700, representing HomeWorks Tri-County's share of Wolverine Power Cooperative's 2015 margins.

These allocations are not cash—they are an accounting of your share of ownership in the cooperative. The amounts allocated to your membership for 2015 will be printed in the top right message area of your energy bill.

Your bill will also show your total unretired capital credit allocations, which will be retired at a future date as determined by your co-op's board of directors.

Retiring Capital Credits

Retiring capital credits is a way of ensuring each generation of members provides its own equity.

The board's current philosophy is to pay most of a retirement from the oldest capital credits on



account, and a smaller portion from the most recent year.

We believe this achieves the purpose of recycling the cooperative's capital, while also giving our newest members a chance to see one of the most fundamental cooperative principles in action.

This year's general retirement totals \$1,243,000, of which \$919,000 retires capital credits allocated by Tri-County Electric in 1989 through 1991, and 2015, including the \$200,000 dividend from Tri-Co Services. Also being retired are \$324,000 in power supply capital credits from 1997-1998, and 2015.

For most members, your retirement will be paid as a credit applied to your May energy statement. It will show as a line item under "Other Charges and Credits."

The board also set aside funds for retiring capital credits to members' estates, on a first-come, first-served basis. Estate retirements will include both Tri-County Electric and Wolverine Power capital credits. For more information about estate retirements, call Member Services at 1-800-562-8232. ■



Fulton High School's yearbook class received a 2016 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grant of \$826.78 to purchase a new camera and an external drive for storage. HomeWorks Tri-County director Cara Evans, far right, is shown presenting the grant to Kallie Iler, Mandy Volk (teacher), Colton Stipcak, Jessica Skaryd, Evan Schneider, Kevin Tabor, and Allison Feighner at Fulton High School.



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

Casting A Line

With Kevin VanDam

By Emily Haines Lloyd



When 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.



Six Members Seek Three Seats On Your Board Of Directors

DISTRICT 1



Shannon Lock, Charlotte

Shannon Lock is a laboratory assistant for the State of Michigan. Her family includes her husband, Evans, and their son Christian.

A member of HomeWorks since 2015, she is a native of Leslie and graduated from Mason High School before earning her

associate's degree in veterinary technology from a joint MSU/Lansing Community College program. She graduated from Siena Heights University with a BS in applied science in 2010.

Shannon is also a licensed real estate agent and stays current with all education requirements.

She served on the Mt. Hope healing team for three years, and is a volunteer at Charlotte High School.

"I have years of excellent customer service experience and I look forward to working with people in my community. I am unbiased, and I will work hard to represent members in my district."



John Lord, Leslie

John Lord, now retired, sold furniture to schools and universities for over 10 years. Previously, he worked at AT&T as an account service administrator and project manager for General Motors and the State of Michigan.

His family includes his wife, Ellen, three

children, 10 grandchildren, and 21 great-grandchildren (and two more on the way).

A member of the co-op since 1989, John's involvement with Tri-County Electric started in 1948 when his parents, Dr. George and Caryle Lord, bought the Speedway Fruit Farm on M-50 between Charlotte and Eaton Rapids.

He and his brothers attended the one-room Perkey School through 8th grade. John graduated from Charlotte High School in 1965, then earned a BS in Psychology from MSU in 1969.

John's community activities include membership in Mason First United Methodist Church and serving as a sixth-grade grandparent-mentor at Mason Middle School since 2000.

John has been a member of the Dimondale Lions Club for nearly 30 years, and is currently serving his third term as president. In 2007, he was honored by the club after 17 years of coordinating their blood drives. As a donor to the American Red Cross himself, he has given over 300 pints of blood and platelets.

"My involvement in industry with large customers; volunteering with Girl Scouts and the Lions, and at the middle school; as well as attending district meetings and serving as district chairman for several years, have all prepared me for the duties and responsibilities of the board. I've had a lot of experience in business and nonprofits and can promise I'll do the very best job I know how."



Tom Reich, Eaton Rapids

Tom Reich is currently Sheriff of Eaton County. His family includes his wife, Brenda, four children and nine grandchildren. He has an Associate Degree in Criminal Justice and recently graduated from the FBI Executive Leadership Academy.

A member of HomeWorks since 2005, he has worked in law enforcement in Ingham and Eaton counties for nearly 29 years. As gaming director of the Bureau of State Lottery, he managed a \$200 million statewide program. From 2010-2012 he served on the Eaton Rapids Public School board, including a term as treasurer. He is currently on the board of the Mid-Michigan Housing Authority.

Other community activities include the Charlotte Assembly of God, Chief Okemos Sportsman's Club, DADS Veterans of Foreign Wars, F&AM 120, Farm Bureau, Pheasants Forever, National Wild Turkey Federation, and the NRA. He is a member of the Michigan Sheriff's Association and the International Chiefs of Police Association.

"As a member-owner of the cooperative, YOU run the cooperative by electing the board of directors. I am committed to the cooperative's efforts to provide reliable power to mid-Michigan and to increase its value to all of us who own it. With my experience, I can bring to the board's deliberations a broad perspective and familiarity with the co-op's mission, history and operations.

"I recognize the potential of having new challenges and prospects to work on. I'm confident I can make a positive contribution. I will be your voice and represent you as we face new challenges that are ahead of us."

DISTRICT 5



Corinna Batora, Elsie

Corinna Batora is a policy and training analyst for the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. She and her husband, Tom, have been married 23 years and they have a 14 year-old-son.

A member of HomeWorks since 1998, Corinna says the Batora family has been members of the cooperative since power came to the Bannister area. She holds Bachelor of Science and Master of Arts degrees from Michigan State, and is a 2012 graduate of the Michigan Department of Human Services Leadership Academy.

Corinna has been active in both the community and local schools for many years, including as a Family Farm and Home volunteer, a

former board member for the Paine Gillam Scott Museum, on the St. Johns Downtown Management Board, and the school parent teacher organization.

While owning and operating The Classic Bed and Breakfast in St. Johns for eight years, she also served on the board of the Lake to Lake Bed and Breakfast Association. She is also a board member for the Michigan Family Support Council.

"This is my fourth year as the secretary for District 5. In my current role as secretary I have participated in both board and district meetings; and encouraged Tri-County to implement texting and other electronic communications for our members. I am committed to the continued success of our cooperative, and will diligently work with the board and our great staff to meet our future challenges!"

DISTRICT 7



Shirley Sprague, Barryton

Shirley Sprague has owned and operated the Perennial Patch nursery in Barryton for the past 31 years. She has been Sheridan Township treasurer for 14 years. Her family includes her husband, Eldon, and their four sons.

A member of HomeWorks since 1979, she is a graduate of Chippewa Hills High School, and has participated in educational courses for various township board positions, including board of review, election boards, and treasurer.

Shirley has served Sheridan Township since 1994, on the board of review and election boards, before becoming treasurer. In addition to serving the community through her township work, her community activities include years of volunteer work for the Chippewa Hills School District. Duties at the school ranged from tutoring to managing Reading Is Fundamental and other programs. She has been a community program volunteer, done fundraising work, and income tax preparation for the AARP program.

"My life experiences have prepared me to be an effective public official. I feel a responsibility to those I serve to be informed, dependable and accountable. Throughout my career, I have worked diligently to see projects through and provide meaningful solutions."



Wayne Stickler, Remus

Wayne Stickler is county executive director for the Farm Service Agency in Montcalm and Isabella counties. His family includes his wife, Joan, and their son and daughter.

A member of HomeWorks since 1991, he is a graduate of Chippewa Hills High School. He was a dairy farmer until 2000, and later worked

for the Mecosta County Conservation District, promoting and implementing programs to individuals and groups.

His community activities include serving as a board member for Blanchard Telephone since 1999. He is in his fifth year as a member of the Chippewa Hills school board, is a past president of Mecosta County Farm Bureau, and has served on his church board.

"I have served on several boards and committees in various capacities for over 30 years. I was born and raised in the Remus area, remained here in the community and raised my family here. I am a third-generation member of Tri-County Electric."

Absentee Ballot Request

Voting for board candidates takes place at the District 1, 5 and 7 meetings in 2016. If you are unable to attend your district meeting, request an absentee ballot by filling out and mailing this form to HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, 7973 E. Grand River Ave., Portland, MI 48875. Your request must be received on or before June 1, and your completed ballot returned by June 15.

Name _____ Daytime phone _____

Mailing Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

I certify that I am a member of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, and I am unable to attend the (check one)

☐ District 1 ☐ District 5 ☐ District 7 annual membership meeting in order to vote in the scheduled board of directors election.

I hereby request you send one mail-ballot to the above listed address for my use.

Signature _____ Date _____

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!"

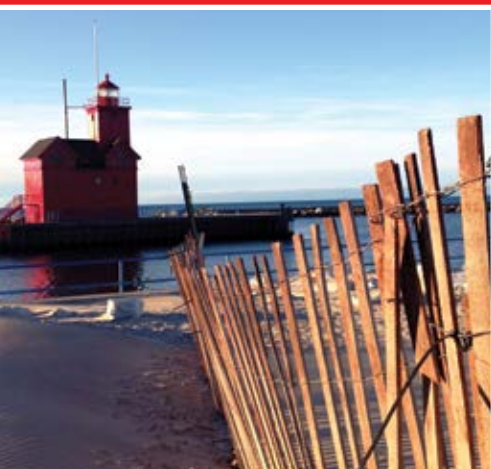


Fortunately for Dustin and his crew, most days are quiet and filled with routine maintenance work and installations. Safety remains the crew's first priority, even on normal days. But all concerns for family and safety aside, Dustin loves his job. During an outage, "The world is dark when we get where 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!" ■

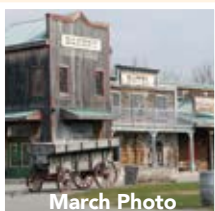


Jack O'Malley



«« 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 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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Watch your mailbox for your personal invitation.

Knowing more about your electric cooperative helps you stay involved, and that helps us run HomeWorks Tri-County Electric for the benefit of you and your neighbors.

Our annual membership meetings start with a light supper (sloppy joes, plus ice cream!) at 6 p.m., followed by a short business meeting, and then learning what's happening at the electric utility **YOU** own. **You'll have a chance to ask questions and win prizes**, such as energy certificates worth \$10, \$25 or even \$50, and one lucky member will leave the meeting with a Grand Prize of a Vizio 32" Smart TV with built-in Wi-Fi.

Bring your kids, too. Besides enjoying a free meal, all youths ages 5–16 have a chance to win an iPod Touch. And, everyone goes home with a special thank-you gift.

Watch your mailbox for your family's personal invitation. See you there!

This year's dates and locations are:

May 16 – District 5 (Election)
Fulton Middle School Gym

May 17 – District 1 (Election)
St. Mary's Church Hall, Charlotte

May 18 – District 6
Beal City High School

May 19 – District 3
Eagle Park Hall

May 23 – District 7 (Election)
St. Michael's School, Remus

May 24 – District 4 (New Location)
Montabella Jr-Sr High Cafeteria

May 25 – District 2
St. Edward's Church Hall,
Lake Odessa