

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

Casting A Line

With Kevin VanDam

Plus!

Annual Meeting Is June 18

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comfort1.net/geothermal

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(231) 258-3588
kalkaskageothermal.net

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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.*



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Fay Hauswirth, Billing Clerk

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OTHER INFORMATION

Date of Incorporation: Sept. 30, 1937
Fiscal year-end: Dec. 31
countrylines.com/coops/ontonagon

Ontonagon County REA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Electric Co-ops And A Culture Of Safety



Debbie Miles
General Manager

In the spirit of May being National Electrical Safety Month, let's take a look at how electric cooperatives have been stepping up when it comes to safety at the co-op.

Until 2007, there was an alarming national trend among electric co-ops, which was the fact that the number of "lost-time" accidents was increasing. Lost-time is defined as anything resulting in an employee missing time at work; these accidents could range from a sprained ankle to the ultimate tragedy of a fatality.

This is why Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, which insures the vast majority of electric co-ops nationwide, initiated a campaign called a "Culture of Safety." It was designed to create a much greater awareness of safety issues at all electric co-ops.

Federated brought together co-op CEOs and general managers, operations supervisors, safety directors and lineworkers to better understand how each group viewed safety. In doing so, differences in perceptions about safety within cooperatives were identified, allowing for much needed conversations and evaluations of how to raise awareness and improve local safety cultures. The "Speak Up, Listen Up" program is designed to empower anyone who sees a potentially 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.

As a member, you too have a role. If you see any potentially dangerous situations or practices, you should report them as soon as possible to Ontonagon REA.

The implementation and success of the Culture of Safety program demonstrates a very important point. If we are intentional about our actions, we can change the culture in our organizations. The same is true for our families, our teams and any groups we may belong to.

We also know that living our cooperative principles and values is equally important. We have the best business model because it puts you, the member-owner, at the center of our efforts.

We look forward to being your safe electricity provider and energy advisor long into the future. ■

Notice Of 2016 Annual Meeting Of Members Of Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association

Date of Notice: May 18, 2016

Please be advised that, pursuant to Article II, Section 3 and Article XIV of The Ontonagon county Rural Electrification Association's Bylaws, the Annual Meeting of the Members of The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association is hereby called by the Secretary of the Association.

The Purpose of the Annual Meeting is to seat the new directors, pass upon reports covering the previous fiscal year, and transact any other business as may properly come before the meeting.

The Annual Meeting of the Members of The Ontonagon County Rural Electrification Association shall occur at Chassell, Michigan, promptly at 10 a.m. on Saturday, June 18, 2016.

Ontonagon County Rural
Electrification Association



Randy Myhren, Secretary

Ontonagon County REA/Dec. 31, 2015 & 2014 Financial Statement Balance Sheets

| <u>Assets</u> | <u>2015</u> | <u>2014</u> |
|--|---------------------|---------------------|
| UTILITY PLANT: | | |
| Electric plant in service | \$ 23,272,325 | \$22,609,434 |
| Construction work in progress | 2,078,742 | 487,112 |
| | 25,351,067 | 23,096,546 |
| Less—Accumulated depreciation | (7,998,347) | (7,483,382) |
| Net utility plant | 17,352,720 | 15,613,164 |
| INVESTMENTS & OTHER ASSETS | | |
| Investments | 758,720 | 705,148 |
| Total investments and other assets | 758,720 | 705,148 |
| CURRENT ASSETS | | |
| Cash and cash equivalents | 401,372 | 318,397 |
| Accounts receivable (less accumulated provision for uncollectibles of \$40,000 in 2011 & \$15,805 in 2010) | 725,588 | 737,541 |
| Accounts receivable—other | 75,953 | 45,577 |
| Materials and supplies | 219,974 | 238,573 |
| Prepayments | 53,044 | 60,205 |
| Total current assets | 1,515,931 | 1,400,293 |
| Deferred Charges | 662,035 | 288,082 |
| TOTAL ASSETS | \$20,289,406 | \$18,006,687 |
| Member's Equities and Liabilities | | |
| EQUITIES: | | |
| Memberships | \$23,005 | \$23,040 |
| Patronage capital | 3,952,741 | 3,380,739 |
| Other equities | 32,497 | 32,497 |
| Total equities | 4,008,243 | 3,436,276 |
| LONG-TERM LIABILITIES: | | |
| Rural Utilities Service (RUS) mortgage notes | 5,241,610 | 2,279,573 |
| National Rural Utilities Cooperative Finance Corporation (NRUFCFC) supplemental mortgage notes | 206,431 | 222,659 |
| CoBank, ACB mortgage note | 9,387,566 | 9,703,370 |
| | \$14,835,607 | \$12,205,602 |
| Less current portion | (488,000) | (439,000) |
| | \$14,347,607 | \$11,766,602 |
| Post-retirement benefit obligation | 427,524 | 413,633 |
| Total long-term liabilities | \$14,775,131 | \$12,180,235 |
| CURRENT LIABILITIES: | | |
| Current maturities of long-term liabilities | 488,000 | 439,000 |
| Line of Credit notes payable | - | 1,162,000 |
| Accounts payable | 564,448 | 332,639 |
| Customer deposits | 13,600 | 12,250 |
| Other current liabilities | 311,531 | 344,176 |
| TOTAL CURRENT LIABILITIES | 1,377,579 | 2,290,065 |
| Deferred credits | 128,453 | 100,111 |
| TOTAL EQUITIES AND LIABILITIES | 20,289,406 | 18,006,687 |
| Statement of Revenue & Expenses Ending Dec. 31, 2015 & 2014 | | |
| OPERATING REVENUES | \$6,313,543 | \$6,265,030 |
| OPERATING EXPENSES: | | |
| Cost of purchased power | 2,663,214 | 2,623,983 |
| Distribution—Operations | 397,838 | 408,022 |
| Distribution—Maintenance | 518,293 | 578,727 |
| Consumer accounts | 223,489 | 237,836 |
| Customer service and informational | 84,981 | 79,630 |
| Sales Expense | - | 196 |
| Administrative and general | 517,803 | 614,286 |
| Depreciation | 704,777 | 665,274 |
| Taxes | 218,088 | 208,810 |
| Other deduction | - | 16,345 |
| Total operating expense | \$5,328,483 | \$5,433,109 |
| Operating margins before interest expense | \$985,060 | \$831,921 |
| Interest expense | 673,754 | 598,083 |
| Operating margins (loss) after interest expense | \$311,306 | \$233,838 |
| NONOPERATING MARGINS: | | |
| Interest and investment income | 42,767 | 50,929 |
| Other nonoperating income (expense) | 94,263 | 33,055 |
| | \$137,030 | \$83,984 |
| Capital credits | 123,668 | 126,135 |
| NET (LOSS) MARGINS | \$572,004 | \$443,957 |

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.

Saluting Our Armed Forces Photo Gallery



Photo Fun

Ontonagon 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.



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



Hearts Without Borders

By Yvonne Whitman

Eldon and Alice Kinnunen's decades-long humanitarian vocation began, simply enough, with a magazine article. "I read about a man who took military surplus blankets and gave them to poor people in Mexico who lived in a garbage dump," Alice explains. "I contacted him and asked him to please tell me where these people were, and he replied, 'Come here and I will show you.' So we loaded up our car with donations, drove to Texas, and he took us across the border to Reynosa. When we got there, we just knew that was our place, and that's where we've been going for 24 years."

Married for over 53 years and now in their 80s, Eldon, a retired structural engineer, and Alice spend seven months of the year at their 100-year-old family farm on the Waasa Road in Hancock. But every year from December to April they make McAllen, TX, their home, facilitating their daily trips across the border to Reynosa, Mexico.

"The Mexican people in our 'colonia' (a particular area of the city) are like family to us. We are considered grandparents to many and are treated



Eldon surrounded by a group of grateful members of the colonia they serve.

Top: A group of colonia residents excited to receive donations that the Kinnunens have brought from Michigan.

Photos Courtesy-Eldon & Alice Kinnunen

with much love and respect," Alice says. Each day they load up their van with items donated by U.S.-based benefactors and distribute them to the many needy members of their colonia. Donated items range from clothing, shoes, food, furniture, bedding and toys, to medical and school supplies.

"Life in Reynosa is difficult—wages are pathetically low and jobs are hard to find. Street vendors and beggars are common sights. School for children is a financial challenge and sacrifice," Alice explains matter of factly. "Ownership of a fan, a small tank of gas for a stove and running water is a luxury. Words are inadequate when attempting to describe the conditions of this nearby poverty to Americans just across the border."

"If everyone gives a thread, the poor man will have a shirt."

Russian Proverb

They expanded their efforts in 2000 by beginning a program to build houses with both the new homeowner and local volunteers providing the labor. The Kinnunens have been involved with the construction of 36 houses and, until recently, they averaged three new houses per year. "We are now slowing down due to our age, and we're now down to building only one house per year," according to Eldon. The most recent of these being a three-bedroom, one bath house constructed for \$10,500.

"Our hearts break because we are unable to help as much as we'd like, but as the saying goes, doing something is better than doing nothing," Alice says. "During five months in 2015, we were able to bring 105 loads of goods



Eldon and Alice Kinnunen in front of a photo collage of their many trips to Mexico to do humanitarian work.

across the border in our van, build a house, help with electrical and water problems and aid children with schooling and other special needs." Obviously no small feat for a couple of octogenarians.

Ontonagon REA fortuitously aided the Kinnunens when Eldon won a \$100 door prize at the co-op's June 20, 2015, annual meeting. "Before I left home that day I told my wife, 'If I win that \$100 I'm going to give it the one of the families in Mexico so they can send their daughter to middle school.'" Eldon did win the prize, and the money was soon on its way to Mexico to make a difference in the education of one colonia resident.

The Kinnunens rely heavily on their faith, stating, "We were led by the Lord step-by-step. God's work is like a jigsaw puzzle with many pieces. Many various people hold a piece of the puzzle. When they are all put into place, the picture is a beautiful one." Asked how long they will continue with their humanitarian work, "As long as I can crawl," Alice says quietly. ■



This house was built in 2015 with assistance from the Kinnunens.



"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.





The Roller Skating Seamstress

By Yvonne Whitman

Professional sewing has made its way through four generations of Kendra Symbal's family tree. But what would her great grandmother, a milliner, have made of seamstress Kendra's decision to don a short skirt and fishnet stockings and roll into the public arena as a roller derby team member? One can only imagine!

Kendra runs The Stitch Witch shop in Marquette's Gateway Plaza, specializing in mens' and womens' alterations and repairs, including bridal and formal wear. First opened in 2008 in Ashland, WI, her business has grown to the point where she is looking to hire additional help. "Many times new clothes don't fit as you wish they would. These clothes are never perfect for your individual body. And, uncomfortable clothes that don't look as good as they could, leave you feeling less confident. With subtle alterations, you can look and feel amazing in clothes you already love," Kendra explains.



Kendra Symbal with daughter, Evelyn, at half-time during a roller derby race.

Speaking of looking and feeling amazing, Kendra's foray into the roller derby was the result of growing boredom with everyday gym visits. "I saw on Facebook that there was a roller derby group forming in Marquette. I thought, "Wow. I get to

wear fishnets. In public? And be on roller skates? I mean who doesn't love that? I thought, this sounds really fun! So I joined the Dead River Derby. I trained hard. I hadn't been on roller skates since middle school and I was a wall climber," Kendra said.

Unfortunately, or fortunately, the increased success of her business—and the responsibility of raising two children—meant she had to retire from the derby. Kendra managed to referee for a season and is now a proud business sponsor of her former team.

Kendra's children are often found in her shop, just as she spent a great deal of time in her own mother's business. She maintains a back room where the kids can play while she works.



THE STITCH WITCH

She sees how much she absorbed about sewing as a child and how that led to it becoming her passion and livelihood.

"I learned a lot from her. I was always absorbing and observing the multi-generational sewing thing as a kid. You don't realize these things when you are growing up, but they really are influential," Kendra explains. "That's why I bring my kids to my shop—so that they can learn and observe."

Sewing was always a part of Kendra's life. Her great grandmother owned the millinery shop and her grandmother, Janice, sewed cushions for her husband's boat business. And, Kendra's mother was a home economics teacher who always had a home-based business, taking in sewing to supplement her income.

Kendra recalls her first sewing experience of creating a felt Valentines box in kindergarten, and in high school, she was known as "The Costume Goddess" by the theatre department. She sewed clothes for herself and assisted her mother with back-logged customer work.



Kendra refereeing a match.

While Kendra did enjoy sewing, she opted for a degree in cosmetology. Attending NMU, she also did alterations part-time to make extra cash. "I started realizing that I liked doing it. I enjoyed the customers and particularly enjoyed taking a garment that a customer especially loved and fixing it," Kendra explains. "I've always liked taking something rough and making it shiny."

Completing her cosmetology studies, Kendra found herself unfulfilled and unchallenged by the work. On a particularly slow day working in a salon, she had a realization. "I found myself at the salon without any customers, knowing that I had a rack of clothes at my mom's shop just waiting for me to sew. I thought, 'I can't do this anymore.' I can't sit here for eight hours a day, making no money, and work all night at mom's shop to catch up!" Thus, Kendra became the fifth in her family to live by the sewing needle. ■

Kendra Symbal is an electric cooperative member. For more information, contact The Stitch Witch at 906-236-1087 or MiStitchWitch@gmail.com. Appointments for bridal wear are required. Walk-ins are accepted for standard alterations. Rush season (prom and wedding) requires six-week advance orders.

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!"

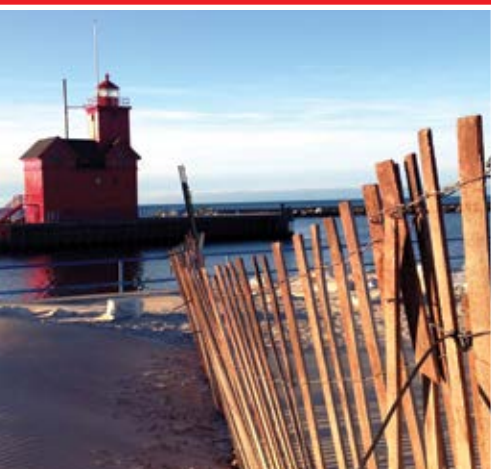


Fortunately for Dustin and his crew, most days are quiet and filled with routine maintenance work and installations. Safety remains the crew's first priority, even on normal days. But all concerns for family and safety aside, Dustin loves his job. During an outage, "The world is dark when we get where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

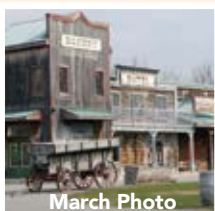


Jack O'Malley



«« 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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Don't Miss It!

Ontonagon County REA 2016 Annual Meeting

June 18 • Chassell High School

The board of directors and employees of your electric co-op invite you to join them at the 2016 annual meeting (see notice, page 5, and right for details).

This is a chance to visit with your neighbors and friends from throughout our five-county service area and participate in your co-op's affairs. You will hear about the state of the co-op over the past year, as well as our vision for the future.

At the meeting, newly elected directors from District 2-Lake Mine/Toivola, District 5-Pelkie/Herman/Keweenaw Bay and District 6-Chassell will be seated.

Meeting Highlights:

- 10 a.m., Chassell High School
- Updates on co-op affairs by co-op president & general manager
- Guest Speaker: Art Thayer, Michigan Electric Cooperative Association
- Director election results: District 2-Lake Mine/Toivola, District 5-Pelkie/Herman/Keweenaw Bay and District 6-Chassell
- Update on your co-op's financial health
- Drawing for cash prizes
- Lunch