

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



Plus!

Annual Meeting June 18 -
Food, Fun And Prizes!

Directors Announced
For Districts 1, 6 And 9

Great Lakes Boat Building School -
Where A Shipwright's Career Begins



Asparagus

REIGNS IN MICHIGAN

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



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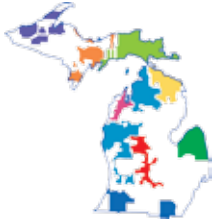


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1. 7 Series unit uses approximately 900 watts while running in speeds 1-2.



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

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

"Will I always over think everything?"

"Will I ever not need to call mom every time I have a bad day?"

"Have I seen the world and did I let it shape me?"

"Am I happy?"

"Was college really worth all of the money?"

Our new Question of the Month is:

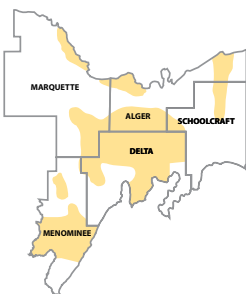
If you could spend the day with any celebrity, who would it be?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by July 1.

ON THE COVER

Marcia and Dick Walsworth, second-generation asparagus farmers from Mears, MI, introduce us to their 260-acre kingdom as they explain the struggles of maintaining their domain in the second largest asparagus producing state.

Photo-Emily Haines Lloyd



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Alger Delta Completes Audit



Tom Harrell
Chief Executive
Officer

The audit of Alger Delta's financial statements for 2015 is complete, and the results show your cooperative to be in a solid financial position. Tax accounting and CPA firm Eide Bailly, of North Dakota, specializes in auditing electric cooperatives. Eide Bailly completed the audit in March and reported their findings at the April board of directors meeting. Eide Bailly stated, "In our opinion, the financial statements...present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Alger Delta

Cooperative Electric Association...and the results of its operations and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting standards generally accepted in the United States of America." In accounting parlance, this statement is known as a "clean opinion" and is, essentially, the equivalent of meeting the gold standard.

The auditor's report also noted that all transactions had proper authoritative guidance or consensus; there were no misstatements on financial records; there were no deficiencies in internal controls; the cooperative follows adequate and effective accounting procedures. The auditor's report also noted Alger Delta maintains adequate control of materials and supplies. In addition, the firm praised the co-op for preparing accurate and timely financial and operating reports.

The audit confirmed that Alger Delta had just over \$1.4 million in margins for 2015. These margins are allocated, or assigned, to the members based on their energy usage in 2015. Also reported to the board is that most of Alger Delta's key financial ratios are in the "quiet zone"—meaning they are in a range that satisfies lenders and regulatory agencies of Alger Delta's ability to meet its financial obligations while maintaining appropriate reserves.

Some folks get regular physical exams to evaluate their health and determine what to do to stay healthy. An audit is similar to an annual physical. The audit provides members with independent verification that the cooperative is following accounting rules, is in good financial and operational health, and that the board and staff at Alger Delta are working hard to be good stewards of the cooperative—thereby keeping electricity affordable. ■

Annual Meeting June 18 FOOD — FUN — PRIZES!

Alger Delta's 2016 Annual Meeting is June 18 at the U.P. State Fairgrounds in Escanaba. Any member can attend for **FREE!** Call Alger Delta today at 800-562-0950 or 906-428-4141 and save your place at the fair.

Food, fun for the family and PRIZES!

People Helping People

In April, directors and employees from all of Michigan's electric cooperatives gathered in Grand Rapids for the annual meeting of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) and the Wolverine Power Symposium. These two events combine to provide training, networking, and an opportunity for attendees to learn about the political and technical developments that affect cooperatives and the service we provide.

This year, the organizers provided attendees with an opportunity to give back to their communities in a fun and challenging way. MECA, in partnership with a Kids Against Hunger Coalition, participated in a "Commitment to Community Service Project." Attendees formed assembly lines and packaged more than 10,000 highly-nutritious, vitamin fortified soy/rice casserole-style meals specially formulated to meet the nutritional needs of



L-R: Director Nancy Gardner-Platt (District 3, Grand Marais), CEO Tom Harrell and CFO Amanda Seger are suited-up to package meals at the "Commitment to Community Service Project."

children. Each participant took some of the meals back to their communities for distribution to food pantries and other qualifying local organizations.

Alger Delta members can get these meals and other assistance from the Helping Hands Food Pantry in Grand Marais or the St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Stephenson. ■

Small, Sederquist, Bovin Elected to Board of Directors

Darryl Small, Paul Sederquist and Doug Bovin have been elected to the Alger Delta Board of Directors to represent Districts 1, 6 and 9 respectively. District elections were conducted by mail and online beginning in April and culminated with the district meetings held May 9-11.

In District 9 (Hiawatha) Doug Bovin ran unopposed and received 477 votes. Incumbent Director Ron Oberg served one term and did not run for reelection.

Directors will be seated on the board at the annual meeting on June 18, 2016. ■



Newly elected
District 1 Director
Darryl Small.



Newly elected
District 6 Director
Paul Sederquist.



Newly elected
District 9 Director
Doug Bovin.

District 1 – Big Bay was the only contested election with Darryl Small running against incumbent director Mike Nason. Small won by a margin of 247 to 165. Small previously served on the board for just under 11 years before losing a close election in 2013. By regaining the seat, Small will be the second-longest serving active board member. Nason sat on the board for one term. Fifty-six percent of the members eligible to vote participated in the election.

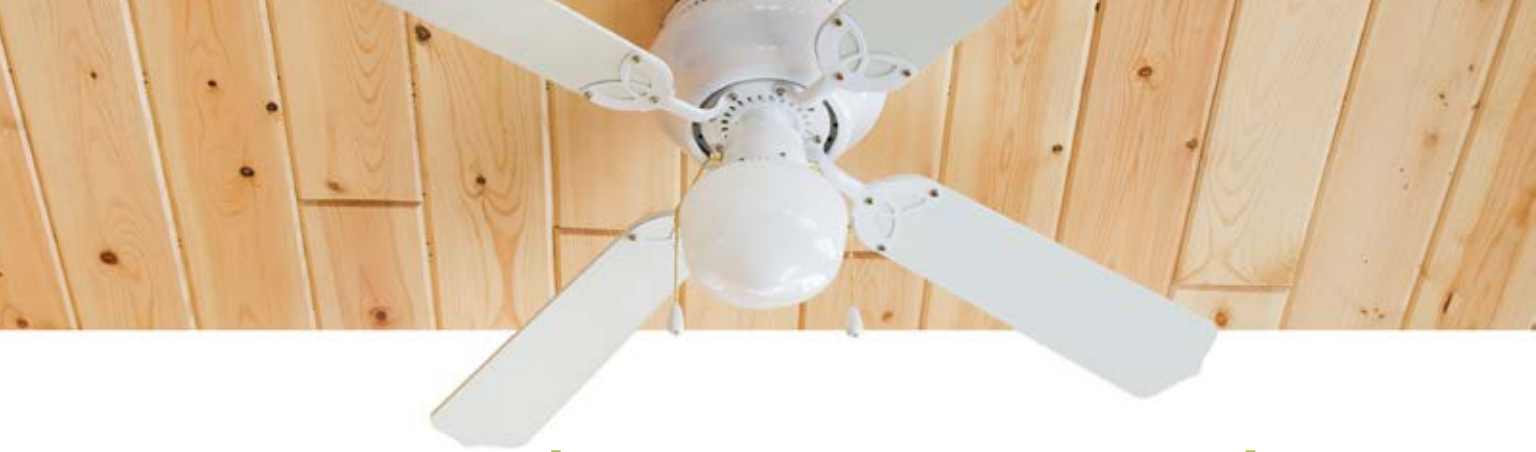
In District 6 – Nathan / White Rapids long-time director Paul Sederquist ran without opposition and was reelected with 277 votes. Sederquist served on the board from 1986-1995 and again from 1998 to the present for a total service time of 27 years.

NOTICE TO MEMBERS OF ALGER DELTA COOPERATIVE ELECTRIC ASSOCIATION CASE NO. U-15813 2014 RENEWABLE ENERGY PLAN ANNUAL REPORT SUMMARY

The Michigan Public Service Commission (MPSC) requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately two percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012 and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2014, Alger Delta purchased power as a member of WPPI Energy. WPPI acquired renewable energy from direct renewable energy purchases and from slice-of-system contracts with major investor-owned utilities. As a WPPI member, Alger Delta has allocated a portion of those resources necessary to meet its renewable energy portfolio standard. WPPI Energy will ensure that Alger Delta will have sufficient renewable energy credits to meet the renewable energy standard.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan annual report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the cooperative's website at algerdelta.com or by request at any of the cooperative's offices.



How To Use Ceiling Fans For Year-Round Comfort, Savings

By James Dullely

People often wonder which ceiling fans to install. There are so many models and prices, leaving some to wonder if they can help cut energy costs.

People typically think of fans only for summertime comfort and lower air-conditioning costs. Ceiling fans are unique in that they can also reduce your wintertime heating bills with proper use.

Before installing a ceiling fan, it's important to understand how one functions. A ceiling fan does not cool a room like an air conditioner. It heats the room whenever it is running. All of the electricity it uses ends up as heat. Always turn the fan off when no one is in a room.

You feel cooler under a ceiling fan because it creates a downward breeze over your skin. This breeze allows you to run your air conditioner less or set its thermostat a few degrees higher without sacrificing comfort. If you do not do this, running the ceiling fan will increase your electric bills.

During winter, reverse the rotation of the fan blades, so the air flows up toward the ceiling. Run it on low speed. This gently moves up the hotter air, which collects near the ceiling, throughout the room without creating a chilly breeze. This allows you to set the heating thermostat a few degrees lower for savings.

The simplest way to select an efficient ceiling fan is to pick one which is Energy Star certified. When selecting a typical, lower-cost, four or five blade fan, a rule of thumb for sizing is (room size vs. diameter of blades): up to 75 sq. ft.—36 in., 75 to 144 sq. ft.—36 to 42 in., 144 to 225 sq. ft.—44 to 50 in., 225 to 400 sq. ft.—50 to 54 in.

The ideal height for the fan blades is about eight feet above the floor. A three-inch downrod is included with most fans to provide the proper height. For high ceilings, downrods up to six feet long are used to get the fan low enough. For safety reasons, never have the blades closer than seven feet from the floor.

Many new, stylish fans come with multiple blades, ranging from one to six blades, with three being the most common. Pay attention to the pitch angle of the blades to get an idea of how strong a breeze it creates. A steeper pitch moves more air at a slower speed. This often indicates a quiet and more powerful motor.

The newest and most efficient motors are DC (Direct Current) motors. These are similar in design concept to the variable speed motors in new heat pumps.

Most people install a lighting kit under the ceiling fan. Select one with LED lighting. It is not only efficient, but it lasts for many years, and most are dimmable.

A model with a hand-held remote control is most convenient to adjust the speed and is the easiest to switch off when leaving a room. Some new high-tech fans can even be controlled by a cell phone with a special fan app.

The universe of ceiling fans is amazingly big! Besides the brick-and-mortar stores, online stores have a nice selection, too.

A good online site for ceiling fans is Hansen Wholesale. For each product it sells, Hansen offers information on motor quality, CFM (air movement measured in cubic feet per minute) output, energy efficiency and other pertinent data. ■

Perform An Annual Safety Inspection On Your Boat And Dock Before Lifting The Anchor

Water comprises almost one-half of Michigan, so it's easy to see why the state boasts a thriving recreational industry and leads the nation with nearly 1 million registered pleasure boats. For boating and water safety, there are items you must legally have on your watercraft—life vests, fire extinguisher, throwable flotation device, and properly working lights—but make sure the boat and the dock are safe, too.

To help prevent accidents, the National Electrical Contractors Association says:

- All installations should be performed by a professional electrical contractor.
- All dock receptacles must comply with the National Electrical Code, which mandates a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). A GFCI measures a circuit's current and senses any imbalance (such as a discharge into the water), which trips the GFCI and cuts off the power.
- Test any GFCIs every month. Locate it along the ramp to the dock so it can be easily tested by local fire departments.
- Metal dock frames should have "bonding jumpers" that connect all metal parts to an

on-shore grounding rod. This means any dock part that becomes energized by electrical malfunction will trip the GFCI or circuit breaker.

- Ask neighbors if their dock electrical systems have been inspected and are up to Code.
- Household wire is not suitable for boats.
- *Do not* use wire nuts (these are for solid conductor wire, which should never be on a boat) or splice connectors (can cut wire strands)!
- Fuses are rated to protect the wire, not the stereo. If a fuse blows continuously, something else is wrong.
- If you rent a dock or boat, notify the owner of safety violations immediately.
- Have your boat's system (especially with onboard generators) checked at least annually and when something is added or removed.
- Ropes, string, masts and rigging also conduct electricity—don't be the common ground between water and electricity! ■

See [SafeElectricity.org](https://www.SafeElectricity.org) for more tips.



Optimize Your Home With A Free Energy Audit



Is your home properly sealed, insulated and ventilated? If you've noticed any issues such as mold, mildew, ice dams, drafts or overall discomfort, your home may require improvements to resolve energy inefficiencies. To better understand and manage your home's energy use and cost, take advantage of the Energy Optimization program's free energy audit!

The Home Energy Optimizer is a brief online survey that analyzes your home's energy use. You will be required to enter some specific information, such as the year your home was built, the type of heating and cooling systems in your home, and when various systems and appliances were purchased and installed.

Once you've completed the survey, you will receive a personalized, comprehensive report, as well as cost-saving tips and recommendations to help reduce energy waste throughout your household. Additionally, all participants will receive a free energy-saving kit, which includes lightbulbs and other devices to help save energy and water!

How to complete your home energy audit:

Visit the Energy Optimization website at michigan-energy.org.

- Select your electric utility from the drop-down menu at the top of the page.
- In the left menu bar, select "Online Home Audit."
- Click "Get Started Now!" and complete the questionnaire.

Upon completion of the Home Energy Optimizer survey, your free energy-saving kit will be mailed to the address you indicate. Have questions about the free home energy audit or energy-saving kit? Call us at 877-296-4319. ■



Energy savings at your fingertips

Team up with the Energy Optimization program to improve the comfort, durability and energy efficiency of your home! Complete our Online Home Audit to assess your home's energy performance, and receive a comprehensive report featuring cost-saving tips and opportunities.

ENERGY TIP: Receive a **FREE** energy-saving kit when you complete your Online Home Audit!

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319

Better together



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.

Reeling It In Fishing Photo Gallery



Submit Your Photos

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

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **Sports/Outdoor Fun**, due **July 25** for the September issue and **Best Friends**, due **Aug. 25** for the October issue.

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

Remember <http://bit.ly/countrylines> to submit photos!

1. This is the way the true masters fish. Nice catch. *Photo by Andy Byerly*
2. David Gill caught the biggest lake trout of the day on Lake Superior while on a three generation family fishing trip. *Photo by Michelle Gill*
3. My Arizona niece catching her first bass in Michigan on Wabasis Lake in Greenville. *Photo by Jerry Miller*
4. My daughter, Heidi, and I fishing in the evening. She just had to kiss the fish before she put it back. *Photo by John Segard*
5. Beautiful shimmering salmon caught on Lake Michigan near Manistee at sunset. *Photo by Anne Marie Marz*

QUICK & EASY

Cook these fresh and simple recipes.

Blender Pots de Crème

Janice Harvey, Charlevoix

- 1 pkg. (6 oz.) chocolate chips
- 1 egg
- 2 T. sugar
- 1 t. vanilla
- ¼ t. salt
- ½ c. plus 2 T. milk
- whipped topping
- chocolate sprinkles or grated chocolate

In a blender, add the chocolate chips, egg, sugar, vanilla, and salt. Blend at high speed to mix ingredients and break up chocolate chips. Heat milk just to a boil, pour into blender and whirl at medium speed 1 minute. Pour into six small pot de crème dishes or custard cups and chill several hours. Just before serving, top with whipped topping and sprinkles.



Photos—831 Creative

BBQ Meatballs

Theresa Mandeville, Manistee

- 3 lbs. ground beef
- 1 c. milk
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 2 c. quick oats
- 1 T. minced onions
- 2 eggs
- pepper to taste

Topping:

- 2 c. ketchup
- 1 T. mustard
- 1 T. Worcestershire sauce
- 1 ½ c. brown sugar
- 1 T. garlic powder

Preheat oven to 350°. Lightly grease a 9x13 pan. Mix meatball ingredients and form into large meatballs. Mix topping ingredients together in a saucepan on low heat until blended. Pour topping over meatballs and bake for 1 hour, covered.



Quick Corn Fritters

Virginia Curtiss, Bitley

- 1 egg
- ½ t. salt
- pinch of sugar
- ½ can cream style corn
- ¾ c. water
- peanut oil
- 2 c. self-rising flour
- sugar or powdered sugar

In a medium mixing bowl using a wire whisk, whip the egg with salt and a good pinch of sugar. Add the cream style corn and water; whisk. Fill an 8 ½" HEAVY skillet half full of peanut oil. Heat to just below medium heat. Add self-rising flour; stir with a fork. Drop the mixture into the frying pan one tablespoon at a time, using about ½ the batter. Turn fritters over once. Place on paper towels to drain. When just warm, roll in sugar or powdered sugar, and place them on a platter Tip: put sugar in a plastic bag and shake them quickly.

Gramma's Microwave Cashew Brittle

Linda Ackerman, Thompsonville

- ¾ c. whole cashews (or other nuts)
- ½ c. white sugar
- ¼ c. white corn syrup
- pinch salt
- ½ t. butter
- ¼ t. vanilla
- ½ t. baking soda

Place the first four ingredients in a glass microwave safe container (a 2-cup Pyrex measuring cup is perfect). Stir thoroughly. Cook 2 minutes on high; stir and cook 2 minutes longer on high. Add butter and vanilla. Stir and cook 30-35 seconds on high. The bubbling syrup should be light brown. Sprinkle baking soda over top. Stir quickly, thoroughly and carefully, because it's very hot. Pour immediately onto warm, lightly cooked, greased cooling rack. Cool and break up into pieces. Makes approximately 12 large pieces.



Gather Round The Co-op Kitchen Table

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

Members can submit recipes online for a chance to win a \$50 electric bill credit; plus there's more! We will print the winning recipe in *Country Lines* with a 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 and "World Cuisine" recipes by August 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





Where A Shipwright's Career Begins

By Yvonne Whitman





The Great Lakes Boat Building School (GLBBS) in Cedarville, MI, began when a group of residents brainstormed for an idea they hoped would bring economic opportunities to their community. By combining their money and energies, they came up with the idea to create a boat building school, which seemed to be a perfect fit for the long and storied history of boats in the beautiful Les Cheneaux Islands of Lake Huron. This grassroots group purchased waterfront property on which to build the school and in 2006 ground was broken.

The only licensed proprietary school of its kind in the state, GLBBS is housed in an impressive 12,000-square-foot facility, designed and built specifically for the teaching of woodworking, basic design, traditional and modern boat building, and yacht joinery. In 2007, Patrick Mahon, a master boat builder, marine surveyor, and instructor with more than 30 years of experience, was recruited to act as Program Director. Mahon developed the core program and, in the fall of 2007, the first group of students stepped through the doors of the new facility.

Students attending the Great Lakes Boat Building School represent a great diversity of backgrounds, ages, hometowns, skills and goals, but all are bound by their love of fine craftsmanship and their passion for wooden boats. With students coming from all walks of life and from all over the U.S., Canada and internationally, there is a wide range of experiences, perspectives, and skills to contribute and share. When combined with the talents and experience of the school's instructors and staff, it adds up to a focused, rewarding and enjoyable educational environment.


The school offers students the choice of a nine-month "Comprehensive Boat Building" program in which wood composite boat building techniques are taught or they can return for the advanced nine-month "Career Boat Building" program. This second-year program offers instruction on mechanical systems and yacht joinery, which includes techniques of finishing interiors. The school can accommodate up to 25 students and according to Mahon, "We are always interested in



applications from new students to fill those spots." Graduates are in high demand with the school boasting a placement rate of nearly 100 percent.

In a short time, GLBBS has earned a distinguished reputation for graduating skilled craftsmen. In 2015, proof of this was given by the United States Navy. The school was commissioned to build a 32-foot pilot 'gig' boat to be used on the USS Constitution or, as it is more fondly known, "Old Ironsides." Once completed, the boat, named "August Glory," was delivered by GLBBS staff and students to its final destination at the Charlestown Naval Yard in Boston, MA (now called the Boston Navy Yard) for delivery to the U.S. Navy. As Mahon proudly recalls, "It was an honor and privilege to deliver 'August Glory' to Boston. A team of dedicated students created a beautiful example of traditional wooden boat building. They built a seaworthy vessel which will be used by the Navy for many years. The boat reflects the craftsmanship and skill of GLBBS students, and being able to take part in the delivery was something I will always treasure." ■

To learn more about the school, visit glbbs.org or call 906-484-1081. Tours of the school are given daily to the public Monday through Friday at 2 p.m.



Asparagus

REIGNS IN MICHIGAN

By Emily Haines Lloyd

In the second week of June, Oceana County, also known as “The Asparagus Capital of the Nation,” gears up for its annual Asparagus Festival. Started in 1974, it’s the longest running asparagus festival in the country. It boasts all the events you’d expect—a parade, 5k run, arts and crafts fair, and the annual Asparagus Queen pageant. Back in 2001, the grand marshal was a well-known figure in the industry—Dick Walsworth.

Walsworth, a second-generation asparagus farmer from Mears was happy to ride in the parade, but has always known that the real star is the asparagus.

“Oceana County produces two-thirds of the asparagus grown in the state of Michigan,” Walsworth says, proudly. “Considering Michigan is the second largest grower of asparagus in the country, that’s a pretty big deal.”

Walsworth got his start on the farm established by his parents, Walter and Anna Walsworth, in 1932, and purchased it himself in the early 1970s. He has since expanded the acreage. It is now owned by his son and daughter-in-law, Ryan and Janice, and at 260 acres, Golden Stock Farms is one of Michigan’s largest.

“The Lake Michigan shore is the perfect place to grow asparagus,” Walsworth explains. “The lake moderates the temperatures, keeping it from getting too hot or cold and preventing frost.”

The Michigan asparagus yields prove his point, producing up to 23 million pounds annually—an impressive harvest for a crop that produces primarily early May through late June. However, a short season isn’t the most difficult challenge facing the industry.

Walsworth identifies the increase in imported asparagus, labor demands, and the lack of local processing plants as pressing concerns. With countries like Peru and Mexico—





The Walsworth family (left to right) Ryan, Janice, Marcia and Dick work together to make Golden Stock Farms successful.



who have very favorable growing conditions all year and large processing companies like Del Monte and Green Giant that have moved their plants to Peru—things are tough. Additionally, asparagus is a hand-harvested crop, meaning that labor costs are very expensive—an estimated 25 percent of gross sales, Walsworth says. Altogether, it means Michigan’s asparagus industry is facing real struggles.



As of 2005, those struggles are also faced by Ryan, who bought the farm from his father and mother.

“Ryan is confronted with a much different landscape than when I purchased the farm from my father,” Walsworth says. “Things are difficult, but we keep working on solutions.”

The Walsworths are most definitely problem solvers, as Ryan also recently took over his father’s role as chairman of the Michigan Asparagus Advisory Board. Dick also served for 30 years on the Great Lakes Energy Board of Directors and 25 years on the Wolverine Power Cooperative Board—providing valuable knowledge and insight to both. Walsworth retires from his seats this year, but is in no way sitting on the sidelines as he focuses on promoting renewable energy, as a member of the Spartan Renewable Energy Board of Directors.

At 74 years old, why does Dick Walsworth keep working so hard? “Once a farmer, always a farmer,” he says. ■

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Photos-Emily Haines Lloyd

A Walsworth Family Favorite: Asparagus Roll-Ups

- Fresh asparagus
- Thinly sliced ham
- Thinly sliced turkey, chicken or hard salami
- Softened cream cheese (plain or flavored)

Trim and clean asparagus spears. Blanche in boiling water for 2 minutes. Drain and submerge in ice water to cool. Drain well. Spread slices of meat with cream cheese, lay asparagus on top and roll up. Refrigerate in covered container.

Visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and others.





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 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 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 photo: 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." That's 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.

I Remember...

We invite members to share their fondest memories.

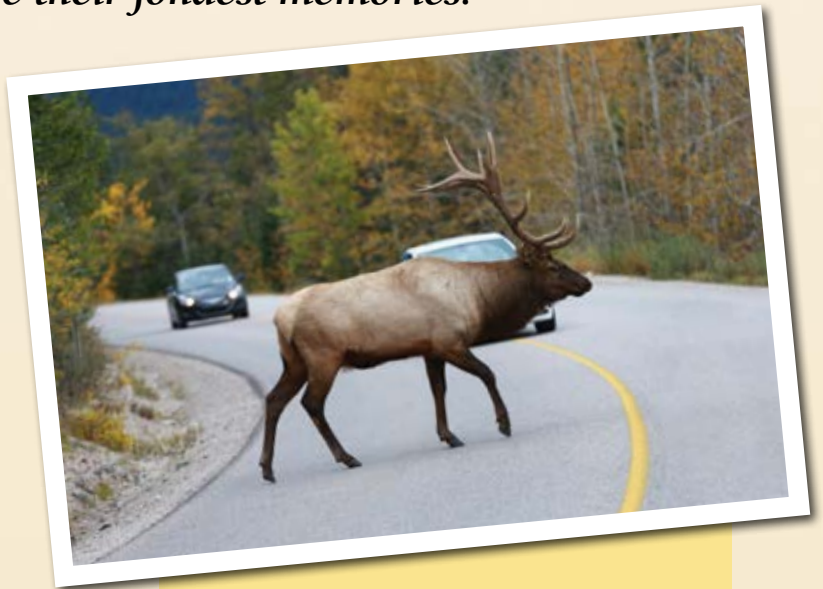
A Unique Driving Lesson

When my daughter was almost 15, I took her down a narrow traffic-free dirt road in northern Michigan to teach her gear shifting in our Volkswagen GTI. She quickly got the hang of using the clutch and gears and was quietly cruising down the road when, without warning, an enormous bull elk leapt into the road 20 yards ahead of the car!

The elk, with a full rack of antlers, proceeded ahead of us filling the road while my daughter, totally unfazed by the event, just drove behind this awe-inspiring animal. Its enormous body towered above us for about 200 yards before it sauntered back into the woods.

My wife, with our dog, was picking blackberries further down the road. Imagine her surprise when we told her what had happened. Since then, we have frequently seen the imprint of large cloven hooves on the same road but never another elk, which was likely part of the Pigeon River herd. (The road is just north of Vanderbilt to the west of I-75.) Has anyone else in northern Michigan, or the USA for that matter, been partnered by a bull elk on their first driving lesson?

*Ed Robinson, Thumb Lake
Great Lakes Energy Cooperative member*



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