

Midwest Energy Cooperative

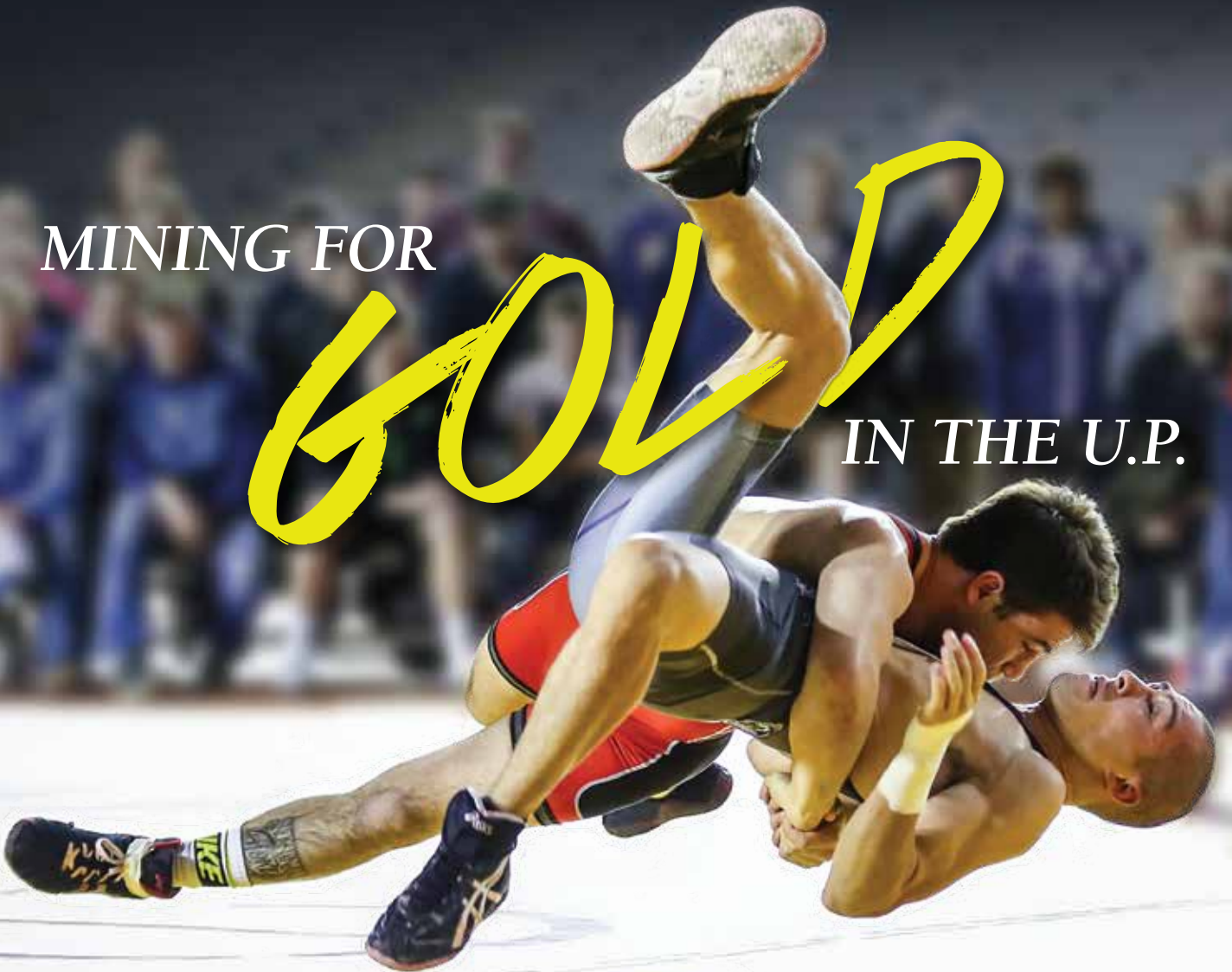
September 2016

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

MINING FOR

GOLD

IN THE U.P.



Plus!

Conquering High-Speed Fatigue

Employees Give 600 Hours
Of Service In One Day

Grant Brings Drone Technology
To Local School

Switch to geo by the end of the year for incredible savings



Switching to geo can save you even more—if you hurry

Upgrading to geothermal just got more affordable, and with the 30% federal tax credit set to expire at the end of this year, the time to act is now! WaterFurnace units can save you up to 70% on heating, cooling & hot water by capturing the clean, renewable energy in your backyard to provide incredible home comfort. Now, for a limited time, we're offering homeowners with traditional systems a very special Switch-to-Geo rebate package on our most efficient and comfortable geothermal heat pumps—the 7 Series and the 5 Series—from now until Dec. 9, 2016. Contact your local WaterFurnace dealer to learn more about the Geothermal Upgrade Event!



7 SERIES
\$2000
INSTANT REBATE

5 SERIES
\$1000
INSTANT REBATE

ACT NOW FOR A
30% Tax Credit
EXPIRES DEC. 2016

Your Local WaterFurnace Dealers

Bad Axe
B & D Htg
(989) 269-5280
bdheating.com

Berrien Springs
WaterFurnace
Michiana
(269) 473-5667
gogreenmich
geothermal.com

Big Rapids
Stratz Htg & Clg, Inc.
(231) 796-3717
stratzgeocomfort.com

Caro
AllTemp
Comfort, Inc.
(866) 844-HEAT (4328)
geo4less.com

Carsonville
Certified Temperature
Innovations
(810) 300-7748

Clifford
Orton Refrigeration
& Htg
(989) 761-7691
sanduskygeothermal.com

DeWitt
S & J Htg & Clg
(517) 669-3705
geothermalservices
ofmichigan.com

Grand Rapids
Total Comfort
Resource, LLC
(616) 406-3182
totalcomfortresource.com

Hart/Ludington
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
adamsheatingcooling.com

Indian River
M & M Plmb & Htg
(231) 238-7201
mm-plumbing.com

Jackson/Adrian
Comfort 1
Htg & A/C
(517) 764-1500
comfort1.net/geothermal

Kalkaska
Kalkaska Plmb & Htg
(231) 258-3588
kalkaskageothermal.net

Mt Pleasant
Walton Htg & Clg
(989) 774-1566
waltonheating.com

Muskegon
Adams Htg & Clg
(231) 873-2665
adamsheating
cooling.com

Kiessel Geothermal
Htg & Clg
(231) 747-7509
kiesselsgeo.com

Portland
ESI Htg & Clg
(517) 647-6906
esiheating.com

Sunfield
Mark Woodman
Plmb & Htg
(517) 886-1138
mwphonline.com

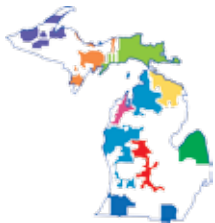
Traverse City
Geofurnace Htg & Clg
(231) 943-1000
watergeofurnace.com
D & W Mechanical
(231) 941-1215
dwgeothermal.com

WaterFurnace
Smarter from the Ground Up™



visit us at waterfurnace.com/credit

Rebates available only to residential customers through participating dealers.
WaterFurnace is a registered trademark of WaterFurnace International, Inc.



Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

September 2016
Vol. 36, No. 8

Executive Editor
Casey Clark

Editor
Christine Dorr

Copy Editor
Heidi Spencer

Publisher
**Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association**

Michigan Country Lines, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Lansing, MI, and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

Subscriptions are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors.

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

Association officers are **Robert Kran**, Great Lakes Energy, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

CONTACT US/LETTERS TO EDITOR:

Michigan Country Lines
201 Townsend St., Suite 900
Lansing, MI 48933
248-534-7358
cdorr@meca.coop
countrylines.com



Change of Address:

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

The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

IN THIS ISSUE

6 ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL—SO IS THE FUTURE OF RURAL AMERICA

Justin LaBerge

10 COOKING COMMUNITY

Desserts—So Delicious You'll Be Tempted To Eat Dessert First
Christin McKamey & Our Readers

14 FEATURE

Mining For Gold In The U.P.
Emily Haines Lloyd

18 READERS' PAGE

The Wheels On The Bus
Jack O'Malley
Guess Our New Mystery Photo

ON THE COVER

During Northern Michigan University's 15-year anniversary event, Sam Jones, an NMU student-athlete (wearing red) won the 59kg match by technical fall 9-0 against All-Navy wrestler Angel Oliveras.

Photo—Courtesy of Northern Michigan University

IN YOUR WORDS

What is your favorite Michigan craft beer?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by October 1.

Last month's responses to the question:

Where can you get the best burger in Michigan?

"Clyde's in Manistique"

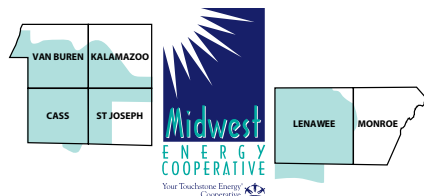
"Corky's in Allegan"

"West Pier Drive-In, Sault Ste. Marie"

"Stella's Lounge, Grand Rapids"



A student-athlete at NMU, Elizabeth Becker, is a force to be reckoned with in her weightlifting division and brings that same focus to the kitchen. With a major in environmental sustainability and dreams of owning an organic farm one day (along with an Olympic medal), Elizabeth cooks mainly organic meals. Her crockpot veggie mac & cheese is perfect for the health-conscious athlete, as well as the comfort food junkie. Visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and read more about NMU's Olympic athlete training on page 14.



CASSOPOLIS DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

901 E. State Street (P.O. Box 127)
Cassopolis, MI 49031-0127
M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

PAW PAW DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

59825 S. LaGrave, Paw Paw, MI 49079
M-F, 8 a.m.–4:30 p.m.

ADRIAN DISTRICT SERVICE CENTER

1610 E. Maumee Street, Adrian, MI 49221
M-F, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.

CONTACT US

MIDWEST ENERGY COOPERATIVE

800-492-5989 • TeamMidwest.com

MIDWEST CONNECTIONS

844-493-4237 • TeamFiber.com

MIDWEST PROPANE

844-493-4427 • TeamMidwestPropane.com

E-mail: info@TeamMidwest.com

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Clarence "Topper" Barth, *Chairman*, Three Rivers

269-279-9233

Clarence.Barth@teammidwest.com

Ben Russell, *Vice Chairman*, Constantine

269-435-8564

Ben.Russell@teammidwest.com

Ron Armstrong, *Secretary*, Lawton

269-299-0239

Ron.Armstrong@teammidwest.com

John Green, *Treasurer*, Dowagiac

269-470-2816

John.Green@teammidwest.com

Arell Chapman, Onsted

517-292-3040

Arell.Chapman@teammidwest.com

James Dickerson, Bloomingdale

269-370-6868

Jim.Dickerson@teammidwest.com

Harry Gentz, Blissfield

517-443-5537

Harry.Gentz@teammidwest.com

Fred Turk, Decatur

269-423-7762

Fred.Turk@teammidwest.com

PRESIDENT/CEO

Robert Hance

COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR/EDITOR

Patty Nowlin



Find us on Facebook:

[facebook.com/TeamMidwest](https://www.facebook.com/TeamMidwest)

Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Beverage Straws And High-Speed Internet



Robert Hance
President/CEO

Inspiration sometimes comes in odd packages. Today mine is a beverage straw/stir stick.

I've always been a little perplexed by this seemingly useless piece of plastic, typically served up by baristas and bartenders with your beverage of choice. Sometimes it's a thin singular barrel, and other times it's two or three thin barrels melded together. Do I stir with it? Drink my beverage through it?

My typical approach is to set it aside and enjoy the beverage unassisted, but inspiration hit as I removed the thin barrel of plastic from this morning's cup of brew.

We've been trying to figure out a meaningful way to differentiate our fiber internet service from every other option promoted as "high speed." You can't sit through an hour of television without seeing an ad for high-speed internet service, and our inboxes and mailboxes are filled with promotions touting the virtues of the latest high-speed offering. From satellite to DSL to cable, these providers offer their version of a high-speed experience designed to bring you new levels of surfing satisfaction.

The problem is that "high speed" has become a generic term for just about any internet experience faster than dial-up. As a result, we've become understandably skeptical about anything promoted as high-speed, because most experiences just don't live up to our needs and expectations. We've got a collective case of high-speed fatigue.

Fiber internet sets a new standard for high-speed, and we want to awaken folks from the fatigue to understand and experience the difference. Imagine trying to satiate a dire thirst by drinking water out of a beverage straw. You can't get much power out of that thin barrel and are left parched. That's dial-up. Satellite, DSL or cable experience is more like the larger straw served with your favorite soft drink. The flow is stronger and more steady, but just as satisfaction sets in, the straw develops a kink or a small chunk of ice gets lodged, and your flow is compromised. Or maybe you've reached the bottom of your drink and need to pay extra for an additional serving to satisfy your thirst.

Fiber internet is like a huge fire hose. It's a consistent, robust flow of information and data that can't be compromised. It doesn't matter how many others are consuming from the same hose; the flow is fast, unwavering and unlimited. It's the ultimate satisfaction for your thirst.

Your electric cooperative is stepping up to serve the rural space where others won't, and delivering an experience that others can't. It's not high speed; it's fiber speed! ■



GO FOR THE GIG

with Olympic-Sized Speeds

In the world of high-speed internet, nothing takes the gold like fiber.

As world-class athletes competed for the Olympic gold in Rio last month, Midwest Connections continued to redefine “high-speed” with its Olympic-sized speeds and experience. We don’t offer a high-speed experience; we offer FIBER speed!

Other internet offerings promote great “up to” speeds, but you quickly learn, especially as you wait for your site to load, that “up to” speeds rarely equate to the actual experience.

That’s where fiber internet is changing the high-speed game. Our speeds are guaranteed on your hard-wired device, meaning if you sign up for 25 Mbps and have the right equipment to support those speeds, you’ll actually enjoy a 25 Mbps experience. Your Olympic-sized experience can go all the way up to Gig service if that’s the speed you need!

In 2014, Midwest Energy Cooperative implemented a plan to build a robust, two-way, fiber-based communications system across its electric utility grid, providing great utility and member benefits now and into the future. We are leveraging that

investment through Midwest Connections to deliver Olympic-speed fiber solutions to our co-op members across southwest Michigan, and more than 2,000 homes and businesses are now realizing what a true high-speed experience looks like.

Packages start at just \$49.95/month for 25 Mbps download and 10 Mbps upload speeds and offer unlimited data.

We are fully deploying this service across our southwest Michigan territory over a five-year period (2015-2019), and our construction plan is determined by our members through a good, old-fashioned grassroots approach. Our service territory is divided into 23 zones based on substation service area, and 11 of those will be lit by the end of 2016. When you sign up for service at TeamFiber.com, you are assigned to a zone, and when we are ready to begin construction in a new area, we’ll go to the zone with the greatest percentage of interest. The next steps are in your hands!

Ready to experience fiber-speed internet service? Visit TeamFiber.com and click on “Join the Crowd” to submit your expression of interest and see where you are in the five-year build. ■



ALL POLITICS IS LOCAL

So is the future of rural America.

By Justin LaBerge

In two months, Americans will go to the polls and cast votes for a president, 34 senators, 435 members of Congress, 12 governors, 5,920 state legislators and countless other local races.

While the presidential race is at the top of most voters' minds, it is the state and local races that have a more direct and immediate impact on the "kitchen table" issues that matter most to families. For rural America, the stakes in this election are especially high.

Rural America continues to experience population decline driven by out-migration of residents to larger urban areas. The trends underlying much of this out-migration—issues such as globalization, technology advances and the shift from a manufacturing-based economy to a service and knowledge-based economy—are largely beyond the control of any community, state or even country.

Although the challenges facing rural America are global, the prevailing sentiment among rural stakeholders and researchers is that the solutions are largely homegrown. In other words, if rural America is to enjoy a prosperous future, it will be thanks to the ingenuity, self-reliance and determination of its people. The rural electrification movement is a prime example of this.

When for-profit utilities based in urban areas declined to build electric lines in sparsely populated rural areas, the residents of those communities banded together to form cooperatives and build their own systems with the help of government loans. Today, America's electric cooperatives are finding new ways to support and promote the interests of the communities they serve.

Co-ops Vote

One program that is particularly relevant today is the Co-ops Vote initiative. This non-partisan, nationwide program is designed to promote civic engagement and voter participation in communities served by electric cooperatives. Co-op members can go to vote.coop to gather information on the

voter registration process in their state, dates of elections, information on the candidates running in those elections and explanations of key issues affecting rural America.

Visitors to the website can also take a pledge to be a co-op voter. By taking this pledge, they can send a message to candidates at all levels of government that electric cooperative members will be showing up at the polls in force and are paying close attention to the issues that impact the quality of life in their communities.

Growing our own leaders

Mil Duncan, a noted scholar on rural economic development issues, said in a recent essay, "far and away the biggest challenge rural development practitioners face is the need for greater human capital—for more leaders, more entrepreneurs..."

To answer the call for more rural leaders, America's electric cooperatives created the Washington Youth Tour program. Each year, approximately 1,700 high school students representing electric cooperatives from across the nation converge in Washington, D.C., for a weeklong, all-expenses-paid leadership development experience.

Previous Youth Tour participants have become university presidents, CEOs of Fortune 500 companies and members of Congress. Many more have returned home to serve in many underappreciated leadership roles—coaches, small business owners, church deacons, county commissioners—that form the backbone of our communities.

Making the most of natural strengths

One of the greatest advantages enjoyed by electric cooperatives is their ability to leverage the unique strengths of the communities they serve.

The members of each cooperative are empowered to explore different approaches to solving problems and figure out what solutions are best for their community. This applies to the energy sources

they use to generate electricity, the technologies they use to operate the system and the policies and procedures they adopt. What works for co-op members in Michigan might not be right for co-op members in Oregon.

While many rural communities face similar challenges driven by similar factors, the best way to address those issues can vary widely from community to community.

Fostering connectivity

In the early 1900s, electricity access was a key factor in determining the quality of life and economic prosperity of a community. Those that had electricity enjoyed many modern conveniences. Those without it languished in darkness and struggled to compete.

When electric cooperatives brought electricity to rural America, the playing field was leveled and small towns experienced a renaissance. A similar trend is unfolding as broadband access makes its way to more rural communities.

One recent high-profile example involves Christopher Ingraham, a data journalist at the Washington Post. In 2015, he wrote a short article based on a dataset from the USDA that ranked American communities on qualities that are often indicators of desirable places to live. The community with the lowest score in the USDA ranking was Red Lake County, MN.

His story generated a lot of comments, including many from the people of Red Lake County who encouraged him to come out for a visit. He did, and was struck by the kindness of the residents and beauty of the landscape.

As a journalist who writes about data, Ingraham wasn't tied to any particular location. As long as he has a reliable high-speed internet connection, he can do his job and email his editor the finished stories. In March of this year, he announced in another story that Red Lake County had won him

over, and he'd be moving there with his wife and young children. He can make this move because of high-speed broadband.

The shift to a knowledge-based economy might hurt some traditional rural industries, but as more companies embrace teleworking, employees who were forced to move to large cities to work in certain industries can keep their jobs while working remotely from rural communities.

Expanding access to broadband in rural areas is one of the key issues addressed by the Co-ops Vote program, and Ingraham's story is just one example why.

Taking action for the future

The challenges facing rural America will not be solved by one person, one idea or one action. But on November 8, we will determine which leaders we trust to enact policies that will help small communities help themselves.

Study the issues that are critical to the future of your community. Look at the positions and backgrounds of every candidate running for every race, from the president to county road commissioner. Then join millions of fellow electric cooperative members at the polls. ■



Recycle And Save!

Do you have an old refrigerator or chest freezer taking up valuable space in your basement or garage? While you may not think about these older appliances often, they can be costing you hundreds of dollars each year. Midwest Energy Cooperative's Energy Optimization program offers free pick up and recycling of older functioning appliances, and you can earn \$50 for proper removal and disposal of each secondary refrigerator or freezer.

Program includes:

Free pick up and recycling of the units is handled by the Energy Optimization team. While our drivers are at your home to pick up your old or inefficient refrigerator or chest freezer, we can also recycle window air conditioners and dehumidifiers. All items must be in working condition.

How to participate

Contact the Energy Optimization team at **877-296-4319** to schedule an appointment. A representative from our team will come to your home for the pick up, and a cash incentive will be mailed to you. It's that simple!

Cash incentives are available for the following functional appliances:

Appliance Type	Pick up or Ride-Along Item	Incentive Amount
Refrigerator	Pick up	\$50
Chest Freezer	Pick up	\$50
Window Air Conditioner	Ride-Along	\$15
Dehumidifier	Ride-Along	\$15

Limit two appliances per year, per residence.

More ways to save!

Are you working on a remodeling project? Your electric utility's Energy Optimization program offers cash incentives for qualifying ENERGY STAR® appliances from refrigerators, washers and dryers, ceiling fans, room air conditioners, televisions and more. Visit michigan-energy.org for a complete list of cash incentives for your home.

Please visit **michigan-energy.org** for more information, or call **877-296-4319** with any questions. ■



Ready to upgrade or get rid of an old refrigerator or freezer?

Recycle it and save! Earn cash incentives for recycling your old, functioning appliances.

- **Refrigerator = \$50**
- **Freezer = \$50**
- **Dehumidifier (ride along item) = \$15**
- **Window Air Conditioner (ride along item) = \$15**

Contact the Energy Optimization team to schedule a free pick up.

Shopping for new appliances?

Energy Optimization offers cash incentives for qualifying ENERGY STAR® appliances. Visit our website for a complete list of savings opportunities.

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877-296-4319



Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan electric service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit michigan-energy.org.

Sports/Outdoor Fun



Lori Haley, Three Rivers – "It's A Hit!"

Photo Contest Winners

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the winning photo and some great runners-up from our July/August photo contest. Winners were selected from 15 Facebook entries receiving over 400 votes! Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

Visit teammidwest.com/photo-contest/ to view all the photos submitted.



Nichele Rohacs, Niles – "Smiling All The Way To First Base!"



Tammy West, Jones – "A West Pitch."



Stacy Ford, White Pigeon – "First Time On Skis And A Magic Carpet."



Barb Niblock, White Pigeon – "Cold Spring Soccer Game."



Enter Your Photos and Win!

Team Midwest's photo contest is underway; and one lucky winner will win a credit of up to \$200 on their December 2016 electric bill. Every month, a new theme will be announced, and then you can submit your photo. The photo receiving the most votes each month on our Facebook contest page will be entered into the drawing for the year-end bill credit and will be featured in *Country Lines*.

Visit facebook.com/TeamMidwest and click on "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs to submit your high-resolution photos. Not on Facebook? You can also enter at TeamMidwest.com/photocontest. Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too! **Our September theme is Country Roads. Photos are accepted from Sept. 1 to Sept. 20 for the November issue.**

DESSERTS

These decadent dessert recipes are irresistible and will satisfy any craving.

Nana's Sour Cream Rhubarb Pie

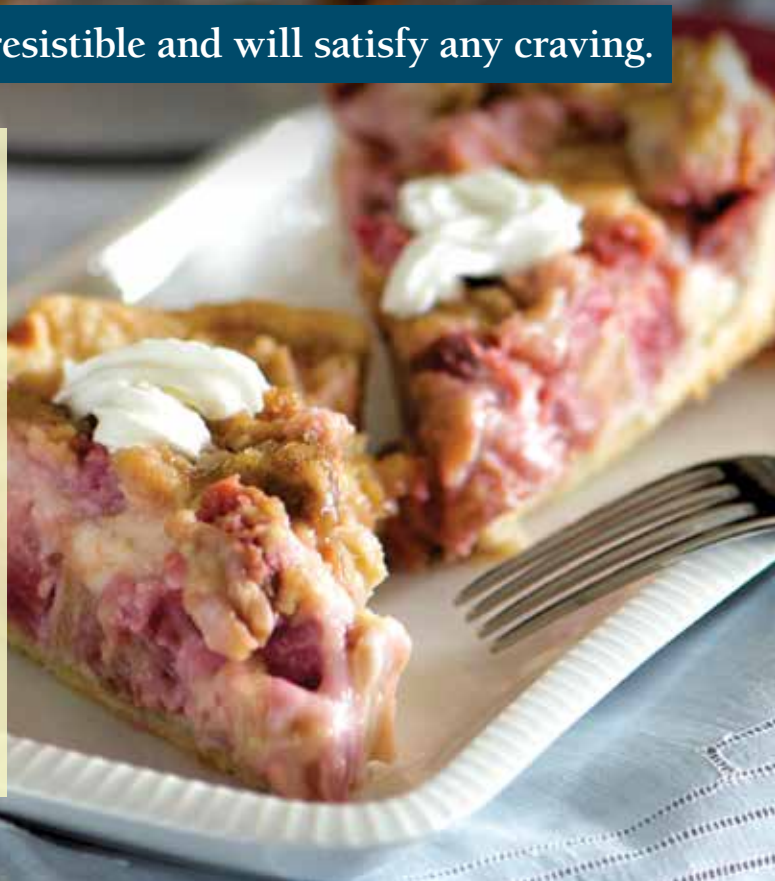
Tonya Langlois, Rogers City

- 1 unbaked pie crust
- 5 cups chopped rhubarb
- 1 egg
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup white sugar
- 1 cup sour cream
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour

Crumble Topping

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup melted butter

Preheat oven to 450 F. Shape pie crust into pie plate. Mix egg, white sugar, sour cream, and $\frac{1}{3}$ cup flour. Evenly coat chopped rhubarb with mixture and place in unbaked pie crust. Mix $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flour, brown sugar, and butter until crumbly. Sprinkle on top of rhubarb. Bake at 450 F for 15 minutes, reduce heat to 350 F and bake for 40 minutes more. Watch edges and cover as needed to avoid over darkening. Serve warm immediately.



Photos—831 Creative

Sopapilla Cheesecake (Mexican Cheesecake)

Theresa Timko, Caro



- 2 packages cream cheese, softened
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 2 tubes crescent rolls
- mini chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ stick melted butter to drizzle

Preheat oven to 375 F. Mix cream cheese, $\frac{3}{4}$ cup sugar and vanilla together. Spray bottom of a 9x13-inch pan and lay out one tube of crescent rolls, carefully pressing seams together to form one crust on all sides of pan. Spread cream cheese mixture over crust. Sprinkle desired amount of mini chocolate chips over the cream cheese mixture. Lay remaining tube of rolls over this mixture and gently press seams together. Combine cinnamon and $\frac{1}{2}$ cup sugar together and sprinkle over the top crust (this makes the goodness layer!). Drizzle the melted butter over the top and bake about 25 minutes. Cool completely and refrigerate before cutting bars.

Creeping Crust Cobbler

Ginny Horton, Brethren

- ½ cup butter
- 1 cup flour
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ½ cup milk
- 2 cups fruit: blackberries, blueberries, raspberries, apricots, peaches, etc.
- 1 cup or less of sugar



Preheat oven to 350 F. Melt butter in a 10-inch baking dish. Mix flour, sugar, baking powder, then add milk and mix together. Spoon mixture over melted butter. Heat fresh or canned fruit with sugar, using less sugar if the fruit is canned. Pour the

fruit mixture over dough. Bake for about 30 minutes or until crust is golden brown; crust will rise to the top. Serve warm or cold, if any lasts that long!

Frozen Mocha Pie

Linda Ackerman, Thompsonville

- 1 teaspoon instant espresso powder
- 2 teaspoon boiling water
- 1 package (1 ounce or 4 serving size) vanilla flavor instant pudding
- 1¾ cup very cold milk
- 1 (8 ounce) container whipped topping, thawed
- 1 prepared chocolate crumb pie shell



Dissolve espresso powder in hot water. Chill, then add to milk. In a large bowl, prepare pudding as directed on package (using espresso/milk mixture). Fold whipped topping into pudding mixture; pour into pie shell. Freeze for two hours or

until pie is firm. Top each serving with additional whipped topping and a drizzle of chocolate syrup. Garnish with chocolate shavings, if desired.



Gather Round The Co-op Kitchen Table

Join our **EXCLUSIVE** online cooking community to submit your recipes and try recipes from other members.

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

Please submit your favorite "Healthy Living" recipe by November 1 for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit and have your recipe featured in *Country Lines*.

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



MIDWEST IN THE COMMUNITY



The employee family takes a break from the action to gather at the new headquarters construction site for a group photo.

Neighbor helping neighbor—that's how your Team Midwest family approaches daily work and efforts to give back. We live, work and serve right here in our local community, and strive to actively live our community values in meaningful and impacting ways.

On Wednesday, June 15, the entire southwest Michigan family of employees came together in an unprecedented day of community service across Cassopolis and surrounding communities. Nearly 90 employees in eight teams were deployed to 10 project sites, giving close to 600 "man hours" to strengthen and support the community.

"We recently broke ground on a new headquarters facility just east of Cassopolis, and wanted to acknowledge this huge step that we are taking on behalf of our members, communities and employees," said Bob Hance, president/CEO. "Instead of a gold-shovel groundbreaking event, we set out to do something meaningful and important for this community that we've called home for nearly 80 years and intend to call home for many years to come."



Roger Bowser, Tony Fornoff and Adam Johnson work on installing a new fence at Russ Forest Park.



Paige Deak and McKenna Wolf split and stack logs at Five Star Summit in Union.



Alyson Gillam paints a picnic table at Cass County's Lawless Park.

Teams spread out across the greater community, improving facilities, landscaping, clearing trails, constructing fences and ramps, and completing a myriad of other tasks. Project sites included Bair Lake Bible Camp in Jones; Five Star Summit in Union; Russ Forest in Decatur; Dr. T.K. Lawless Park in Vandalia; and Cass County Fairgrounds, Cass County Council on Aging, Cassopolis Public Schools, and Clisbee, Don Horne and Log Cabin Parks, all in Cassopolis. ■

Strengthening Schools Grant Offers Students Cutting-Edge Technology

Bloomington area residents may have seen something peculiar in the sky at the end of the school year. It wasn't a bird, a plane or Superman, but a great piece of technology designed to give students in the computer arts program at Bloomington Middle/High School a leg up on digital design and production.

In January, Midwest Energy Cooperative awarded a \$2,466.72 Strengthening Schools grant to Mike Douglas to purchase a DJI Inspire 1 aerial filmmaking quadcopter, more commonly known as a drone. Douglas teaches video production, computer graphics, photography and art for students in grades 7–12. While he strives to stay on the forefront of technology, limited budgets pose a challenge.



Bloomington teacher Mike Douglas and student Kyle Guerrero practice flight and camera controls with the DJI Inspire 1 aerial filmmaking quadcopter.

Douglas was drawn to the Inspire 1 because of its state-of-the-art features, as well as the safety benefit of a two-person control system. One operator focuses on flying the unit, while the other operates the high-tech camera from a separate remote. His graduating seniors used the drone to create their 2016 Senior Video.

Applications Available For 2016–17 Grant Cycle

Today's students are tomorrow's business and community leaders, and Midwest Energy Cooperative supports the important work of regional teachers and schools with our Strengthening Schools Grant Program. The program is provided in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

Midwest is now accepting applications for the 2016-17 program. Any teacher, administrator or school official in a public elementary, middle or high school serving students in the Midwest Energy Cooperative service territory may apply for a grant of up to \$2,500 to support classroom needs and special projects, technology, or academic clubs and organizations. School districts may be awarded multiple grants, not to exceed a total of \$5,000 during the annual award cycle.

Applications are due Oct. 17 and funds will be awarded in January 2017. Applications are evaluated, and funding decisions made without knowledge of the school or district, by a committee of Midwest Energy Cooperative members.

For more information or to apply online, visit TeamMidwest.com. Interested applicants may also contact Lori Ruff at 269-445-1139 or email lori.ruff@teammidwest.com.

This Strengthening Schools Grant generated a lot of buzz among students. "I've been excited about this since we started talking about it," said Kyle Guerrero, a student in the advanced video production class. "It's a cool piece of equipment that is just awesome. It will provide us [with] a whole new set of angles for shots that we have never been able to get before."

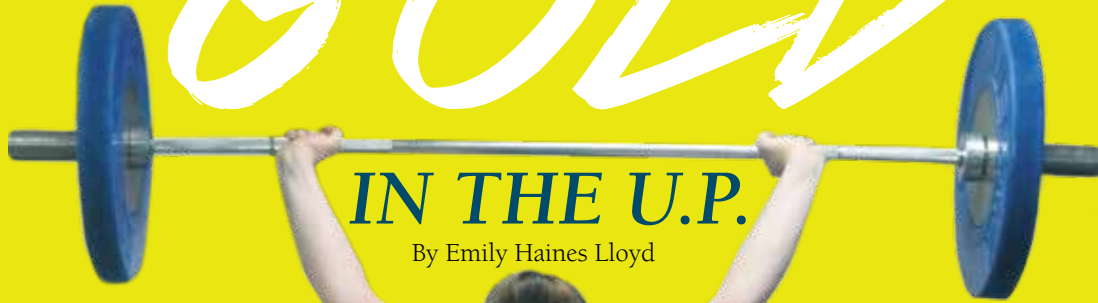
Zane Wallantyn agreed. "It was great to use the drone for my video; I liked it a lot. The shot we got was very crisp and clear. It made the introduction to my video look professional and separated it from videos you generally see on YouTube. I look forward to using it more next year when I take advanced video production." ■

MINING FOR

GOLD

IN THE U.P.

By Emily Haines Lloyd



*"WE'VE SEEN
AMAZING
STUDENT-
ATHLETES TRAIN
HERE AND THEN
GO ON TO MEDAL
AT THE OLYMPICS
AND WORLD
CHAMPIONSHIPS."*

*"I LIKED THE
ISOLATION OF
MARQUETTE. SPENDING
TIME OUTDOORS IS
REALLY INSPIRING."*

*"YOU LEARN TO
LOVE IT ALL—
EVEN THE EFFORT."*

Haley O'Connell,
NMU student-athlete

Photos—Courtesy of Northern Michigan University

On the shores of Lake Superior in the Upper Peninsula, you can catch a glimpse of the world's largest wooden dome, fittingly called Superior Dome. It's certainly a site to see, but even more remarkable is what is happening inside.

Along with hosting Northern Michigan University's football, soccer, and track and field teams, Superior Dome is home to the NMU Olympic Training Site—one of only 18 Olympic Training Sites in the country. These training sites are world-class facilities used by elite

athletes. All of the sites have hosted Olympic or Paralympic trials, and most of them have hosted world cup or world championship events.

At NMU-OTS, you'll find some of the nation's most distinguished Greco-Roman wrestlers and



The Superior Dome on the campus of Northern Michigan University.

weightlifters preparing to make their mark in the sporting world.

"The program has been around since 1985," said Michael Kaurala, Director of Facilities at NMU-OTS. "We've seen amazing student-athletes train here and then go on to medal at the Olympics and world championships."

At the time of the interview, the 2016 Rio Olympics were just around the corner, with eight current or former NMU-OTS athletes competing in various events—Greco-Roman wrestling, freestyle wrestling, boxing, weightlifting and paracanoe.

"It's always an exciting time when the Olympics come around," said Kaurala. "When current or former athletes work so hard and then perform well—it's a great feeling."

As only one of two wrestling OTSs in the country, the draw for student athletes is tremendous.

Nate Lewis, from Arlington, WA, entered the program hoping to pursue his weightlifting and academic dreams.

"I was looking for a positive training environment without sacrificing my education," said Lewis. "I liked the isolation of Marquette. It keeps me more focused on my training, as well

as my studies. Plus, spending time outdoors is really inspiring."

The athletes know a lot about the outdoors, as coaches like to take the athletes out of the state-of-the-art facility sometimes to run along the shore of Lake Superior or up and down the sand dunes for variety in their workouts.

Dalton Roberts, a Greco-Roman wrestler, has had a lot of success in his sport both nationally and internationally. Roberts hopes to become an Olympian and World Team Member and isn't afraid to put in the hard work to make it happen.

"It's a lot of work, for sure," said Roberts. "But it also feels great to do what I love every day. People think it's hard and it is, but you learn to love it all—even the effort."

So, if you're going on a picturesque drive in the U.P. and happen to catch a glimpse of the enormous white dome peeking out through the treetops, take a moment for a closer look. Under that dome you'll find gorgeous Douglas Fir wood beams and a state-of-the-art training facility, with hardworking young men and women who have dreams big enough to fill the entire stadium. ■



Northern Michigan University-Olympic Training Site's Greco-Roman Wrestling Team.

NMU-OTS'S GOLDEN GIRL

The world was watching when Helen Maroulis became the first woman to win a gold medal in wrestling for the United States at the 2016 Olympic Games. Cheering crowds in Rio were likely only eclipsed by the roaring fans in Marquette, MI—where Maroulis spent her senior year of high school and trained at NMU-OTS.

A Maryland native, Maroulis decided to finish high school in Marquette in order to pursue her wrestling dreams at NMU-OTS. Those dreams came to an apex in Rio as she battled to trim down to compete in the 53kg weight class against Japan's Saori Yoshida, three-time reigning Olympic gold medalist and 13-time world champion.

Against the odds, but with all the determination and focus she acquired through her years of training, Maroulis pinned the legend to win gold. NMU-OTS celebrated the success of their former wrestler by using her example to inspire training their current athletes whose Olympic dreams shine as brightly as their gold-winning alumna.

Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Midwest Energy Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 06/30/16.

COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

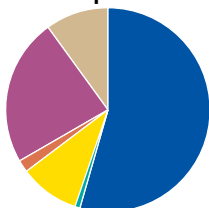
Regional average fuel mix used

Your co-op's fuel mix

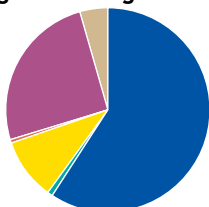
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	50.3%	55.0%
Oil	0.5%	0.6%
Gas	17.9%	12.8%
Hydroelectric	1.4%	0.7%
Nuclear	22.8%	25.7%
Renewable Fuels	7.1%	5.2%
Biofuel	0.6%	0.7%
Biomass	0.4%	0.5%
Solar	0.1%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.0%	0.0%
Wind	5.5%	3.4%
Wood	0.5%	0.5%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas; and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix, but does not include renewable energy credits (RECs) that bring the total for renewable fuels above 10%.

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Average Fuel Mix



EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.8	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,603	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.6	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0072	0.0083

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

Midwest Energy Cooperative purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc., which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Public Act 295: The Clean Renewable and Efficient Energy Act

2015 Annual Energy Optimization Report, Midwest Energy Cooperative, MPSC Case Number U-17783

Midwest Energy contracted with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) to administer the Energy Optimization efforts in order to comply with PA-295. MECA filed a 4 year Energy Optimization plan with the MPSC on August 1, 2011, as required by PA 295. This EO plan was approved by the MPSC on November 10, 2011, and we began implementing the plan January 1, 2012. WECC was selected to implement all Residential, Commercial, and Industrial Programs, and the Energy Optimization website www.michigan-energy.org. WECC has subcontracted with JACO, Michigan Energy Options, Franklin Energy, Morgan Marketing Partners, and Honeywell to assist with the implementation of the EO Programs. MECA contracted with KEMA as the independent 3rd party evaluation contractor for the certification of kWh savings.

In 2015 Midwest Energy collected \$1,172,119 through the Energy Optimization Surcharge and spent \$1,137,178 resulting in an over-collection of \$34,941 which will be applied towards the 2015 EO Program delivery expenses and goal achievement. Midwest Energy achieved 6,068 MWh of energy savings in 2015. For every dollar spent on energy efficiency programs, customers will save \$3.00 in avoided energy costs. The full report can be obtained at michigan-energy.org or <http://efile.mpsc.state.mi.us/efile>.

Notice to Members of Midwest Energy Cooperative

Case No. U-17309

2015 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, Midwest Energy Cooperative submits an annual report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2015, Midwest acquired a total of 18,839 renewable energy credits (12,066 credits from Harvest Wind Farm, LLC and 6,773 credits from Thunder Bay—Four Mile) and 628 incentive credits from Thunder Bay—Four Mile. All credit transfers were directed through Midwest's wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc. Wolverine will continue to generate renewable energy and bank unused renewable energy credits for future use and compliance with statutory renewable portfolio standard requirements on behalf of all of its members.

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 teammidwest.com or by request at any of the cooperative's offices.

Access To Rules & Rates

Please be advised that the following information is available to Midwest Energy Cooperative members:

1. Complete rate schedules;
2. Clear and concise explanation of all rates that the member may be eligible to receive;
3. Assistance from the cooperative in determining the most appropriate rate for a member when the member is eligible to receive service under more than one rate;
4. Clear and concise explanation of the members' actual energy use for each billing period during the last 12 months.

The information can be obtained by contacting Midwest Energy Cooperative at 800-492-5989.



Board Assigns 2015 Patronage Capital

As an electric cooperative, we are different from our investor-owned counterparts in that our consumers, through their patronage, provide capital for the co-op. You are more than simply a consumer; you are a member and owner!

Midwest Energy maintains a patronage capital account for each member. At the end of each year, any operating margin or "profit" is allocated based on the amount of electricity purchased by each member. The total of these accounts is used by your cooperative to provide the equity base necessary for financial stability and is paid back to members over time as approved by the board of directors.

At their April meeting, the board authorized the allocation of the 2015 net margin totaling \$3,247,511.67. Your portion of this allocation is not payable at this time and does not represent a reduction of your electric bill, but rather indicates your equity share in our cooperative's 2015 margin.

Please notify us of any address changes so we can forward payments when patronage capital is retired. If a member or former member fails to claim cash retirement of patronage capital or other payment from the cooperative within five years after payment has been made available at the last known address, that payment will be added to the cooperative's general fund. ■

The Wheels On The Bus

By Jack O'Malley

Admit it. You just sang "go round and round" in your head. September brings cooler temperatures, football season, and the start of a new school year accompanied by a fleet of familiar vehicles on northern Michigan roads. Recognized by their distinctive color and flashing lights, school buses transported an estimated 26.9 million students in the United States last year.

Buses can only operate with a dedicated crew of drivers, and one of the best can be found in Chippewa Hills. Kent Blackmer says the first day of school can be a bittersweet time. "Summer is over, but I see all the kids again!" Yes, Kent loves being part of the kids' day. He feeds off their energy each morning, and Ken admits some days can be pandemonium, especially with the elementary kids. High school students, however, are surprisingly mellow, most listening to their music or reading during the trip to and from school.

A six-year veteran of the Chippewa Hills School District, Ken enjoys many laughs with the kids each day. Most know him by name. Some simply refer to him as Mr. Bus Driver. Either way, he says, the kids are "respectful and well behaved." And the parents? "Supportive and, like most of us, happy to have an expert behind the wheel!"

While Kent enjoys driving, he says the job does have its share of stress. "You always have to be on guard. My job is to be aware. Sometimes awareness can be difficult, especially when noise levels rise or winter roads are slippery, but I can't get distracted." Safety is paramount. Kent insists that students follow rules on his bus. And while he can't control other motorists on the road, he hopes drivers watch out for his big



yellow bus. "Unfortunately, people do run my stop sign." When they do, he gets a plate number and reports the driver.

School buses across the state roll out every morning and afternoon with drivers like Kent, happy to be behind the wheel. Kent said he does have an all-time favorite part of the job. "It may seem silly," he remarked. "But I always enjoy the reaction of the family pets when they see their children coming up the driveway happy to see them come home." ■



Jack O'Malley

Parts of the Chippewa Hills School District are serviced by HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

I Remember...

We invite members to share their fondest memories. *Country Lines* will pay \$50 for stories we publish.

Guidelines

1. Approximately 200 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Only one entry per household, per month
4. *Country Lines* retains reprint rights
5. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and the name of your electric co-op
6. Submit your memories online: countrylines.com



«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by Sept. 30 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit. 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.

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the July/August 2016 issue is David LaLiberte, a Midwest Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as downtown Kalamazoo, the corner of South Street and the Kalamazoo Mall.



July/Aug Photo



American Metal Roofs

**FALL
METAL ROOF
SALE**

*Order in the month of September
and receive a FREE UPGRADE from
Steel to Aluminum, PLUS 30% OFF your
garage or outbuilding when added to your order!*

30% OFF
**YOUR GARAGE
OR OUTBUILDING**

Call Today! 844.638.2576
844.METAL.ROOFS

VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS:

FLINT - 6140 Taylor Drive
CHARLOTTE - 1875 Lansing Road

**Do-It-Yourself
and
Save 50%**
Free Classes - Register Online

Visit our new website!

AmericanMetalRoofs.com

See dozens of pictures • Enter to win a Metal Roof • Request a Quote

DON'T GET CAUGHT WITHOUT POWER...

WHOLE HOUSE STANDBY

GENERATORS

- INSTALLATION INCLUDED
- FINANCING AVAILABLE!!!





TeamMidwest.com

HIGH SPEED **FIBER** **INTERNET**

The rural broadband revolution is spreading across southwest Michigan and more than 2000 co-op members are now enjoying their first real high-speed experience.

**Sign up today and
see where you are
in the five-year
construction plan!**



Call 844-493-4237 or visit TeamFiber.com

*12-month service contract required. Midwest Connections is an unregulated service of Midwest Energy Cooperative.