

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



Northern Michigan's New
Alpine Power Plant
Is A Powerhouse

Plus!

Help Find Missing Members

What Causes Those Blinks?

Chapins' Centennial Farm

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
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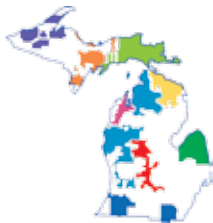
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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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

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See page 4 for contact information.

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ON THE COVER

The Smith family can rest easy, knowing their family sources their power from Alpine Power Plant. Alpine Power Plant is now the largest and most efficient generator in Michigan north of the Ludington-Midland line, including the Upper Peninsula.

IN YOUR WORDS

What is your favorite Michigan fall activity?

Please submit answers to countrylines.com by November 1.

Last month's responses to the question:

What is your favorite Michigan craft beer?

"Perrin Grapefruit"

"Perrin Lil' Grizzly"

"Short's Soft Parade"

"Bell's Two-Hearted"

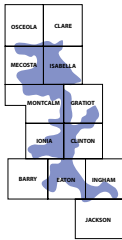
"Founders All Day IPA"

"Dark Horse Crooked Tree"



During construction of the Alpine Power Plant a favorite restaurant was discovered and enjoyed. The Railside Bar & Grill in Elmira is one of northern Michigan's best kept secrets—with a diverse array of tasty dishes, including genuine Polish meals, delicious pizzas, mouth-watering sandwiches, and of course, the World Famous Potato Burger.

Enjoy the Railside's recipe for Polish Nachos at micoopkitchen.com and read more about the Alpine Power Plant on page 14.



Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

Blanchard office:

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

Portland office:

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

Electric bill/account questions:

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

Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

Service questions/outages:

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

Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

High Speed Internet

1-800-668-8413

homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

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facebook.com/HomeWorks.org

Cooperation, Commitment & Community



Mark Kappler
General Manager

National Cooperative Month is celebrated annually in October across the U.S., allowing us to reflect on our shared principles.

One co-op principle is concern for community, where our member-owners live and work. From providing technology in local classrooms to supporting jobs and industry, we are committed to improving our member-owners' quality of life through being involved in our communities.

The Tri-County Electric People Fund, which returns members' spare change to families and organizations in need, is one great example. Moreover, our employees are encouraged to look outward for ways to get involved, through sports, schools and social groups.

Another co-op principle is cooperation among cooperatives. We serve our member-owners most effectively, and strengthen the co-op movement, by working together.

People are often amazed by the extent of the cooperative network:

- We are insured by a cooperative insurance company, which is a leader in creating a culture of safety for our employees. It's good business for them, but their primary concern is for the people they're reaching.
- The software for our computer systems, from desktops to mobile apps, comes from an information systems cooperative—one of several that's been formed by electric co-ops over the years.
- Our after-hours call center and dispatch service is supplied by a co-op that started out as several small co-ops looking for an effective and economic way to provide 24-hour response for their members.
- We purchase many of our materials—utility poles, transformers, wire, and more—from a rural electric supply cooperative.
- We even bank with two different cooperatives—including the Portland Federal Credit Union right down the road from our office (we, in turn, serve a couple of their branch offices.)
- We purchase electric power from a cooperative that we own along with four other Michigan electric co-ops. Like all the other co-ops mentioned above, and like HomeWorks, Wolverine Power Cooperative is operated for the benefit of its member-owners, and is not for profit.
- We have mutual aid agreements to help each other out in times of need—say, for instance, a big storm swipes across lower-Michigan. Co-ops to the north and south of us may not be affected and would have line crews and equipment to spare to help us rebuild and restore power.

As one of the owners of each of these co-ops, we know that we have a say in their operations. When we elect a board member to represent us, receive capital credits, or are consulted on our future needs, the feeling of being a co-op owner can't be beat.

We hope you feel the same way about HomeWorks Tri-County! ■



4-H Renewable Energy Camp Visits HomeWorks

For the second year, Michigan 4-H Renewable Energy campers stopped in Portland to learn more about solar and geothermal energy after a visit to Carbon Green Bio-Energy, the Woodland ethanol plant which receives electricity from HomeWorks Tri-County Electric.

Energy Advisor Brandon Trierweiler, far right, also showed campers the "Partners for Power" video from the Buena Vista, Guatemala, trip last November. He then led a tour of the Community Solar Garden. The campers are high school students with a special interest in science and energy, who spent a week at Michigan State doing hands-on projects and experiments. ■



Chapins' Centennial Farm

Leona Chapin, center, is the matriarch of this Mecosta County farm family, which recently earned the Centennial Farm designation. With her are her son Douglas and daughter-in-law Cheri, at right, and their son Sam and daughter-in-law Micah, along with great-granddaughters Marian, left, and Melanie. The original 180 acres were purchased in 1911 by Douglas' great-grandparents, William J. and Mary A. (Merriman) Chapin. The farm has since grown to 675 acres, with milk, hay and corn as its major products.





Michigan Co-ops Lead The Way In Renewable Energy

Sun. Water. Wind.

Michiganders know these elements can make for a great day at the beach. Michigan's electric cooperatives also know these raw energy sources can be a great way to power your home.

From solar to wind to hydroelectric (hydro) power, Michigan's electric cooperatives are the state's undeniable leaders in renewable energy.

Collectively, Michigan's nine electric cooperatives will receive more than 20 percent of their energy from renewable resources in 2017. Meanwhile, the statewide average for other utilities is closer to the Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) requirement of 10 percent.

Michigan's cooperatives have been ahead of the curve on renewable energy for more than a decade.

In 2006, Wolverine Power Cooperative* partnered with John Deere Renewables to develop Michigan's first commercial scale wind farm in Huron County. The wind farm was fully operational in 2007 with an output of 50 megawatts. The following year, Michigan adopted the RPS which mandated a 10 percent supply of renewable energy be utilized by electric providers by 2015.

After Michigan's first wind farm, progress continued with the state's very first community solar project at

Cherryland Electric Cooperative in 2013. Another community solar project was built by HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative in 2014. Community solar offers an affordable, convenient way for members to use renewable energy as a power source. A solar panel subscription entitles members to a share of energy produced on a utility-scale community solar array. Participants receive solar credits on their utility bill. It's a great way to remove up-front costs and installation barriers of solar, making it available to the wider membership.

Cloverland Electric Cooperative operates one of the largest hydropower facilities in Michigan. Located along the St. Marys River in Sault Ste. Marie, the hydro plant produces one-fifth of the power needs of the eastern Upper Peninsula.

Now there's the new \$200 million clean natural gas Alpine Power Plant. Commissioned just this year, it was developed to meet peak demand needs for Michigan co-op members and to supplement the often intermittent nature of renewable energy. (See the full story on page 14 of this issue).

This fall, a partnership that includes several of Michigan's electric cooperatives will begin construction on a large solar project located in Missaukee County, between Cadillac and Lake City. This large-scale array will begin generating electricity using the sun starting in January 2017. The project is still in the early stages, and



more information will appear in future issues of *Michigan Country Lines* as it develops. Additionally, members can sign-up to receive project updates at spartansolar.com.

So why do Michigan's electric co-ops continue to lead the way in renewable energy?

"We listen to our members and are able to capitalize quickly on renewable energy opportunities," said Craig Borr, CEO/president of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA). MECA is the service organization representing electric cooperatives in Michigan.

"Michigan's electric cooperatives got into renewable energy because it was the right thing to do from an environmental standpoint," said Borr. "But it turns out it's also the responsible thing to do from a financial standpoint."

Clean, renewable energy generation is where the future of energy is headed.

And for Michigan co-ops, that future looks pretty bright. ■

**Wolverine Power Cooperative supplies power to its member co-ops that include Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Midwest Energy Cooperative, and Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op.*

"Pol"ar Energy

Some may know Jan Pol, DVM, as their neighbor and longtime veterinarian and others know him by his enduring title—*The Incredible Dr. Pol*. Seen on National Geographic's *WILD*, Dr. Pol, his wife, Diane, and their team care for countless animals, but they also care about renewable energy.



This year, the Pols engaged in their second solar project, this time mounted on the barn at their Central Michigan home. They worked closely with their local co-op, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, local representative Nick Cluley with Ecojiva, their installer, as well as the folks from CNR Electric to install approximately 5,000 square feet of Canadian Solar's highest efficiency monocrystalline panels.

The system is equipped to generate up to 57 kW. By incorporating solar panels on their property, the Pols hope to take full advantage of the renewable energy generated in order to offset their residential usage. The Pols plan to sell their excess energy back to the utility for the benefit of their fellow co-op members.

The Pols energy for renewable energy is an inspiration to their community, our state and the world.

Stay Warm And Save Energy

Heating and cooling costs account for more than half of the energy used in a typical U.S. home, making it the largest energy expense for most. By equipping your home with an energy-efficient furnace and thermostat, you may effectively control energy use and costs.

ECM Motors: The Key To Savings

If you're in the market for a new furnace, look for a model with an electronically commutated motor (ECM). An ECM, often referred to as a "variable speed motor," adjusts operating speeds, ensures optimal airflow, and uses less electricity—saving you energy and money.

If you can't afford to purchase an entirely new furnace, replace your existing blower motor with an ECM to improve efficiency. Your existing furnace most likely relies on a motor that allows it to run at only one speed—full speed—whenever it's turned on. Since the blower motor uses about 80 percent of the total electricity consumed by the furnace, switching to an energy-saving ECM may make a major impact.

Invest In A New Thermostat

Wi-Fi enabled and smart thermostats help control energy costs by allowing homeowners to program and adjust temperatures remotely, 24/7. Smart thermostats are unique in that they can program

themselves as they "learn" your behavior patterns and desired temperatures for certain days and times during the week.

REBATES NOW AVAILABLE

Upgrading to energy-saving equipment is more affordable than ever with cash incentives available through the Energy Optimization program:

Equipment	Cash Incentive
New furnace with ECM blower motor	\$200
ECM blower motor replacement	\$200
Wi-Fi enabled or smart thermostat	\$100
COMBO BONUS: New furnace + central A/C unit	\$100 bonus
COMBO BONUS: New furnace + central A/C unit + Wi-Fi enabled or smart thermostat	\$150 bonus

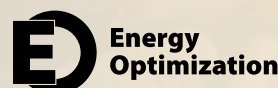
Visit michigan-energy.org or call 877-296-4319 for additional energy-saving information and incentives. ■

Save on heating costs

Cooler weather has arrived, which means it's time to think about properly heating your home. Upgrade to a high-efficiency furnace, or install an ECM blower motor in your existing model, and receive a \$200 cash incentive from the Energy Optimization program!

ENERGY TIP: Take control of your energy use with a Wi-Fi-enabled or smart thermostat and receive a \$100 cash incentive.

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.

A graphic with the words 'Warm up' in large, white, sans-serif font. The background is a warm-toned image of a glass of mulled cider with cinnamon sticks, with a red apple in the foreground.



Lindsay Uzarski of Remus shared this photo of herself and friend Seally Busch (in front) on the log ride at Michigan's Adventure.



Chris Bush of Portland reports, "I took this picture of my wife, Wendy, and our one-year-old lab, Maize, at Bush Farms in Ellsworth in July. Maize never leaves Wendy's side."



Wendy Bush of Portland also sent in a Snap Shot of Maize, this time with BFF Sami, the neighbor's dog. "These two love each other," she says. The photo shows Sami and Maize "chillin' on the patio during the hot and humid dog days of Summer '16."



Gordon and Patty Curns of Portland have a black lab, Allie, who enjoys spending time at the lake with her friend, Casey, a chocolate lab owned by HomeWorks' mapping coordinator Val Wohlscheid. The doggy friends are shown at Lake Arrowhead near Gaylord.

Submit Your Photo!

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

Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics and Deadlines

"Wild Weather," Deadline: **Nov. 14** (January 2017 issue)

"Holiday Fun," Deadline: **Dec. 15** (February issue)

"Family," Deadline: **Jan. 16** (March issue)

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

WORLD CUISINE

Take a cultural journey with these tasty recipes.



Photos—831 Creative

Seafood Tostadas (pictured)

Linda L. Ackerman, Thompsonville

- 1 cup medium-hot thick and chunky salsa
- ¼ teaspoon cumin
- ½ pound cod fillets
- ¼ pound medium raw shrimp, peeled and deveined
- ¼ pound shelled or imitation crab
- 1 cup slivered cabbage
- ½ avocado, thinly sliced
- ¼ cup each, thinly sliced red pepper and onion
- 4–8 small flour or corn tortillas, crisped
- chopped cilantro
- 4 lime wedges

Bring salsa and cumin to simmer in a medium skillet. Add cod; cover skillet and poach fish 3–4 minutes. Turn cod, add 2–3 tablespoons hot water to salsa if needed. Add shrimp and crab. Cover and simmer another 3–4 minutes, or until cod flakes easily and shrimp is opaque. Top each crisped tortilla with seafood and vegetables. Spoon warm salsa over tortillas. Garnish with cilantro and lime. Serve immediately!

Scotch Eggs

Rebecca (Becky) Mikel, Union

- salt/pepper to taste
- ½ cup flour
- 3–4 hard boiled eggs, peeled
- 1 pound ground pork sausage
- 3 raw eggs (not boiled)
- 1 cup seasoned breadcrumbs
- shortening, heated



In a bowl, mix salt and pepper with flour. Peel boiled eggs, then roll in the flour and salt and pepper mixture. Pat sausage out into 4–6 equal patties and encase each egg evenly in sausage patty.

Beat three raw eggs together in a separate bowl, then dip the sausage encased egg in the beaten egg mixture. Roll the egg in breadcrumbs until well coated. Drop gently into the heated oil and turn slowly as sausage browns all the way through. This is traditional fare in the U.K. and is eaten hot or cold—so do either!

Greek Salad

- 1 pound small-sized pasta
- 1 English cucumber, diced
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 cup pepperoncini peppers, sliced
- ½ cup sliced black olives
- ½ cup sliced grape tomatoes
- 1 cup crumbled feta cheese
- 1 cup mayo
- ⅓ cup Italian dressing



Cook small-sized pasta according to package directions. Rinse pasta with cold water. Mix mayo and Italian dressing in small bowl. Combine the rest of the ingredients. Chill in refrigerator for at least 30 minutes. Serve!

Pannukakku (Finnish Oven Pancake)

- 1 ½ cups flour
- 1 ½ cups whole milk
- 6 eggs
- 1 tablespoon sugar
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 2 tablespoons butter
- powdered sugar, jam or maple syrup for serving



Preheat oven to 400 F and place a 13x9 pan inside while it is heating. In a blender, mix all ingredients, except the butter, until they are well blended. Put the butter into the hot pan and brush the pan with the melted butter. Add blender mixture,

and bake for 20–25 minutes until pancake is puffy and golden. It will deflate when it's taken out of the oven. Serve sprinkled with powdered sugar and warm jam or maple syrup.



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 4** 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



Your Board in Action

At the Organizational Meeting of the Cooperative, held August 20 following the Annual Meeting, new directors John Lord (District 1), Corinna Batora (District 5), and Shirley Sprague (District 7) were officially seated.

Following the election of new officers for the 2016-17 year, the Cooperative is led by chairman Luke Pohl (District 3), vice-chairman Wayne Swiler (District 2), and secretary-treasurer Kimber Hansen (District 4).

Meeting at Portland on August 22, your board of directors:

- Adopted a resolution renewing a line of credit with CoBank and authorizing the board chairman and general manager as signatories.
- Discussed the Annual Meeting, held August 20, with a record 196 delegates registered in attendance.
- Read and approved Board Policy 103 – “Compensation and Benefits for Directors,” and read and amended Board Policy 211 – “Whistleblower Policy.”

- Discussed the Michigan Energy Providers Conference, attended by Director Kimber Hansen.
- Reviewed a proposed board meeting calendar for 2017.
- Learned there were 120 new members in July.
- Acknowledged the August safety report, listing employee training, and employee and public incidents. ■

Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Cooperative Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting are available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject. The next meetings are scheduled for Oct. 24 at Blanchard; Nov. 28 at Portland; and Dec. 15 at Blanchard. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

New To Our Blanchard Team

Meet Lafayette Blain, Justin “Zeke” Chambers and Sara Nartker. All three are filling positions left open at Blanchard by retirements of long-time employees.



Lafayette Blain is a recent graduate of the Utility Technician program at Alpena Community College, finishing near the top of his class. He was highly recommended by his instructors due to his motivation, work ethic and discipline. He is also CPR and first aid certified.



Justin Chambers was a foreman with Wright Tree service and has been in the tree business since 2003. He has more than 10 years of climbing and bucket experience, has earned several safety awards, and is also CPR and first aid certified.



Sara Nartker joined our Blanchard customer service team. Sara and her family are from the Mount Pleasant area; her background is in customer service. She previously worked for the Isabella County USDA-Farm Services Agency.



In Memoriam

Al Hafner, 88, passed away on Sunday, August 14. Al worked as a groundman for the Portland office from 1972–1989.

He was a member of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Westphalia, the Knights of Columbus, V.F.W. Post #3733 of Fowler-Pewamo-Westphalia, and was a veteran of the U.S. Army.

He was preceded in death by his wife, Kathleen, in 1997, three infant sons and several brothers. Surviving are his children; Judy (Larry) Theis, Jane (Ron) Hensley, Tim (Diane) Hafner, and Linda (William) Taylor; eight grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

More Schools Receive Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grants



Winn Elementary School received a 2016 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grant of \$2,500 to install a kiosk unit with video screen at each entrance. The kiosks will enhance student, staff and parent communications with announcements, special recognition, scheduled event notices, and more. The third, fourth, and fifth grade student council are shown accepting the grant on behalf of the school.

Director Luke Pohl delivered a large grant check to Twin Rivers Elementary School in Muir, which is part of Ionia Public Schools. The \$2,060 grant upgraded the audio systems in two classrooms, helping teachers provide instruction and activities and allowing more student participation. Shown with Director Pohl are the kindergartners and second graders who were the first to benefit from the new systems, along with second grade teacher Tammy Duell, left, and kindergarten teacher Christina Garlich, right.



Applications for 2017 Classroom Technology Grants will be available at homeworks.org on Nov. 1.



Wolverine Power Cooperative

generates and transmits power to our rural substations so we can distribute it to you, our members. They help us ensure that your energy is affordable, reliable, clean and safe. We rely on Wolverine to make well-informed decisions about the future of your electricity.

We're proud to announce that the newest addition to the Wolverine supply mix, the Alpine Power Plant, is now fully powered and generating enough power for 120,000 member households across the state of Michigan!

What is the Alpine Power Plant?

Just 18 short months ago, Wolverine's board of directors—made up of co-op members just like you—set the Alpine Power Plant in motion. Alpine is the largest and most efficient generator in northern Michigan, including the Upper Peninsula.

Alpine is fueled by natural gas, a clean, reliable, and affordable alternative to coal. Its unique, state-of-the-art technology includes two GE simple-cycle combustion turbine generators that together are capable of producing up to 432 megawatts of power. Alpine is a "peaker plant," meaning it can be fired up quickly to provide electricity for surges in demand.

Wolverine invested approximately \$180 million into Alpine to ensure a quick start and flexible operations. As Michigan transitions away from coal plants toward more renewable forms of electric generation, Alpine provides us with a new, affordable, efficient and flexible generation asset, essential for years to come as the industry changes.



Northern Michigan's New
Alpine Power Plant
Is A Powerhouse

How does Alpine impact me?

Wolverine Power Cooperative and its members, including Cherryland Electric Cooperative, Great Lakes Energy Cooperative, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, Midwest Energy Cooperative and Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, are proud to be leaders when it comes to providing long-term solutions for Michigan's energy capacity. Old coal plants are retiring, leaving a void that new power plants can and need to fill.

Adding Alpine's output to Michigan's energy supply will help maintain affordable rates in the midst of coal plants retiring, by giving us an additional option when market rates fluctuate. The plant will also serve to integrate new renewable energy sources, as we expect to receive 30 percent of our electricity from renewable sources in the future.

Beyond the energy benefits for Michigan as a whole, Alpine Power Plant offers economic impacts for its local community. Strategically located to support reliability in northern Michigan, the middle-of-the-mitt location in Otsego County provides a boost to the local economy. During construction, the site was host to more than 300 workers that, in turn, contributed greatly to the local economy. The plant will be maintained by nine full-time employees. The plant also provides a tax boost to units of government in Elmira Township, the City of Gaylord and Otsego County.

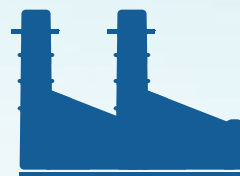
Michigan's energy future is secured in part because of projects like the Alpine Power Plant. We hope you're as excited as we are to see your electric bills stay low and your quality of life stay high! ■

Get more information about the Alpine Power Plant by visiting alpinecleanenergy.com.

WHAT IS ALPINE DOING?

Generating Electricity

Wolverine's Alpine Power Plant is the largest power plant in Michigan's northern Lower and Upper Peninsulas, capable of generating up to 430 MW of electricity.



Powering Members

Alpine ensures Wolverine's members have a reliable, clean and competitive power supply for decades to come.



Supporting Michigan

With retiring coal plants and expanding regulations, Alpine is essential for replacing capacity to meet Michigan's energy demand. Alpine is the only large-scale power plant within a 150-mile radius.



Helping Communities

Alpine provides a major boost to communities with increased tax revenues for local units of government.



Help Members Find Unclaimed Checks

Can you connect these HomeWorks members with their money?

Some former co-op members, listed below, were due to receive refunds for their inactive accounts; unfortunately, their refunds checks remain uncashed. This is only a partial list. We have a much longer list of members with unclaimed capital credits, which will be posted in full at our website, homeworks.org, and updated regularly.

We tried to deliver these checks by mail to the last address given to us by the person or business listed. If you know someone listed below, or have a current address at which we can contact them, please call HomeWorks at 517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232. You can also use the Contact Us link at homeworks.org.

Even if you can't help us find any of these members, make sure we can find you if you ever move out of our service area. Keep us updated on your new address by calling 1-800-562-8232 or using the Contact Us link at homeworks.org.

Name

Last Known City, State

Dorothy Milligan

Lake Isabella, MI

Kamie Otto-Hansen

Edmore, MI

Charles F Bigelow

Eaton Rapids, MI

Ted B Valentine

Dillon, MT

Tiffany Juanita Denniston

Riverdale, MI

Anthony D Hess

Reed City, MI

Sarah L Snow

Clare, MI

Your Spare Change Helps Families

Your spare change assisted three area families with household needs, as the Tri-County Electric People Fund gave three grants on August 24.

The grants, totaling \$4,598.56, include:

- \$2,000 to an Ionia County family to help with housing and medical expenses;
- \$1,000 to another Ionia County family to pay for a new furnace; and
- \$1,598.56 to a Montcalm County family to help with housing and medical expenses. ■

How to Apply for a Grant

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

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

Note: Applications must be received by Nov. 7 for the November board meeting, and by Dec. 5 for the December board meeting.



**Tri-County Electric
Cooperative**


Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

**Our offices will be closed Friday,
Oct. 14, for all-employee training.**

**Please call 1-800-848-9333 if you
have a service issue.**

Why Do My Lights Blink?

By Lesa Barker



HomeWorks Tri-County clears trees away from power lines. This includes more than several hundred miles of right-of-way each year.

You've come home from a long day at work and see your microwave clock blinking, and you worry that the power was off, and your DVR didn't catch your favorite TV show...

Before the digital world took over, we didn't notice as many blinks on our power lines. Modern appliances are controlled by microprocessors; these are so sensitive that normal variations in electricity can cause a loss of memory, which in turn causes your appliances to show that blinking 12:00 we all know so well.

Keep in mind that blinking on the lines isn't necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it is a sign that our system is working exactly as it was designed.

There are some reasons your line might blink—from a tree branch touching the line to lightning strikes or birds taking flight. Our system has reclosers on the lines that will cycle rapidly if a fault is sensed on the line. If the fault goes away—for example, a tree branch falls, lands on the power line, then falls to the ground—the reclosers will stay closed, and your power will stay on.

You may notice your digital clocks have been affected by the cycling of the reclosers. It can be inconvenient to reset your clocks, but it is a sign that our system is doing its job.

There are ways to prevent these blinks, on your end of the system or ours. System engineer Brian Thompson suggests purchasing an uninterruptible power supply (UPS). A UPS is essentially a backup battery for your digital items; in the case of a power outage, the UPS will help protect your expensive digital items.



You can also look for battery backup when you shop for electronics that have electronic clock displays.

Thompson suggests buying a surge protector, as well, for less expensive but still important devices. This should not be confused with a power strip. A surge protector will protect your electronic devices from power surges while a power strip just gives you the option of plugging in multiple devices.

When purchasing either, look for an electric rating. A surge protector will have a rating of joules of energy that will tell you how much energy the surge protector can absorb before it fails—a higher number indicates greater protection. Look for a protector that has at least a rate of 200 to 400 joules.

Although we have no control over birds or Mother Nature, we can take control of our right-of-way. Keeping trees away from power lines helps to reduce the blinks you may experience.

At HomeWorks Tri-County we have made right-of-way clearing a priority; in the last five years, we have cleared 1,561 miles of rights-of-way. One of the co-op's goals is to clear all rights-of-way during an eight-year cycle.

If you notice trees close to a power line, contact us for possible trimming or removal. And if you think you're noticing an unusual number of blinks, contact us at 800-562-8232 so we can look into any potential issues. ■

Co-op Careers Offer Paycheck And A Purpose

By Justin LaBerge

October is National Cooperative Month! Every day in this country, more than 75,000 men and women go to work at America's electric cooperatives to keep the lights on for 42 million energy consumers in 47 states.

It's challenging work, but in addition to a paycheck, co-op employees go home each night knowing they've helped make their communities better places to live.

Over the next five years, thousands of workers will get to experience that sense of purpose and pride as America's electric cooperatives hire nearly 15,000 employees nationwide. These new hires will replace Baby Boomers reaching retirement age and accommodate organic growth in the energy industry.

Many career options

A lineworker high atop a pole is the first image that comes to mind for most people who think about electric cooperative employees. It's true that lineworkers comprise the largest segment of the co-op workforce—approximately 25 percent—but it takes a variety of talents to keep a cooperative running smoothly.

Information technology and engineering are two rapidly growing career opportunities at co-ops. The need for more high-tech workers is driven by the shift to a smarter electric grid and the growth of renewable energy sources that must be carefully monitored and managed.

Other in-demand career paths at electric cooperatives include finance, member services, equipment operators, energy advisors, communications and marketing, purchasing, administrative support and human resources.

Second careers

Some people think the only time to start a new career is fresh out of high school or college. While the energy industry offers many rewarding careers to recent grads, it is also a great place to start a second or third career.



Electric Cooperative Careers
There's a place for you in the co-op network.

Lineworker training programs offered through community colleges are growing in popularity among people who previously worked in oil and gas, manufacturing, mining, forestry and other similar industries.

Make a difference

As not-for-profit, member-owned, locally-based businesses, America's electric cooperatives offer careers that allow employees to make a difference in the communities they serve. Cooperatives are guided by a set of principles that put people ahead of profits and offer fulfilling work to those who enjoy serving others. ■

How to find a co-op job

Interested in joining the co-op family? To learn more about the opportunities available across the cooperative network, visit careers.touchstoneenergy.coop or by visiting Michigan co-op websites at countrylines.com.



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11

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5. Budget plans to even out the seasonal roller coaster.
6. No add-on fees hidden behind a "special" low rate.
7. CETP trained field and customer service puts your family's safety first.
8. 24-hour toll-free service at 1-877-574-2740.
9. Online account access for convenient payments and billing history.
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* (American Customer Satisfaction Index rating
based on 2014 customer survey)

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