

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



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2017 Classroom Technology Grants

Rossman Sesquicentennial Farms

Counting Our Blessings



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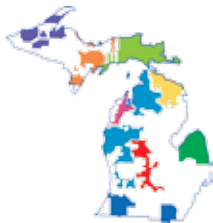
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Please notify your electric cooperative.
See page 4 for contact information.

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Negaunee's Lucy Hill is the only full-length natural luge track in the United States. United States athletes train here before traveling to competitions in Europe.

Statement of Ownership, Management & Circulation

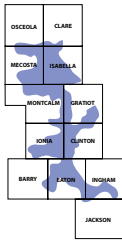
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Once used to describe the three devastating waves that led to the sinking of the Edmond Fitzgerald, Three Sisters is also the name for three tight turns and the most technical part of the Negaunee Lucy Hill luge track. Find Three Sisters Luge Pizza recipe submitted by featured guest chefs from the U.P. Luge Club at micoopkitchen.com, and see the full story on page 14.



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Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

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Portland, MI 48875
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

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Service questions/outages:

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

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homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

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Counting Our Blessings



Mark Kappler
General Manager

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” –William Arthur Ward

The calendar is filling up quickly with holiday events. It’s the time of the year when we reflect on the past year and start thinking about what we’d like to accomplish in the months to come.

There are many things to be thankful for here at HomeWorks, and this short list brings to mind just a few of them. We are thankful for:

Our “Partners for Power:”

- The 10 Michigan linemen who traveled to Guatemala last November to help electrify a remote mountain village;
- the employees and families back home who supported them financially, emotionally, and with suitcases full of gifts for the people of Buena Vista; and
- the leaders in Michigan and at NRECA, our national association, who created the International Program years ago and continue to send line crews all over the world to share the benefits of electric power.

Our culture of safety, which focuses our efforts on safe work habits all day, every day. This year, we had one OSHA-recordable “injury” when a lineman got into some aggressive poison ivy. Knowing that our employees go home to their families safely every night has been a blessing for all of us.

Our members who, in record numbers, attended our seven annual district membership meetings last May and the Annual Meeting in August. You also elected three new directors to the board table, and helped us honor three retiring directors for their combined 74 years of service.

Our employees, who worked hard every day to make sure your power was available; your questions were answered; your propane tank was kept full at a competitive rate; and your cooperative stayed on a strong financial footing.

Our partners in the cooperative network, who came in with mutual aid after the Easter storm caused severe damage to the northern part of our electric system.

As President John Kennedy, who helped NRECA set up the International program years ago, once said, “We must find time to stop and thank the people who make a difference in our lives.”

Finding time just once a year isn’t often enough, but thank you—to **everyone** who had a part in making this a successful year of service for HomeWorks Tri-County. ■

Teachers: Apply For 2017 Grants!

Applications are due Jan. 15 for the 2017 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grant program.

Public or private school districts in our 13-county, mid-Michigan service area, that serve children of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members, can receive a grant of up to \$2,000 to fund innovative programs that enrich students' education.

The only change to the program this year is the \$2,000 cap on grants, a change that will make grants to more schools possible each year.

For examples of recent grants, here are the schools and projects which received grants in 2016:

- \$1,000 to Alma High School, to purchase construction materials for the school's First Robotics team;
- \$2,398.36 to Chippewa Hills High School, Remus, to install an announcement and photo display in the student lobby;
- \$845.80 to Fancher Elementary, Mount Pleasant, for three electronic reader pens to assist students;
- \$826.78 to Fulton High School, Middleton, to purchase a camera and storage drive for the yearbook class;
- \$885 to Gratiot-Isabella RESD at Alma's Hillcrest Elementary School, to buy advanced programs for an EyeGaze bar purchased with a previous grant;
- \$517.53 to Lakewood Middle School, Lake Odessa, to buy a classroom set of calculators for math lab classes;
- \$728.82 to Leslie Middle School, to buy photon solar racer kits for 7th grade science classes;
- \$1,500 to Leslie Middle School to purchase Chromebooks for a Google classroom;
- \$2,500 to Maple Valley Junior-Senior High School, Vermontville, to purchase 31 graphing calculators for students to borrow;
- \$2,500 to Montabella Junior-Senior High School, Blanchard, to purchase 10 Chromebooks and licenses for use with online math software in the classroom;
- \$2,214 to Portland High School, to purchase equipment for the student broadcasting class;
- \$2,500 to Portland Saint Patrick School, to purchase Chromebooks and charging carts for students' classroom use;
- \$2,060 to Twin Rivers Elementary, Muir, to upgrade audio in two classrooms; and
- \$2,500 to Winn Elementary, to purchase two kiosk units and a video camera to enhance student-staff-parent communication.

For an application form with grant guidelines, visit homeworks.org or call Jayne Graham at 517-647-1252. ■



The Alma High School First Robotics team, lead by teacher Gary Shimunek, received a \$1,000 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology grant to buy materials for their 2016 competition robot, shown at center front.



Our Offices Will Be Closed

Thursday, Nov. 24, to celebrate Thanksgiving

Friday, Dec. 23, and **Monday, Dec. 26**, to celebrate Christmas

Please call:
1-800-848-9333 if you have a service issue
1-877-574-2740 if you have a propane issue
1-877-999-3395 to pay your bill by phone

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2016–2017 Season

Program: Winter Protection Plan
Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2016–2017

# in Household	150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income
1	\$17,820
2	24,030
3	30,240
4	36,450
5	42,660
6	48,870
7	55,095
8	61,335

Add \$6,240 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

The **Winter Protection Plan (WPP)** protects enrolled seniors and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–March 31). If you are eligible, your utility service will remain on (or restored with the WPP) from Nov. 1 through March 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, and
- make equal monthly payments between the date you apply and the start of the next heating season on any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (March 31), you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill.

Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months. You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- are age 65 or older,
- receive Department of Health and Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- receive Food Assistance,
- receive Medicaid, or
- household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart at left.

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the WPP are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut off between Nov. 1 and March 31. Service for seniors can be restored without any payments.

Program: Home Heating Credit
Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
1	\$13,070	4	\$26,756
2	17,642	5	31,299
3	22,185	6	35,842

Add \$4,571 for each exemption over 6.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the **2016** tax year if you meet the income guidelines listed at left or you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs. Additional exemptions are available for seniors, disabled claimants, or claimants with 5% or more of their income from unemployment compensation.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. **Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (517-636-4486, or michigan.gov/treasury).** The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **no later than Sept. 30 each year.**

Program: Earned Income Credit
Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept., Internal Revenue Service irs.gov/EITC
 Michigan Dept. of Treasury
michigan.gov/treasury

The **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income, working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EITC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EITC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year **2016** equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. Visit the website or see the MI 2016 tax booklet for details.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program
Contact: Local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) michigan.gov/mdhhs

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): michigan.gov/mdhhs You do not have to be a DHHS client to apply for help with a past due bill, shutoff notice or the need for deliverable fuel through the SER. This program, available Nov. 1–May 31, provides most of its utility assistance during this crisis season. However, limited assistance is available outside the crisis season. If you receive a DHHS cash grant, you may vendor part of it towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 855-275-6424.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization
Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (200% of poverty guidelines) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation. Contact your local Community Action Agency for details. Visit mcaaa.org to find one in your area.

Program: United Way
Contact: Call 2-1-1 or UWmich.org/2-1-1

2-1-1 is a free phone service operating 24 hours daily to provide information about help that may be available in a particular area with utilities and other needs. Learn more at UWmich.org/2-1-1.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection
Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extended to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for details.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty
Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty** you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You must still pay, but contact your utility company and they will help you set up a payment plan.

Program: Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program
Contact: MI Veterans Trust Fund

The Trust Fund provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families facing a financial emergency or hardship including the need for energy assistance.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund at 517-284-5299 or michiganveterans.com

Program: MI Energy Assistance Program
Contact: Utility or 2-1-1 in late November

Agency assistance through Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP), includes services that will enable participants to become self-sufficient, including assisting participants in paying their energy bills on time, budgeting for and contributing to their ability to provide for energy expenses, and being energy efficient. Shut-off protection is provided Nov. 1–April 15 for all residential customers.

Dial 2-1-1 for more information on heating and other human services programs and help.

Safety During Hunting Season

By Tim Velder



Be aware of what's behind that big buck or it might cost big bucks.

Your electric co-op's time and money are spent every year repairing equipment and power lines that have been struck by a stray bullet. As a not-for-profit cooperative, owned by the members, we all share in this expense.

This doesn't even include the inconvenience, damages, and hazards to members down the line that require power for medical equipment or other needs, while a lineman does some hunting of his own looking at spans of line trying to locate the problem.

Hunters and other gun-owners should be cautious not to shoot near or toward power lines, power poles, and substations. A stray bullet can cause damage to equipment, could be deadly to the shooter, and potentially interrupt electric service to large areas.

Sometimes the damage isn't noticed for several weeks or months and is only discovered when an unexplained outage occurs.

Landowners are also encouraged to take note of nonmembers who are hunting on their property and remind them to be aware of power lines.

Shooting near overhead power lines or insulators can result in severe injury or death.

The main safety points to remember are:

- Do not shoot at or near power lines or insulators.
- Familiarize yourself with the location of power lines and equipment on land where you shoot.
- Damage to the conductor can happen, possibly dropping a phase on the ground. If it's dry and the electricity goes to ground, there is the possibility of electrocution and wildfire.
- Be especially careful in wooded areas where power lines may not be as visible.
- Do not use power line wood poles or towers to support equipment used in your shooting activity.
- Take notice of warning signs and keep clear of electrical equipment.
- Do not place deer stands on utility poles or climb poles. Energized lines and equipment on the poles can conduct electricity to anyone who comes in contact with them, causing shock or electrocution.
- Do not shoot at, or near, birds perching on utility lines. That goes for any firearm, including pistols, rifles or shotguns.
- Do not place decoys on power lines or other utility equipment. Anything attached to a pole besides utility equipment can pose an obstruction—and a serious hazard—to electric cooperative employees as they perform utility operations.
- Avoid the use of lofting poles near overhead power lines. Remember, electricity can jump across a considerable distance. ■

Easy Ways To Save Energy This Winter

Between cold weather, the holidays and spending more time indoors, energy use and costs can rise for many Michigan residents. However, by taking a few simple actions, the following small adjustments can result in big savings!

Deck the halls with LED holiday lights. Light-emitting diode (LED) holiday lights use up to 90 percent less electricity and last up to 10 times longer than standard bulbs. Plus, they produce almost no heat and are nearly impossible to break! Save even more energy by putting your lights on a timer.

Set your furnace fan to "auto." Selecting "auto" ensures the fan will operate only when necessary, which can save several hundred dollars per year. Setting the fan to "on" causes it to run constantly and it requires more heat to maintain the desired temperature.

Find and seal air leaks. Prevent cold air from seeping in and heated air from escaping outside. The largest air leaks are typically around gaps in plumbing, chimneys, and wiring bypasses, as well as in dropped ceilings and soffits above cabinets.



Prep your home before leaving for vacation.

Unplug as many appliances as possible. Many appliances use some energy even when they are turned off. You can also safely lower your thermostat to 55 degrees and turn your water heater to the lowest setting.

Take advantage of rebates. Before ringing in the New Year, claim your Energy Optimization rebates for energy-efficient products, such as lightbulbs, TVs, refrigerators and freezers, dishwashers, clothes washers/dryers and more.

View current incentives at michigan-energy.org or call **877.296.4319** for details. ■



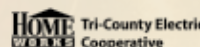
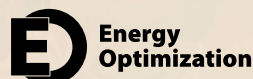
Save energy and be merry

Practice these simple tips to save energy and money this holiday season!

- Deck the halls with LED holiday lights
- Keep your fireplace damper closed unless a fire is burning
- Turn down the thermostat while entertaining guests
- Use a timer to control tree and outdoor lighting
- Unplug appliances before leaving for a long weekend

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.

Snap SHOT

Country Roads



Yvonne Coughlin of Mt. Pleasant says, "My niece and I were kayaking on the Chippewa River. We started out on River Road and somewhere between there and Pickard Road, we came across these deer. I could not believe they didn't move. I got this picture with my phone as I was passing by them."



Barb Abram of Big Rapids shared a Snap Shot of "our beautiful road through the woods to our house."



Sharon Holzhausen of Weidman sent in this photo, noting "We decided to check out the cherry trees that were in bloom this spring near the Traverse City area."



Connie Forbush of Six Lakes shared a picture taken on Christmas Eve 2014 in Six Lakes, looking west at sunset.



Laura Sage of Stanton shared a photo from a tranquil afternoon drive near Blanchard.

Submit Your Photo!

Contributors whose photos we publish in 2017 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 2018!

Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

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

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

"Animals Near Me," Deadline: **Feb. 15** (April 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.



CASSEROLES

These cozy comfort foods can go straight from your oven to your table.

Photos—831 Creative

Great Chicken Casserole

Mary Ellen Babcock, Thumb Electric

- 3 cups chopped cooked chicken
- 2 cups finely chopped celery
- 1 cup (4 ounces by weight) shredded cheddar cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup mayonnaise
- 1 can (4 ounces) water chestnuts, drained and chopped
- 1 can (10-¾ ounces) cream of chicken soup
- ½ cup slivered almonds
- 1 can (6 ounces) French-fried onion rings

Preheat oven to 350 F. Coat a 9×13 inch baking dish with cooking spray. In a large bowl, stir together chicken, celery, cheese, sour cream, mayonnaise, water chestnuts, soup, and almonds. Spoon into prepared baking dish. Bake, uncovered, for 30 minutes. Sprinkle onion rings evenly over top and bake 5 more minutes, or until bubbly around edges. Let stand 5–10 minutes before serving. Enjoy with a nice tossed salad on the side.

Chicken and Rice Casserole

Mary Scodeller, Great Lakes Energy

- 4 chicken breasts
- 2 cups instant rice
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 1 can cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can onion soup
- cooking spray

Preheat oven to 350 F. Blend the three kinds of soup with 2 cups of instant rice. Pour into a casserole dish sprayed with cooking spray. Top with the chicken breasts, and cook for 1 ½ hours. Let cool and serve.



Noodle Cream Cheese Casserole

Jeanie Henrion, Ontonagon

- 1 tablespoon margarine
- 1 pound ground beef
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- 16 ounces tomato sauce
- 8 ounce package of noodles
- 8 ounce package cream cheese
- 1 cup sour cream
- 1 cup shredded cheddar cheese



Preheat oven to 350 F. Brown ground beef in margarine. Add garlic, salt, sugar and tomato sauce. Cover and cook slowly for 15–20 minutes. Cook noodles and drain. Combine cream cheese and sour cream.

In a baking dish, layer noodles, cream cheese mixture and half of the sauce. Repeat layers. Spread cheddar cheese over the top. Bake for about 30 minutes (until heated throughout). Serve!

Uncle Ben's Chicken and Rice

Janice Harvey, Great Lakes Energy

- 6-ounce package Uncle Ben's Long Grain and Wild Rice
- 1 frying chicken or equivalent pieces
- 1 can cream of chicken soup
- 2 ½ cups water

Preheat oven to 350 F. Sprinkle rice mix on bottom of buttered 9x13 pan. Combine soup, seasoning packet from rice, and water. Place chicken on top of rice and pour soup mixture over all. Bake for 1 hour, 15 minutes.



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 recipe for **"CHIP DIPS"** by **DEC. 4**, **"SOUPS & STEWS"** recipe by **JAN. 4** and **"MUFFINS & BREADS"** by **FEB. 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

During the September 26 meeting at Wolverine Power Cooperative in Cadillac, your board of directors:

- Heard presentations on the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association (MECA) from Craig Borr; on Wolverine Power Cooperative from Eric Baker; and on the Public Utilities Regulatory Policies Act (PURPA) from Joe Baumann.
- Accepted letters of engagement from the accounting firm of Eide Bailly to perform audits of the 2016 financial statements of the cooperative, its subsidiary, and the Tri-County Electric People Fund.
- Discussed attendances, costs, and evaluations of the Annual Meeting held August 20.
- Discussed the director election process and electronic voting options; directors Oplinger, Batora, and Sprague were appointed to an ad hoc committee to review the proposal.
- Read and approved Board Policy 303 – “Wage and Salary Administration,” and heard there were no incidents to report regarding Board Policy 316 – “Identity Theft.”
- Reviewed and adopted the annual wage and salary plan.
- Learned there were 130 new members in August.
- Acknowledged the September 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 Nov. 28 at Portland and Dec. 15 at Clifford Lake. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

Your Spare Change Helps Area Food Pantries, Families

Meeting Oct. 5, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made 12 grants totaling \$14,512.77, including:

- \$1,100 to Project Starburst, Big Rapids, to buy a new freezer for their food pantry;
- \$1,000 to Richland Township Library, Vestaburg, for new library books;
- \$1,000 to Lakeview Ministerial Association, Lakeview, to restock their food pantry;
- \$1,000 to Community Christian Action Group in Eaton Rapids, to purchase food pantry items;
- \$1,000 to M-46 Tabernacle Food Pantry in Riverdale, to buy food pantry items;
- \$895.50 to Nottawa-Sherman Townships Fire Department, Weidman, to purchase an emergency pager;
- \$2,500 to an Eaton County family to install a wheelchair stairlift;
- \$997.27 to an Ingham County family, and \$2,000 to another Ingham County family, in both cases to help with housing expenses;
- \$640 to an Isabella County family to assist with eyeglasses;
- \$480 to a Mecosta County family to help with housing expenses; and
- \$1,900 to a Montcalm County family to help with dental bills.

“Area food pantries are getting ready to help families through the holidays, and the People Fund was pleased to offer a helping hand to them,” says People Fund Chairman Richard Palermo. “We were also able to help several families with housing and medical expenses that were over and above what they could handle on their own.” ■

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, Michigan 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.

Property Tax Bill Tops \$1 Million In 2015

Although we operate on a not-for-profit basis, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative does pay sales and property taxes like any other organization.

Property taxes are assessed not only on our operations centers at Portland and Blanchard, but also on the 3,400 miles of power line we use to serve 26,000 meters in 13 counties. Every utility pole, transformer, and meter is assessed at the local rate.

It all adds up. In 2015, HomeWorks paid \$1,060,305.22 in property taxes. This money helps support schools, roads and other local government functions.

The totals we paid, by county, are in the table to the right. ■

County	2015 Property Taxes Paid
Barry	\$13,657.28
Clare	\$4,407.07
Clinton	\$107,278.13
Eaton	\$89,710.30
Gratiot	\$34,360.31
Ingham	\$39,010.62
Ionia	\$167,028.72
Isabella	\$196,028.75
Jackson	\$3,806.79
Mecosta	\$230,126.25
Montcalm	\$173,123.43
Osceola	\$2,121.14
Saginaw	\$296.67
	\$1,060,305.22

Employees Move To New Positions



Michelle Huhn has been named supervisor of the electric customer service team at Portland. She joined HomeWorks Tri-County in customer service in 1998, and she will now be responsible for the electric call center and customer service support teams. Michelle completed work on an associate's degree in business administration at Montcalm Community College while at HomeWorks. She and her husband, Ryan, have two daughters, MaeLynn and Lexie.



Jessica Bryant-Goodemoot joined the customer service group in June, and will cross-train in electric, new service/construction, and propane service. She and her husband, Kendall, reside in Portland. In her free time she enjoys spending time at their pond with family.



Sean Thelen

Sean Thelen, who started at HomeWorks Tri-County in May, 2015, as a customer service support representative, moved to Tri-County Propane as a delivery and install technician this May. He takes the opening left by **Dan Peiffer** moving to the Blanchard propane team to fill a position opened by retirement earlier this year. Dan joined HomeWorks several years ago as a seasonal driver, then became a full-time employee in 2012.



Dan Peiffer

Photos—Thom Skelding

U.P. LUGE CLUB COMPETES ON WORLD STAGE

By Emily Haines Lloyd

Most Michiganders have had the experience of climbing a snowy hill with a plastic or wooden sled in tow, plopping down at the top and pushing off to feel the cold, stinging air. Regardless of the bumps or wipeouts that follow, most people laugh like maniacs, stand up and brush off the snow, then climb the hill to do it all over again.

Far fewer individuals have the experience of sliding down a 280-foot hill at speeds ranging from 50–80 mph, but that's just what's happening in

Negaunee, MI at the Upper Peninsula Luge Club. For more than three decades, beginners with wide eyes and daredevils with years of experience have made the trek up Lucy Hill to make their way down in increments upwards of a half a mile. All of this happens on a luge—which looks similar to an old-fashioned winter sled with metal runners.

"You don't start fast," Coach Levi Underwood is quick to explain. "Your first time, it's just fast enough to get down the hill, and it's still thrilling."

The U.P. Luge Club has been holding clinics and open sledding for the public since the mid-80s. It provides local communities and tourists an opportunity to experience something few people ever get to do. Sliding (not "lugging" as you might expect) isn't available just anywhere, and Lucy Hill is the only natural luge track in the United States.

"Sliding, particularly on a natural track, isn't something you find in every community," said Tammy Wills, the current secretary of the luge club, former coach from 2010–2016 and a competitive slider herself since age 13. "Yet, this one-of-a-kind experience is in the middle of the Upper Peninsula and completely accessible and affordable."



All that is needed are warm clothes, a hat and mittens—the U.P. Luge Club provides the rest. But this is not just for recreational sliders.

The U.P. Luge Club is a feeder club for the luge natural track competitive circuit. As the only natural track in the U.S., young sliders who show both promise and determination are often taken to Europe to compete—where a natural track is both prominent and very competitive.

The U.P. Luge Club President, Fred Anderson, first started sliding when he took his Boy Scout Troop to luge at Lucy Hill.

“I was hooked, and I wasn’t the only one,” Anderson explains. “Years later, two scouts from that first trip went on to compete at the Olympics. Wendall Suckow and Chris Thorpe became very successful sliders—Thorpe going on to become the first American to medal in luge at the Olympics. And they both came through this club.”

Remembering his experiences at Lucy Hill, Underwood, who competed for years in Europe and on the Olympic development team, came back to coach.

“I had so many great teachers, Tammy included, who showed me how an athlete could be humble enough to coach,” said Underwood. “And I wanted to give back to this sport that gave so much to me.”

The joy seen on the faces at the U.P. Luge Club comes from all sorts: individuals who have fallen in love with this unexpected sport; novices who are taking their first slide down a track; adrenaline junkies looking for another hit; and that inner child who remembers the freedom and excitement that comes from climbing up a hill, sitting on a sled and just letting go. ■



Three Sisters Luge Pizza

Submitted by guest chefs from the U.P. Luge Club.

Once used to describe the three devastating waves that led to the sinking of the Edmond Fitzgerald, Three Sisters is also the name for three tight turns and the most technical part of the Negaunee luge track.

This “three-turn” pizza is a favorite with club members and goes down as fast as a luge.

Ingredients

- 1 French Bread, sliced lengthwise
- ½ cup sweet onion, diced
- 3 ounces ham, diced
- 2 ounces pepperoni
- 4 ounces cudighi, cooked
- ½ cup green pepper
- ½ cup red pepper
- ½ cup sliced tomato
- 1 cup cheddar cheese
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese
- 14 ounces pizza sauce

Instructions

Preheat oven to 450 F. Brown the 4 ounces of cudighi. Cut the French bread lengthwise and toast for 4 minutes at 450 F. Spread pizza sauce on both pieces of toasted French bread.

Then add the following ingredients to the French bread in thirds:

Turn one /Step one

First third—ham, green peppers, onions

Turn two /Step two

Second third—pepperoni, red peppers, onions

Turn three /Step three

Last third—cudighi, tomatoes, onions

Bake for 6–8 minutes and enjoy.



Sesquicentennial Farms

Dan and Denise Rossman, Elaine Rossman, Kent and Susan Rossman Schultz, and Isabel Rossman (seated) display the three Michigan Sesquicentennial Farm signs they received recently. The three farms, located adjacent to each other west of Lakeview, first came into the family through Dan, Elaine, and Susan's great-great-grandparents, Fite and Mary Rossman, who moved to Michigan from New York in the 1830s and purchased the Winfield Township land in 1858, nine years before Lakeview was founded. The three farms, totaling over 350 acres, have been certified organic for the past 10 years and currently produce blue corn, soybeans, black beans, yellow corn, oats, and rye. (Courtesy photo)

Directors Recognized For Continuing Education



Kimber Hansen (right) is congratulated on receiving the Board Leadership Certificate by new NRECA leader Jim Matheson at the association's regional meeting in Grand Rapids. Hansen, who represents district 4 (most of Montcalm County) on the HomeWorks Tri-County Electric board of directors, had previously earned the Credentialed Cooperative Director designation. For Board Leadership, he attended courses on governance, leadership, power supply, financial statements and risk management. (photo by Casey Clark)



District 2 director Wayne Swiler, representing Barry and Ionia counties on the HomeWorks Tri-County board, recently received the Director Gold credential, shown with past board chair Ed Oplinger. Director Gold builds on the Credentialed Cooperative Director and Board Leadership Certificate designations by recognizing the director's commitment to continuing education. Director Cara Evans (District 5, Gratiot and Saginaw counties plus parts of Clinton and Montcalm counties) also earned the Director Gold status before she retired from the board. (staff photo)

Your Bill Payment Options: Quick, Free, Easy!

By Lesa Barker

Remember the good old days?

The hassle of buying stamps, writing checks, and mailing bills...

Wondering when your payment would reach its destination...

Worrying about late fees, if it didn't make it on time...

It's easy to forget a time when writing a check and mailing it in was one of your only options, isn't it?

In our fast-paced world, having quick, free, and easy ways to pay your bill has become the new norm. Because we know you are looking for ways to pay and ways to save both time and money, HomeWorks has a number of convenient, no cost payment options for you

- **Use the SmartHub App** on your phone or tablet. Once you have downloaded the app, paying your bill should take a minute or less.
- **Pay by Phone** at 877-999-3395. Have your account number ready, and be sure to wait for the confirmation number to ensure your payment was processed. You should be able to have payment complete within one or two minutes.
- **Pay online** at www.HomeWorks.org. Find the 'Pay Bill Now' button, enter your account number and name. Pick your payment method and submit your payment. It should not take more than a couple of minutes from start to finish.
- **Call our office** Monday–Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 800-562-8232. If you prefer to speak with a customer service representative, your payment can be taken over the phone with card information you've entered previously or with your checking account.
- **You can also explore other payment and billing options** on our website, such as: Auto Pay, Pay As You Go, paperless billing options and scheduling future payments.

We're always looking for new ways to meet your needs. With our variety of free and easy ways to pay, you can save time, money, and worry. Plus, you're doing your part to reduce paper use and its impact on the environment, and as a co-op member-owner, you're helping to hold down costs. ■



Yes, You CAN Pay With A Credit Card!

A few members have questioned an article in the September issue of *Michigan Country Lines*, in which we explained why our employees will not physically handle your credit card, as well as why we don't have access to your full credit card number through our computer system.

While some companies, like restaurants, still take your credit card away for processing, the payment card industry has set very high security standards with costly penalties if there is a breach in credit card security.

As a member-owned cooperative, we felt the risk of such a penalty was too high a cost to expect our members to bear in case someone manages to hack our systems.

All credit card payments made to HomeWorks Tri-County are managed through a third-party system. You are encouraged to pay with your credit card at the payment station in either office, on our website, or by using our pay by phone service at 1-877-999-3395.

You can also store your number on the system when you've logged into your account via SmartHub (online or through your smart device), and through the pay by phone service. Once stored, you can then call our regular phone number and confirm the last four digits of the card number to a customer service representative. We can then use the stored information to process your credit card payment.



Every Vote Counts

By Jack O'Malley

A busy year celebrating Olympians and honoring lost legends like Gordie Howe and David Bowie, 2016 will conclude with one of the most highly debated presidential elections in history. As we prepare ourselves for a new leader, I urge you to do one of two things.

1. Vote
2. Encourage someone you know to vote.

"I don't like the candidates." "My vote doesn't make a difference." "I'm busy." These may be reasonable explanations for the nearly half of Americans who choose not to vote during a presidential election year. To those who understand voting to be a great American privilege, they might sound more like excuses releasing our neighbors of any personal responsibility for the future of our nation.

"Voting is a right, not a duty," non-voters argue. "I have just as much right to exercise my right NOT to vote!" True. American people voluntarily fight (and sometimes die) for you to keep your right to vote—whether used or not. It's a right extended to every American citizen regardless of sex, race or economic standing. It's a right exercised in peace.

In 1964, the U.S. Supreme Court described voting like this: No right is more precious in a free country than that of having a voice in the election of those who make the laws under which, as good citizens, we must live. Other rights, even the most basic, are illusory if the right to vote is undermined. *Wesberry v. Sanders*, 376 U.S. 1 (U.S. 1964).

Vital for the democratic process to work, your vote not only counts, but it also serves as a united voice to elected officials regardless of party. Your vote says, "Here I am, I'm paying attention!"



Jack O'Malley

Whether you choose to exercise your right to vote or not, Abraham Lincoln described it best when he said, "Elections belong to the people. It's their decision. If they decide to turn their back on the fire and burn their behinds, then they will just have to sit on their blisters."

Hope to see you at the polls. ■

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 Nov. 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 the name of your co-op.


Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the September 2016 issue is Karen Wienke, a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative member who correctly identified the photo as Black Star Farms in Suttons Bay. Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



Sept. Photo

American Metal Roofs

“Winter storms, ice dams, power outages...



We'll help you protect your home against the ravages of a Michigan winter ...”

Frank Farmer - President, AMERICAN METAL ROOFS

It's true, our main business is metal roofing, but this time of year we offer products that help protect your home against the damaging effects of our long, icy winters. Products like Heated Shingle[®] and Heated Shingle Ice Dam Cutter[®] are products designed to melt ice buildup on your roof before it can take hold and cause expensive damage.

Protection for any kind of roof - not just metal.

We designed our Heated Shingle products to work on asphalt roofs as well as metal. So, if you've got problem ice areas on your roof, one of our Heated Shingle options may be exactly the solution you need.

Keep the power on through local outages - no worries.

Imagine. Within seconds of a local power outage, electricity in your home is restored - automatically. A whole house generator system keeps critical systems like heat, well pumps and medical equipment online until power is restored - and you never have to go outside.

I grew up in the U.P. so I know firsthand what a Michigan winter can do.

There is no doubt that winter weather can be hard on your home. That's why we offer our Heated Shingle products and whole house generator systems; to help protect your home through the worst of winter. And once the snow clears, we'll be happy to talk with you about one of our Snow Country roofs as well.

Protection. Permanence. You deserve nothing less.

VISIT OUR SHOWROOMS:

FLINT - 6140 Taylor Drive • CHARLOTTE - 1875 Lansing Road

Call Today! 844-638-2576 844-METAL-ROOFS

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Veterans receive an extra \$500 discount!!!



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HomeWorks.org
facebook.com/homeworks.org
Report Outages: 1-800-848-9333



Looking for a propane service that offers real value? Our customers give us a 96% satisfaction rating.

In a recent survey, 96 percent of HomeWorks Propane customers said they were satisfied or very satisfied with our overall performance. If you're not completely happy with your propane service, now's the time to make a change.

Capped Winter Rates

You will not pay more than our guaranteed not-to-exceed capped rate this winter. There is never an additional charge to receive this price security and your rate is good for the entire heating season.

Equal Payment Plan

Our Equal Payment Plan averages your energy bills for the entire year—so you can pay the same amount every month and avoid seasonal ups and downs. You'll always know exactly what you owe. Ask how you can save even more when you sign up for the Equal Payment Plan!

Auto-Fill Service

HomeWorks is able to estimate when your tank is in need of a fill and automatically provide that service to you. No more worrying about running out of gas or calling ahead to schedule a fill.



Tri-County Propane
Call 1-877-574-2740 today!

To qualify for Auto-Fill service, you must be using propane as your primary heat source at your primary residence.
HomeWorks Tri-County Propane is not regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission.