

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



## YOUTH TOUR

The Power Of Our Future

Remembering  
Wayne Swiler

Election Information  
Inside

Prepared For  
A Power Outage?





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### **Big Rapids**

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Total Comfort Resource, LLC  
(616) 406-3182  
[totalcomfortresource.com](http://totalcomfortresource.com)

### **Hart/Ludington**

Adams Htg & Clg  
(231) 873-2665  
[adamsheatingcooling.com](http://adamsheatingcooling.com)

### **Indian River**

M & M Plmb & Htg  
(231) 238-7201  
[mm-plumbing.com](http://mm-plumbing.com)

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Comfort 1 Htg & A/C  
(517) 764-1500  
[comfort1.net/geothermal](http://comfort1.net/geothermal)

### **Kalkaska**

Kalkaska Plmb & Htg  
(231) 258-3588  
[kalkaskageothermal.net](http://kalkaskageothermal.net)

### **Mt Pleasant**

Walton Htg & Clg  
(989) 772-4822  
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Adams Htg & Clg  
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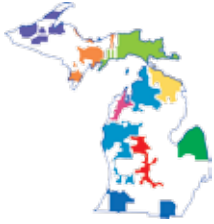
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**Change of Address:**

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.

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## ON THE COVER

Arjun Vorster, a 2016 Youth Tour participant and Midwest Energy Cooperative member, tours the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C.

Pictured here is Brad Whitney, a past Youth Tour attendee and current Great Lakes Energy Cooperative lineman, participating in safety training.

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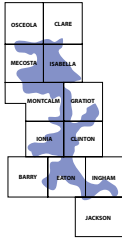
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Submit An 'I Remember' Story And Earn \$50!





## 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](http://homeworks.org)

E-mail: [tricoenergy@homeworks.org](mailto:tricoenergy@homeworks.org)

## Board of Directors

### District 1 — John Lord

2276 Plains Rd., Leslie, MI 49251  
517-974-2518  
[jlord@homeworks.org](mailto:jlord@homeworks.org)

### District 2 — Open Seat

### District 3 — Luke Pohl

Chairman  
15560 W. Hanses Rd., Westphalia, MI 48894  
989-292-0427  
[lpohl@homeworks.org](mailto:lpohl@homeworks.org)

### District 4 — Kimber Hansen

Secretary-Treasurer  
6535 N. Wyman Rd., Edmore, MI 48829  
989-506-5849  
[khansen@homeworks.org](mailto:khansen@homeworks.org)

### District 5 — Corinna Batora

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7655 N. Watson Rd., Elsie, MI 48831  
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[cbatora@homeworks.org](mailto:cbatora@homeworks.org)

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10890 W. Weidman Road, Weidman, MI 48893  
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Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC

# Remembering An Irreplaceable Director And Friend



**Mark Kappler**  
General Manager

As I reflect on District 2 Director Wayne Swiler's passing, many thoughts run through my mind.

I am reminded that HomeWorks can never "replace" Wayne. His 39 years of service on the board of directors taught him innumerable lessons. He had a thorough understanding of the electric utility business and the co-op business model, and he had a sense of service to the members of District 2 and all members of the cooperative. These traits and characteristics are not easily found.

Most importantly, Wayne was always a staunch advocate for the members. When he felt the cooperative was not performing well for the members, Wayne would say, "I have a complaint I want to discuss with you."

Wayne and I traveled to Cadillac each month to attend the Wolverine board meeting, and the 2.5-hour drive each way allowed for great discussions. From business to family, to things we both enjoyed doing, our discussions were always interesting and made the drive feel shorter. Of course, we always managed to find an ice cream shop to visit on the way home.

I am not the only one who feels this profound loss. Former General Manager Scott Braeger reflects, "Wayne was a man of few words, but with a deep understanding of people and values. He provided great leadership to people around him, not with words, but by the example he set! You didn't have to be around Wayne very long to realize that he cared deeply about people; he wanted the best for them. As a director, a member's concerns always came before all else. Wayne was an example to all of us how to live this one life we each have been given. So long, friend...you will not be forgotten."

Retired board member Cara Evans also remembers her friend. "Wayne always spoke his mind. I could call Wayne and ask him questions or discuss an issue with him. He was honest with me; he told me years later that in the beginning, the all-male board didn't really like a woman there. I think we became friends because of his honesty. We could just bounce our thoughts around. It was like thinking out loud to each other. He was a very good friend. He loved serving on the board. And he will be greatly missed."

As we look to the future at HomeWorks, the best we can do is fill his vacant seat with someone who will add value to the board, as well as someone who will bring new skills and perspectives relevant to our changing membership and business model. No one will ever replace Wayne Swiler. Thank you, Wayne, for setting that standard high. ■

*Mr. Swiler's obituary is printed on page 13.*



Find us on Facebook.  
[facebook.com/HomeWorks.org](https://facebook.com/HomeWorks.org)

# Are You Interested In Serving On The Board?

Hansen to seek re-election



Kimber Hansen

**K**imber Hansen of Edmore says he will run for a second term serving District 4 on the Tri-County Electric board of directors. The board seat for District 2 is vacant at press time, following the death of Wayne Swiler of Lake Odessa on December 19. A search committee will appoint someone to fill the District 2 seat until the term ends at the Annual Meeting in August.

The nominating committee in each district consists of the district's officers (listed on this page), elected by members at the district meeting in May. Each committee is required by the co-op's bylaws to nominate at least one candidate on or before March 15. Candidates may also be nominated with a petition signed by at least 25 members from within the district. Petitions must be turned in by April 5.

Names of nominees will be posted at the cooperative's offices by April 10.

## Who Makes Up District Nominating Committees?

Nominating committees are comprised of the district officers, elected by members at the previous year's district meeting.

### **District 2: Barry and Ionia counties**

Wilma Bailey, *Chair*  
12431 Shilton Rd  
Lake Odessa, MI 48849  
phone: 517-566-8242  
email: gramskids32003@yahoo.com

William Nichols (Portland),  
*Vice Chair*

Kristine Ceasar (Portland),  
*Secretary*

### **District 4: Montcalm County, except for Bloomer, Crystal, and Evergreen townships**

Lisa Johnson, *Chair*  
12423 Cutler Rd.  
Lakeview, MI 48850  
phone: 989-352-7593  
email: lisainamble@gmail.com

Glenn Kebler (Six Lakes),  
*Vice Chair*

Elaine Rossman (Lakeview),  
*Secretary*

## Interested In Seeking A Board Seat?

If you're interested in running for a HomeWorks board seat, Article VII, Section 2 of the cooperative's bylaws states you must be an individual member of the cooperative in good standing, at least 21 years old, residing in the district which you are to represent, and a U.S. citizen.

To become or remain a director, the bylaws state, the candidate must: have the capacity to enter into legally binding contracts; comply with standards of conduct as laid out in the bylaws; and meet all reasonable conflict of interest qualifications found in Article VII, Section 3.

Also, within the 10 years immediately prior to becoming a director, a candidate shall not have been convicted of or pled guilty to a felony or misdemeanor crime involving issues of moral character.

For a copy of the bylaws, please visit our website at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org).

If you meet these qualifications and would like to be nominated, contact your district nominating committee, listed on this page, or call HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 517-647-1211 for a nominating petition.

Information about all candidates and district meeting dates, along with an absentee ballot request form, will be published in the May issue of *Country Lines*. ■

# PORTABLE GENERATOR SAFETY TIPS

**Always read the Owner's Manual and instructions for your generator. Do NOT cut corners when it comes to safety.**

These tips are merely supplemental and are not intended to substitute the reading of the Owner's Manual.



## Carbon Monoxide And Ventilation

- Using a generator indoors **can kill you in minutes**. Exhaust contains carbon monoxide, a deadly, poisonous gas you cannot see or smell.
- NEVER run a generator indoors or in partly-enclosed areas, such as garages.
- ONLY use outdoors and far from windows, doors, vents, and crawl spaces and in an area where adequate ventilation is available and deadly exhaust gas cannot accumulate.
- Using a fan or opening doors and windows will not provide sufficient ventilation.
- It is recommended that you install battery operated carbon monoxide alarms/detectors indoors according to manufacturer's instructions/recommendations.

## Gasoline, Fueling And Burn Safety

- If the tank is over-filled, fuel can overflow onto a hot engine and cause fire or explosion.
- Do not overfill the fuel tank. Always allow room for fuel expansion.
- Never add fuel while the unit is running or hot. Allow the generator and engine to cool entirely before adding fuel.
- Never store a generator with fuel in the tank where gasoline vapors might reach an open flame, spark or pilot light.
- Many generator parts are hot enough to burn you during operation and while the generator is cooling after turning off. Avoid coming into contact with a hot generator.

## Electrocution Hazard And Electrical Shock Hazards

- Connecting a portable electric generator directly to your household wiring can be deadly to you and others. A generator that is directly connected to your home's wiring can "back feed" onto the power lines connected to your home and injure neighbors or utility workers.
- Do not connect your generator directly to your home's wiring or into a regular household outlet.

- Only start or stop the generator when no electrical loads are connected.
- Overloading your generator can seriously damage your valuable appliances and electronics. Do not overload the generator. Prioritize your needs; do not operate more appliances and equipment than the output rating of the generator. A portable electric generator should be used only when necessary and only to power essential equipment.
- Use the proper power cords. Plug individual appliances into the generator using heavy-duty, outdoor-rated cords with a wire gauge adequate for the appliance load. Overloaded cords can cause fires or equipment damage. Do not use extension cords with exposed wires or worn shielding.
- Do not operate the generator in wet conditions such as rain or snow.
- The generator must be properly grounded. If the generator is not grounded, you run the risk of electrocution. Check and adhere to all applicable federal, state and local regulations related to grounding.

## Generator Placement And Operation

- Allow at least five feet of clearance on all sides of the generator when operating.
- Generators can be used during a wide variety of weather temperatures, but should be protected from the elements when not in use to prevent shorting and rusting.
- Operate the generator only on level surfaces and where it will not be exposed to excessive moisture, dirt, dust or corrosive vapors.
- Inspect the generator regularly.
- Always disconnect the spark plug wire and place the wire where it cannot contact the spark plug to prevent accidental starting when setting up, transporting, adjusting or making repairs to the generator. ■

Source: American Red Cross with technical advice from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the National Fire Protection Association (publisher of the National Electric Code®) and the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

# Wind Energy Is Full Of Wins For Michigan

By Kelley Welf,  
Communications Manager,  
Wind On The Wires

Michigan farmers, business owners and taxpayers have a lot to gain by embracing wind energy. It offers a drought-resistant cash crop, requires very little land, creates family-supporting jobs in rural areas, and injects much-needed revenue sources into rural communities at a time when many are struggling—all while generating low-cost, clean energy. Everybody wins with wind power!

For generations, farmers have harnessed the power of the wind, but it wasn't until the 1980s that the industry was able to accomplish it on a utility scale. Since then, technological advancements and the growth of domestic manufacturing have driven the cost of wind projects down considerably. The price consumers pay for wind power has dropped 66 percent over six years.

Currently, wind provides more than four percent of Michigan's electricity needs, with 1,531 megawatts (MW) of installed capacity and another 330 MW under construction. The Department of Energy projects that Michigan could produce enough wind energy by 2030 to power the equivalent of 710,000 American homes.

Wind farms ensure farmland is protected over the long term. The average wind farm leaves 98 percent of land undisturbed, so they don't significantly impact crops or livestock production. Many farmers have found access roads built or improved for wind projects to be convenient during harvest time. Plus, wind developers make annual land-lease payments to farming families and other rural landowners. In 2014, wind developers paid \$4.6 million to Michigan landowners. This extra income goes a long way toward helping families meet their household budgets, send their kids to college, or keep the family farm. It is also reinvested in the community through spending at local businesses, restaurants and other establishments.

Wind developments increase the tax base, which helps keep more money in the pockets of citizens. From 2011–2015 the counties with the most wind farms—Gratiot, Huron and Tuscola—saw the largest increase to their tax base. This new source of tax revenue paid by wind developers brings in millions of dollars every year, and is often used to help pay for schools, county and township services, police and fire departments, and programs for seniors and veterans.

The economic impact of wind development ripples through local economies. With 26 wind manufacturing facilities, Michigan ranks fourth in the nation in wind manufacturing and enjoys about 2,000 wind energy jobs. Businesses also benefit from wind projects, as developers use local service stations, hardware stores, restaurants and hotels in their day-to-day operations.

Harvesting the wind and investing energy dollars locally is a winning strategy. Wind developments offer the opportunity to capitalize on jobs and economic development while ensuring Michigan's farm families and rural lifestyle stay economically viable. ■

*Wind On The Wires is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization based in St. Paul, MN, that works to advance renewable energy in the Midwest.*

[windonthewires.org](http://windonthewires.org)



# Look For The ENERGY STAR® Label

Making the switch to LED bulbs is a smart way to save energy. But, just like all other products, some LEDs meet a higher standard of quality and performance than others. To ensure you are selecting the best LEDs, always look for the ENERGY STAR®!

What is ENERGY STAR? ENERGY STAR is a trusted brand for quality products that use significantly less energy than required by minimum federal standards. The ENERGY STAR label can be found on hundreds of items, including light bulbs, electronics, major appliances, and even certified homes and buildings.

For a LED to bear the ENERGY STAR label, it must pass rigorous testing to ensure maximum energy savings, while also proving it will display the following characteristics:

- Brightness equal to or greater than that of other existing technologies
- Well-distributed light
- Excellent color quality
- Light output that remains constant over time
- Light that comes on instantly when turned on

- No flicker when dimmed
- Does not use power when turned off

## Other tips for choosing the right LED bulb:

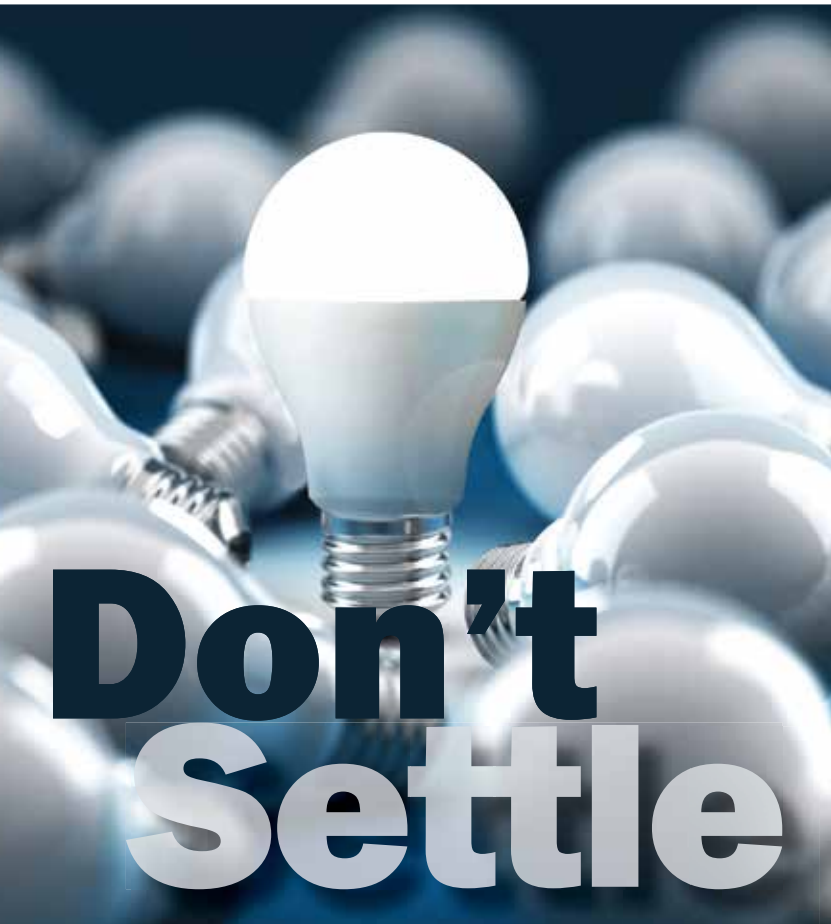
Choose the right brightness. Instead of watts, look for lumens when purchasing LEDs to gauge the brightness of the bulb.

Choose the appropriate color. LEDs come in a broad range of colors, which are measured by temperature on the Kelvin scale (K). Lower K emits a warmer, yellowish light, while higher K produces cooler, bluer light. ■

By replacing your home's five most frequently used light fixtures or bulbs with ENERGY STAR® LEDs, you can save up to \$75 each year.

## REBATES NOW AVAILABLE

Visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or call 877-296-4319 for additional energy-saving information and incentives.



# Don't Settle

## All LEDs are not created equal!

You know LED bulbs are the most efficient lighting solution for your home. To save as much energy as possible, look for the ENERGY STAR® label!

### Why ENERGY STAR LEDs?

- Highest quality and performance
- Exceptional color quality and light output
- Thoroughly tested and verified to back up claims

**ENERGY TIP:** Visit a participating retailer near you to receive instant in-store savings on LED bulbs and fixtures!

ONLINE: [michigan-energy.org/RetailersSearch](http://michigan-energy.org/RetailersSearch)

PHONE: 877.296.4319

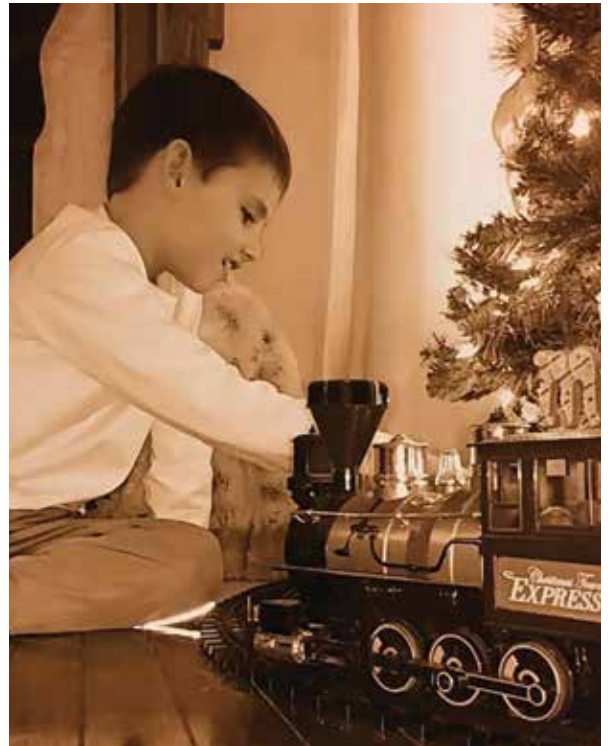


Energy Optimization programs and incentives are applicable to Michigan electric service locations only. Other restrictions may apply. For a complete list of participating utilities, visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org).





Wyatt Raglin meets Santa! Julia Raglin of Barryton shared a Snap Shot, saying, "This picture was taken at the Morton Township Library in Mecosta. My son Wyatt attends story hour every Tuesday morning. Santa and Mrs. Claus came to visit them for their Christmas party."



Janis Tipton of Saint Johns writes, "Our son, James, has always loved trains. We have always had a train around the bottom of the Christmas tree. Couldn't ask for a more priceless picture."



Shelby Olson of Lakeview shares this photo of her favorite Christmas present, baby Allison Davis: "It was my daughter's first Christmas. This was Mommy's favorite gift under the tree."

### 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 \$100 each on their December electric bill, due in January 2018!

### Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

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

**"Planes, Trains, and Cars,"** Deadline: **March 16** (May issue)

**"Farms & Barns,"** Deadline: **April 17** (June issue)

Go to [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org) and select *Country Lines* under the Electric tab 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.



# CHIP DIPS

These dips are a slam dunk for your next gathering.

## Philly Tomato Basil Dip

Nancy Popa,  
Cherryland Electric  
Cooperative

- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- 2 plum tomatoes, chopped
- 2 tablespoons zesty Italian dressing
- 2 tablespoons shredded Parmesan cheese
- 1 tablespoon finely chopped basil

Spread cream cheese in a 9-inch pie plate. Mix tomatoes and Italian dressing, then spoon over cream cheese. Sprinkle Parmesan and basil on top. Serve with thick chips or crackers!







## Southern Pimiento Cheese

Annie, Great Lakes Energy

- 2 cups shredded extra-sharp Cheddar cheese
- 8 ounces cream cheese, softened
- ½ cup mayonnaise
- ¼ teaspoon garlic powder
- ¼ teaspoon ground cayenne pepper (optional)
- ¼ teaspoon onion powder
- 1 jalapeno pepper, seeded and minced (optional)
- 1 (4 ounces) jar diced pimiento, drained
- salt and black pepper, to taste

Place the Cheddar cheese, cream cheese, mayonnaise, garlic powder, cayenne pepper, onion powder, minced jalapeno, and pimiento into the large bowl of a mixer. Beat at medium speed, with a paddle if possible, until thoroughly combined. Season to taste with salt and black pepper. Serve cold with crackers or toasted baguette slices, at room temperature as a dip with tortilla chips, or as a spread for a grilled cheese sandwich.



## Cheesy Hot Crab Dip

Janice Harvey, Great Lakes Energy

- 8 ounces imitation crab meat
- 2 cups mayonnaise
- ½ medium onion, chopped
- ¼ cup fresh parsley, chopped
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups shredded mild cheddar cheese
- assorted crackers or chips

Preheat oven to 350 degrees.

In a medium bowl, shred imitation crab meat. Stir in mayonnaise, onion, parsley and pepper. Stir in cheese. Spoon into shallow 1-½ quart baking dish. Bake, uncovered, for 20–25 minutes or until heated through. Serve with crackers or chips.



Submit your favorite recipe for a chance to win a \$50 bill credit and have your recipe featured in *Country Lines*:

- “Breakfast & Brunch” due March 4
- “On The Grill” due April 4

Go to [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com) for more information and to register.

## U.S. SENATE BEAN SOUP

*In honor of the annual Youth Tour Washington, D.C. trip application deadline, we share this favorite recipe. Since the 1940s, the traditional U.S. Senate Bean Soup, pictured above, has been on the Senate's menu every day.*

- |   |                            |
|---|----------------------------|
| • 1 pound dry navy beans                                | • ¼ cup chopped parsley    |
| • 1 meaty ham bone                                      | • 1½ teaspoons pepper      |
| • 1 cup chopped onion                                   | • 1 teaspoon ground nutmeg |
| • 2 garlic cloves, minced                               | • 1 teaspoon oregano       |
| • 1 cup chopped celery                                  | • 1 teaspoon basil         |
| • ¾ cup mashed potato flakes or 1½ cups mashed potatoes | • 1 bay leaf               |
|   | • salt, to taste           |

Wash and sort beans; in a large kettle, cover beans with 6–8 cups hot water. Bring to a boil and boil 2 minutes; remove from heat, cover, and let stand for 1 hour. Add another 2 quarts of cold water and ham bone, then bring to a boil; reduce heat and simmer 1½ hours. Stir in remaining ingredients; simmer 20–30 minutes until beans are tender. Remove ham bone, trim off meat and return meat to soup; remove bay leaf. Serve hot, or freeze for later.

See Youth Tour cover story on page 14 and visit [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com) for this recipe and others.



# Your Board In Action

## Meeting at Blanchard on December 14, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the cooperative's liability, property, umbrella, and other insurance coverage with a representative of Federated Rural Electric Insurance Exchange, and approved renewal for 2017 at current levels of coverage.
- Went over strategic and tactical plans for 2017.
- Learned that staff is continuing to attend township board meetings, successfully seeking service franchise renewals.
- Learned there had been no instances of identity theft, in a quarterly report required by board policy.
- Learned there were 112 new members in November.

- Acknowledged the December 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 meeting is scheduled for 9 a.m. on March 27 at Portland. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

# People Fund Helps YMCA With Swimming Programs

## Meeting December 14, 2016, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made four grants totaling \$6,985.54, including:

- \$1,500 to Ionia County YMCA, to purchase water safety equipment for the 3rd grade, senior, and special needs water safety programs;
- \$3,000 to an Ingham County family, to help with housing expenses;
- \$785.54 to a Montcalm County family, to help with housing expenses; and
- \$1,700 to another Montcalm County family, also to help with housing 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](http://homeworks.org).

**Note:** Applications must be received by Feb. 27 for the March board meeting.

## Notice of Member Access to Rates

As a member-customer of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, the following information is available to you from the cooperative:

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; and
4. Clear and concise explanation of the member's actual energy use for each billing period during the last 12 months.

**The information can be obtained by visiting [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org) or contacting HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 1-800-562-8232.**

# Remembering Long-Time Director Wayne Swiler



Wayne Swiler with his 1938 John Deere B, driven by six generations of Swilers.

Wayne Swiler, who served HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members for 39 years on the cooperative's board of directors, died at his home near Lake Odessa on December 19, 2016, after a long illness. He was 71.

A native of Portland who moved to Lake Odessa at a young age, he graduated from Lakewood Public Schools in 1964 and served in the National Guard from 1965-1972, while employed at Oldsmobile.

After dairy farming for several years, he left the business and worked at Herbruck's Poultry Ranch for 20 years before retiring.

Mr. Swiler is survived by his wife, Pam; son, Kevin; daughter, Amanda; three granddaughters and one great-grandson. He was a member of the First Congregational Church of Lake Odessa, the Lakewood Area Lions Club, First Families of Ionia County Society, and the Ionia County Genealogical Society, and enjoyed fishing in his spare time. He was also a great fan of the Grand Rapids Drive basketball team.

"Wayne was especially known for his compassion and generosity," his family wrote of him. "He never met a stranger and was loved by all who knew him. He had a wonderful sense of humor and a warm, loving smile. He was the go-to fix-it man for anyone who needed something repaired."

Mr. Swiler's paternal and maternal grandparents were some of the very first members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative; he became a member in 1967 and was first elected to the board of directors in 1977. He was vice-chairman of the board and also represented the cooperative on the Wolverine Power Cooperative board of directors. ■



Several of our Electric Operations supervisors and crew leaders completed a three-year series of Supervisory Safety Management courses and earned certification from our national association. From left, Chris Teachout, Dan Fredricks, Jon Karcher, and Rob Brennan were recognized for their further education at the December safety steering committee meeting.

## Operations Supervisors Complete Safety Courses

As part of HomeWorks Tri-County's commitment to a culture of safety, our operations team participated in a six-course Supervisory Safety Management series, provided through the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association.

The six courses included: Utility Safety Basics for Supervisors; The Role of Supervisors in the Safety Process; Incident Investigation Training; Safety Management and Human Performance Principles; Organizational Behavior for Employee Success; and Safety Leadership Responsibilities.

Those who completed the series include Rob Brennan, Portland crew leader; Dan Fredricks and Jon Karcher, Blanchard crew leaders; and Chris Teachout, Portland operations coordinator.

# YOUTH TOUR

## The Power Of Our Future

By Emily Haines Lloyd

“We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.” – Franklin D. Roosevelt



Arjun Vorster, shown rock climbing, says Youth Tour had an impact on how he wants to make a difference in the world and his own life.

**E**nergy is more than the ability to do work. Energy powers our imaginations and fuels positive change. That is why, for the last 50 years, approximately 1,800 students from at least 45 states have participated in the Electric Cooperative Youth Tour program each year. This five-day trip is a high-energy, interactive experience designed to help young people grow as leaders and takes place June 10–15.

Through an application and interview process, rising juniors and seniors are selected and sponsored by their local co-ops to travel to Washington, D.C., for a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Together with students from all across the country, the selected Michigan students learn about co-ops, leadership, history and the importance of civic engagement.

“The experience changed me quite a bit,” said Arjun Vorster, a junior at Mendon High School and 2016 Youth Tour participant sponsored by his electric co-op Midwest Energy.

It wasn’t the travel that impressed Vorster, who was born in South Africa and has traveled around the





Brad Whitney, who participated in Youth Tour eight years ago, is shown with fellow students from Great Lakes Energy at a Michigan Rural Electric Teen Days event.



Today, using some of those same principles he learned as a young man, Brad serves his community as a Great Lakes Energy Cooperative Lineman.

world, including living in seven different countries before moving to the United States.

“Washington, D.C., is a really impressive place,” said Vorster. “You are surrounded by so much history, and you and your fellow students are right in the middle of it all. It’s pretty amazing.”

Vorster, who wants to study environmental engineering in college, noted that having the opportunity to see the historical monuments, visit various museums and interact with the other student participants were some of the most impactful moments of his trip.

“I met so many interesting people,” said Vorster. “I was surrounded by people who wanted to make a difference, and it made me more resolved to make a difference in my own life too.”

Youth Tour can have long-lasting effects on attendees. The impact of leadership training, a unique experience of living history at our nation’s capital, and significant information on the future of electric power, makes quite an impact on the students.

Brad Whitney was a participant at Youth Tour in 2009 and the influence it had on him has been long lasting.

Whitney is currently a lineman at Great Lakes Energy Cooperative. He attended Youth Tour and followed up his trip with a summer job related to line work. Eventually, Brad became the recipient of a GLE scholarship, earning his lineman certification from Alpena Community College and Great Lakes Energy.

“It was a great experience that I’ll never forget,” said Whitney. “I hope this program is available when my kids grow up—I’d want them to go and have an experience as amazing as mine.” ■

**Visit [CooperativeYouthTour.com](http://CooperativeYouthTour.com) for applications. Applications are due February 28.**

# Being Prepared For An Outage

By Lesa Barker

10  
Commonly  
Asked  
Questions

Winter is here, and it's important to be ready for an outage. At HomeWorks we work hard to provide you with affordable and reliable electricity, but outages can still happen for many reasons that are out of our control. When an outage occurs, being prepared and knowing how to keep yourself and your family safe is imperative. Are you ready?

When a member calls in to report an outage, we direct the call to our dispatchers. Dispatch assigns the outage investigation to the linemen on call, who then patrol the area to determine where and what the cause of the outage is before starting repairs.

Finding the cause of the outage will help determine how long the crew will need to restore power. This can be quite time-consuming, especially if the weather conditions are poor.

Here are some commonly asked questions from our members. When you understand the process of restoring electric power during and after a storm, you can take proactive steps to care for your family.

## 1 How do I report an outage during and after business hours?

During business hours (Monday–Friday, 8 a.m.–5 p.m.) you can contact our customer service team at 800-562-8232. We will forward your outage information to dispatch; if the information is already available, we may be able to give you an idea of how long to expect your power will be out. You can also report your outage using the SmartHub app.

After hours you can call 800-848-9333 to report your outage, use the CALL NOW button on our Facebook page, or use our SmartHub app.

## 2 Why isn't there an after-hours staff available to talk to me?

We have an after-hours service in place to take your call at any time. We also *always* have managers and linemen on call in the event of an outage. Thankfully, major outages aren't common enough to justify the expense of staffing around the clock.

## 3 How long will my power be out?

This question can be tricky, and it is one that we don't always have the answer to. If an outage is planned (to do repairs, for example) a time frame for restoral is usually given. However, in the event of a major outage caused by storm damage, a time most likely will not be available. Electric Operations Manager Chris Reed says, "Outages can range from a lightning strike blowing a fuse

to a vehicle/pole accident. The extent of damage that caused the outage will determine the time it takes to restore power. Deep snow, mud, water, or darkness make access difficult and slow the restoral process," says Reed.

## 4 How does HomeWorks determine who gets restored first?

Reed explains, "During major storm events, we start restoring power with the main feeder lines, the lines that branch out from the substations. It's similar to how counties plow snow; the main roads are done first, then secondary roads, et cetera."

## 5 How do I know if the outages are happening other places, rather than just in my neighborhood?

You can view our outage map on our website (homeworks.org). Click on Outage Map near the top of the page, and you'll see the map that indicates where outages have been reported.

This can also be viewed through our SmartHub app. In the event of a major storm, we also publish regular updates on our Facebook page.

## 6 Can I report an outage on your website, Facebook, or with SmartHub?

You can report an outage through the SmartHub app. You cannot report an outage through Facebook or our website, but information is available in both places directing you to call. When you call in or use SmartHub,

our dispatchers can get your specific location and pole numbers. We also ask a few other questions to help us provide better information to line crews responding to your call. That information is then added to the outage map.

### 7 Why do your CSRs ask for a call-back number?

"We pride ourselves on having a fast response to an outage," says Luanne Goodman, a customer service representative at our Portland office. "Providing the best service sometimes may involve asking you some questions to help our linemen find the outage." Having the right contact number could be crucial.

An automated call-back is placed once power is restored. This helps us ensure that power is restored to every location. If you get a call stating power is back on at your location, but it is not, you are asked to call us immediately to report you are still without power, while our linemen are still in the area.

### 8 At what point should I leave my location?

It's your decision to make. All members are encouraged to watch weather reports and be prepared for an outage. If you have a generator or a backup heat source that doesn't require electricity, you should have it ready to use. If you don't have either, and you are able to safely leave your location, you may feel your best option is to find an alternative place to stay for the duration. If you don't have family or a motel nearby, check with the Red Cross or your county emergency services coordinator.

This is another reason we ask for a call-back number when you report your outage. If you aren't home, the call will let you know you can return. You can also use the "Be Prepared" list (right) to prepare for an outage.

### 9 Why do my neighbors have power and I don't?

System Engineer Chris Jensen explains there are a number of reasons this could happen. If you see your neighbor has power and you don't, consider the following possibilities:

- Your neighbor is running a generator.
- Your neighbor is served from a different utility.
- The wire or jumper serving your home is broken.
- The two homes are fed from different substations or lines.
- Or most commonly, there is a single phase outage on a three phase line, and your two homes are served by different phases.

### 10 What is HomeWorks doing to reduce outages and outage restoral time?

Jensen says, "Clearing the right-of-way [and] making sure the trees are clear from the power lines is one of the biggest factors in reducing outages." Keeping up with technological advances and having a well-prepared staff are just some of the things we do to help reduce outages and restoral times.


With today's weather forecasting technology, he adds, we are almost always aware when a storm is aimed at mid-Michigan. Our top priority every day is making sure our system can withstand storms, and that we're ready to repair damaged power lines if one hits. ■


## Be Prepared Before The Storm




Being prepared is important at your end of the line, too. Follow the tips included with this article, and other safety information HomeWorks Tri-County provides, to get your family through the storm. Once a storm hits, your role is to report the outage to us and then let our crews take care of the rest.

Here are some basic items you should store in your home in case of emergency:

 **Water:** Three-day supply, one gallon per person per day

 **Food:** Three-day supply, non-perishable, high-energy

 **Clothing, bedding, and sanitation supplies**

 **Tools:** Can opener, plates, utensils, flashlight, batteries, cash, bleach, hand sanitizer

 **First aid supplies, medicine**

 **Important documents**



# I Remember...

*The Wonder Of Michigan Always Brings Us Home.*

The eldest of five siblings, I was the only one born in Michigan while my father was in boot camp. We were stationed in Alaska until I was nine and my youngest brother was almost two when my father decided to end his military career and move us all back home to Michigan. Picture two vehicles, a blue and white van and a tiny Isuzu truck, packed to the gills with two adults, five children, snacks in bulk, and a potty training toilet. What a sight we must have been!

It is a credit to both my parents and chocolate animal crackers that I fondly remember the 3,000-mile trek.

The best trips I remember as a child were to Sleeping Bear Dunes, Tahquamenon Falls, the Iron Mountain Iron Mine, Fort Mackinac on Mackinac Island, Fort Michilimackinac in Mackinaw City, and hiking on various trails.

In 2009, I moved to Arkansas with my husband, and there we had two children of our own.

In 2015, we could not resist the magnetic pull of the 45th parallel and moved back home to Michigan.

Since then my children have experienced the wonderland that is Michigan and have made memories of their own—their first snow angels, local farms and orchards, and the magic of the Great Lakes.

Home.

*Kalico Casady, Great Lakes Energy*



*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
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## Michigan Co-ops Inspire Tomorrow's Leaders Today With **YOUTH TOUR 2017**

An exclusive summer highlight for the best and brightest youth in the state.  
**June 10-15, 2017**

Designed to inspire the leaders of tomorrow, Youth Tour teaches the brightest students of Michigan about their past—and helps equip them with the skills they need to be Michigan's next generation of energy-minded leaders. This is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid leadership travel opportunity for high school sophomores and juniors (going into their junior or senior year this summer) and is sponsored by Michigan's electric cooperatives.

Youth Tour offers a unique opportunity to build leadership and public speaking skills, enhance students' knowledge of the cooperative form of business, and build life-long friendships with other student-leaders from across the country.

**Youth Tour applications accepted between now and Feb. 28.**

### Trip Highlights Include:

- Visit the Gettysburg Civil War battlefields
- See Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star Spangled Banner"
- Explore the Washington, D.C., monuments and memorials
- Attend a theater performance at the Kennedy Center
- Explore the museums of the Smithsonian Institution
- Pay respects at Arlington National Cemetery
- Meet with Michigan Senators and Congressmen
- Batter up! Enjoy a Washington Nationals baseball game

Additional information and online application are available at [CooperativeYouthTour.com](http://CooperativeYouthTour.com).