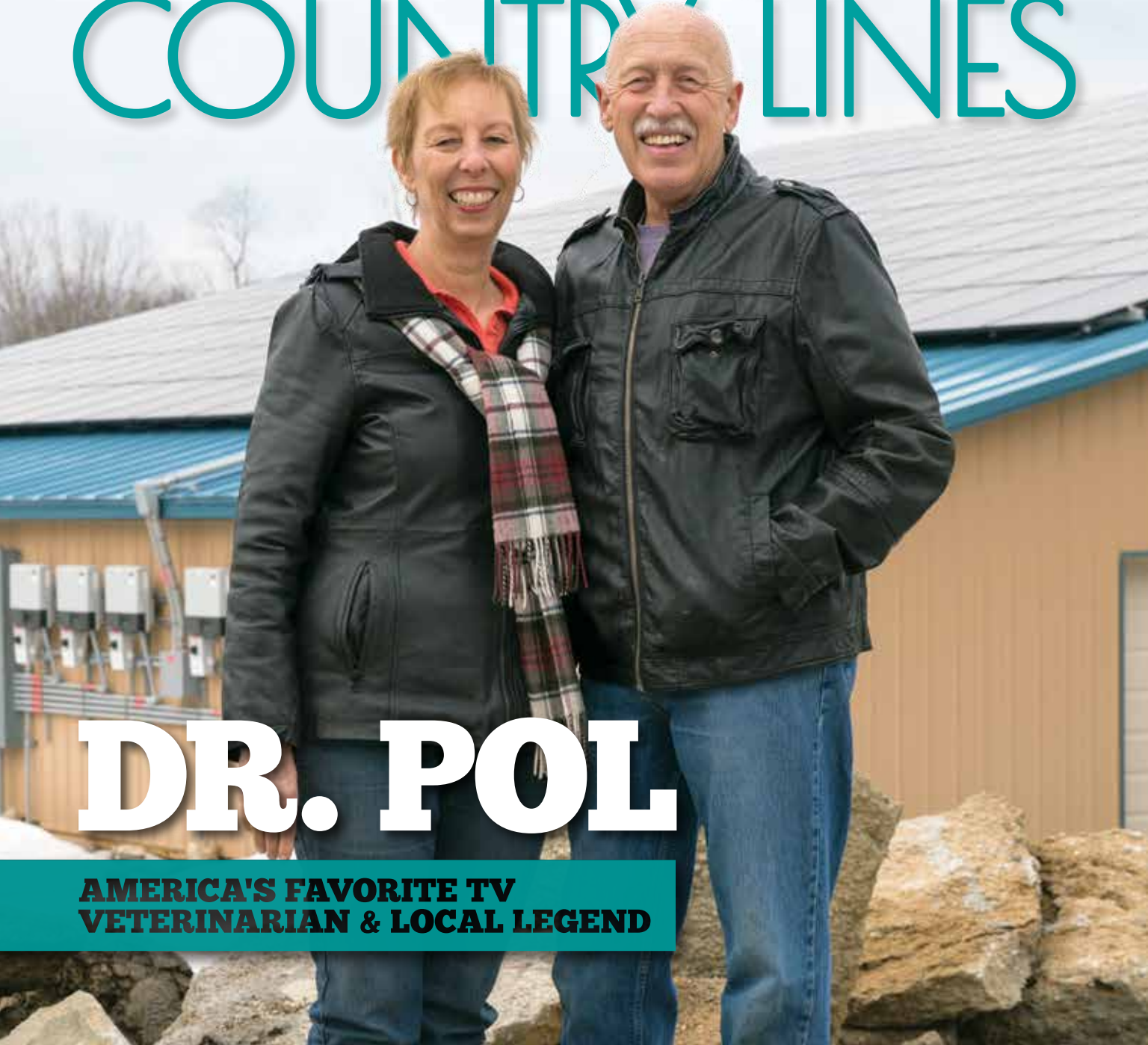


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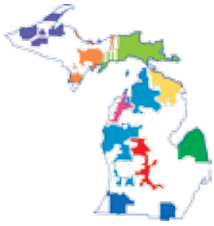
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Photos courtesy of E. Michael Stankevich and National Geographic

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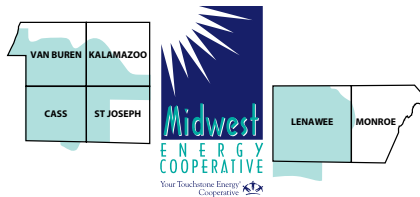
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Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Small Town With Big City Tech



Robert Hance
President/CEO

The digital space opens up a lot of opportunities for customers to share service experiences, good and bad. Here is a Google review recently shared by a Midwest member:

"Our power went out for the first time in over a year after a huge snow storm. I used their automated system, next thing there was a truck in my driveway. Then a follow-up call saying power was restored! For a small town, they are big city tech."

I wish all reviews were so positive, but sometimes we just mess up. We own our mistakes and course-correct accordingly. But what I particularly love about this review is that last sentence.

There are more than 900 rural electric cooperatives across the country, all on a mission to do the same thing: deliver reliable service. We certainly share that goal, but delivering reliable electric service is not rocket science; we've been doing it for decades. Your co-op is setting itself apart and delivering big city tech opportunities by leveraging our infrastructure, resources and creativity.

People choosing the rural space need and deserve the same amenities enjoyed by their urban counterparts, but the digital divide that separates rural and urban America limits folks from taking advantage of opportunities that come when you marry smart grid infrastructure with the internet of things.

"Big city tech" opportunities shouldn't be defined by geography, and that's where we're setting ourselves apart. We're actively investing in and building infrastructure to not only improve your electric service experience, but also bring you the opportunities enjoyed by your urban peers. Those efforts are reflected in our new vision and mission statements adopted by your board in January.

Our vision, what we ultimately want to accomplish, is: "Vibrant, relevant, sustainable rural communities." We certainly can't do that alone, but we're investing in critical infrastructure that will not only keep people happily and productively living and working in the rural space, but also draw new people in.

We accomplish that vision by actively living out our new mission, "Delivering first-in-class innovations and solutions where others won't." We're investing in our members so that your address no longer dictates your scope of opportunity.

These investments obviously come at a cost, and we're on a path to restructure rates so that everyone pays equally for the opportunities we're making available. Technological advances will change the ways we live, and our rural corner of the world will be ready for that. We're bringing big city tech to your small town experience. ■



Midwest Energy Cooperative is committed to providing members with reliable energy and telecommunications services, as well as high levels of customer care. Your thoughts and opinions can help us create a better service experience for you and fellow members.

We will launch two surveys this month to collect useful information as we evaluate the member service experience and develop new offerings and opportunities to meet your needs. All information collected in both surveys is confidential and will not be shared with any outside entities. We appreciate your time as we strive to create a better customer experience.

As we continue to evaluate different technology opportunities and applications, we're interested in knowing more about what you're using, how you're using it, and what you'd like to see in the future to enhance your rural experience. We're digging down on things like home automation, home security, and the ever-evolving over-the-top entertainment options, where you bypass the normal gatekeepers of content (traditional television or satellite) and use mobile communications service available via an app and viewable on your device where high-speed service is available.

This survey will be available online at TeamMidwest.com from March 6 through April 7.

From March through May, we will also participate in a member satisfaction telephone survey, conducted by the market research team at the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association. Members will be randomly selected for participation, and the survey should take no more than 10 minutes.

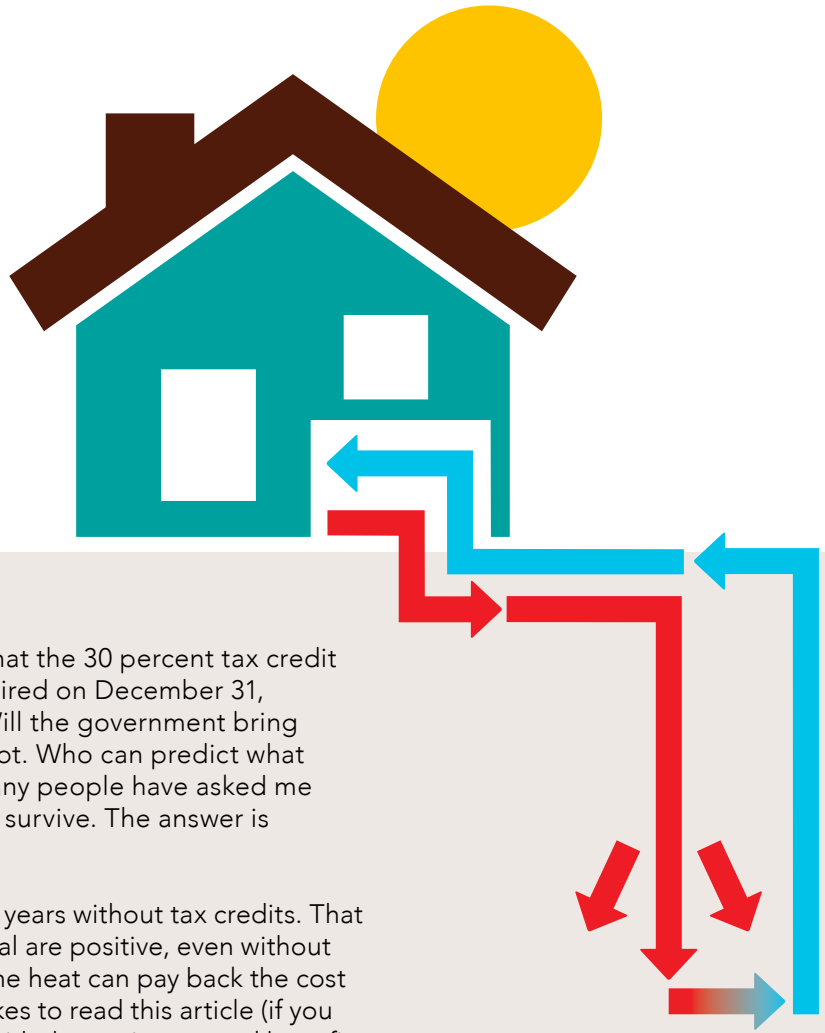
We strive to provide all members with first-class innovations and solutions. Your participation in these efforts will help us make decisions that benefit you and other co-op members. Thanks for your help! ■

Fuel Mix Report		
The fuel mix characteristics of Midwest Energy Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ending 12/31/16.		
COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED		
Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE	2016	Regional Average
Coal	39.8%	47.7%
Oil	0.5%	0.6%
Gas	27.2%	18.1%
Hydroelectric	1.3%	0.8%
Nuclear	21.5%	26.7%
Renewable Fuels	9.7%	6.1%
Biofuel	0.6%	0.8%
Biomass	0.4%	0.5%
Solar	0.1%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.1%	0.1%
Wind	8.1%	4.1%
Wood	0.4%	0.5%
NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas; and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix, but does not include banked renewable energy credits (RECs) that bring the total for renewable fuels to 10%. The 2016 Fuel Mix numbers reflected here do not reflect current and ongoing renewable percentages of fuel mix.		
<p>Your Co-op's Fuel Mix</p>		
<p>Regional Average Fuel Mix</p>		
EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON		
TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	5.4	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	1,578	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.5	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0068	0.0083
* Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the 12-month period ending 12/31/16.		
Midwest Energy Cooperative purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc., which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.		

Geothermal Systems

The rumors of their demise are greatly exaggerated.

By Larry Kaufman



Many of you have heard or read that the 30 percent tax credit for geothermal heat pumps expired on December 31, 2016. That is completely true. Will the government bring the tax credits back? Maybe...maybe not. Who can predict what the government will do? A question many people have asked me is whether the geothermal industry will survive. The answer is absolutely, positively, undeniably, YES!

The geothermal industry survived many years without tax credits. That is because the economics for geothermal are positive, even without the tax credit. Anyone with oil or propane heat can pay back the cost of a geothermal system in the time it takes to read this article (if you are a very slow reader). When coupled with the environmental benefits, comfort benefits, and that there is no outdoor unit—geothermal makes sense.

For 20 years I have had geothermal at my house. People tell me that they won't spend the extra money for geothermal. However, you are going to spend it—either on geothermal or by paying the utility. If you spend it on geothermal, you keep this extra money. Otherwise, you continue to pay this extra money forever. It's your choice.

The Michigan Geothermal Energy Association's annual conference is April 27 from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. at Soaring Eagle Casino in Mt. Pleasant. This is a great place to learn more about geothermal. The fee is \$20 at the door or free if you request a quote on geothermal from any dealer at the conference. ■

Larry Kaufman is the Executive Director for the Michigan Geothermal Energy Association.

Visit earthcomfort.com or geoexchange.org to learn more about geothermal.

Michigan Legislature Approves Energy Package



Craig Borr, CEO
Michigan Electric
Cooperative
Association

After nearly two years of discussion, dialogue, committee hearings and, at times, frustration, the Michigan Legislature passed an energy reform package as their last initiative prior to recess in late December. The two-bill package is 200-plus pages in length and is the first major piece of state energy legislation since 2008.

One of the principal goals of the legislative package was ensuring additional “marketplace certainty” so that additional generating capacity can be constructed in our state. Michigan’s generating capacity, particularly in the Lower Peninsula, has been declining significantly over the past few years due to the many plant retirements necessitated by new, more stringent federal environmental standards.

Thankfully, electric cooperatives in Michigan are in a much better position than many of their neighboring municipal and investor-owned utilities when it comes to generating capacity and the ability to meet member demands during peak load periods. The 430-megawatt Alpine Generating Plant built by Wolverine Power Cooperative near Gaylord last year is a prime example of how Michigan’s electric co-ops are preparing for their members’ future needs. The Alpine plant required an investment of nearly \$200 million and is fueled by natural gas.

What are some of the specifics included in the energy legislation signed by Michigan Governor Rick Snyder in December, and how will they impact you and your electric cooperative?

- **Renewable Energy** – The new energy legislation increases the state’s Renewable Portfolio Standard (RPS) from the current 10 percent level to 15 percent in 2021. The majority of Michigan’s electric cooperatives already exceed the 15 percent renewable energy threshold required in 2021 from their extensive use of solar, wind and hydroelectric generating resources located in Michigan. Electric co-ops are Michigan’s renewable energy leaders.
- **Net Metering** – As member regulated utilities, Michigan’s electric cooperatives will continue



to set the parameters of their own net metering programs so that member-consumers can access their electric co-op’s net metering programs without regulatory involvement.

- **Electric Choice** – Like the state’s largest electric utilities, electric cooperatives will continue to offer “choice” to their large commercial and industrial members through Michigan’s electric customer choice program. However, electric choice suppliers will need to prove they have ample supplies of electric capacity to meet the energy requirements of “choice” customers. This is particularly important as much of Michigan’s electric generation fueled by coal continues to dwindle due to age and federal environmental requirements.
- **Energy Optimization** – Electric co-ops will continue to provide their members with energy optimization programs designed to reduce electric usage through LED lighting, installation of energy-efficient appliances and more extensive efficiency programs for commercial, industrial and agricultural members.

Michigan’s electric cooperatives were supportive of the new energy legislation and believe strongly that it will be good for our member-consumers throughout rural Michigan. We are hopeful that this package will result in the construction of new and cleaner forms of electric generation in Michigan, including new natural gas, wind and solar facilities. ■

Recycle And Save!

Do you have an old refrigerator or chest freezer taking up valuable space in your basement or garage? While you may not think about these appliances often, they could be adding hundreds of dollars onto your utility bill each year.

Declutter your home and save money with our Energy Optimization program. You can earn \$50 for removing and recycling a secondary refrigerator or freezer!*

Free appliance pick up made easy:

The Energy Optimization team will pick up and recycle your old refrigerator(s) or freezer(s) for FREE. You can choose to send along an old window air conditioner or dehumidifier for recycling as well. NOTE: All items must be in working condition.

How to participate:

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

Cash incentives are available for the following:

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

*Limit two appliances per year, per residence.

More ways to save!

Are you working on a remodeling project? Your electric utility's Energy Optimization program offers cash incentives for qualifying ENERGY STAR® appliances, including refrigerators, washers and dryers, ceiling fans, room air conditioners, televisions, and more.

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



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

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

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

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

Shopping for new appliances?

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

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877-296-4319



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

Your Family Photos

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the photo with the highest votes (and some other selections) from our January photo contest. Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

Visit teammidwest.com/photo-contest/ to view photos.

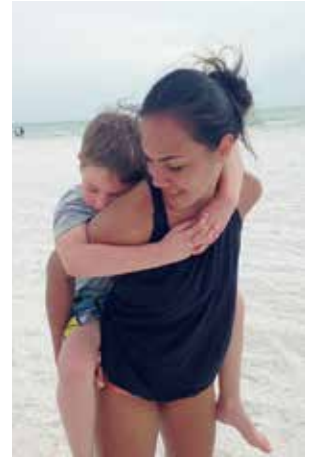
Most
Votes On
Facebook!



Kathy Bontrager, White Pigeon—Fun Family Vacation



Erin Dohm, Dowagiac—
Snow Much Fun



Erin Yingst, Mattawan—
Sibling Love



Rachel Hostetler, Schoolcraft—Fuzzy Family Fun



David Cheney, Dowagiac—Sun Sets On Ice Hockey Players

Enter Our Photo Contest And Win A Bill Credit!

A winner every month!

Submit your best shot and encourage your friends to vote! The photo receiving the most votes from our Facebook contest will be printed in an issue of *Country Lines* along with some of our other favorites. Visit facebook.com/TeamMidwest and click on "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs to submit your high-resolution photos. Not on Facebook? You can also enter at TeamMidwest.com/photocontest. Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too!

Our **March** theme is **Planes, Trains and Automobiles**. Photos can be submitted from **March 1 to March 20** to be featured in our May issue.

The photo with the most votes will win a \$50 bill credit on their May bill.

SOUPS & STEWS

Warm up with these hearty, comforting recipes.

Larry's Mushroom Soup

Larry Rospierski, Great Lakes Energy

- 1½ pounds mushrooms (larger ones are easier to clean and slice)
- ¼ cup butter
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 1 medium sweet onion
- 2 medium cloves garlic, minced
- 3 teaspoons flour
- 1 cup half & half
- 1 quart chicken stock
- 1 cup plain Greek yogurt
- 1 tablespoon white cooking wine
- pepper, to taste
- 4–5 large leaves fresh basil, shredded or finely cut
- ½ cup chopped scallions or chives (fresh is best)

Begin by wiping clean (do not wash) the mushrooms and slicing thin (⅛" or so). Melt butter in a large stockpot and cook mushrooms covered for about 5 minutes on low heat. While mushrooms are cooking, dice the onions. Add salt to the stockpot and stir. Then reserve about ¼ of the mushrooms on the side. Add the onions and garlic. Cover and cook for another 5 minutes. Add the flour and mix well. Remove the pot from the heat. After the mixture is completed, add the half & half slowly and whisk on low heat. Add the stock slowly, whisking on low heat. Then add the yogurt, whisking on low heat. Add the basil, stirring (not whisking) in well. Then add the wine and stir in. Using an immersion blender (or mixer), combine and chop all ingredients thoroughly. The texture will not be smooth. Add most of the mushrooms that were set aside, saving about 2–3 slices for each serving. Cover and continue cooking slowly, bringing the soup to just below boiling. Serve with two or three of the sliced mushrooms in the middle and pepper to taste. Garnish with scallions or chives.



Minestrone

Carolyn Davis, Midwest Energy

- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 pound stew meat, cubed (can substitute with browned turkey or Italian sausage)
- 7 cups beef broth or beef stock
- 2 (15-ounce) cans tomato sauce
- 1 (14-ounce) can diced tomatoes
- ½ cup onion, chopped
- ½ cup celery, chopped
- 2 tablespoons dried parsley flakes
- ½ teaspoon salt
- ½ teaspoon thyme
- ¼ teaspoon pepper
- 2 cups shredded cabbage
- 1 cup zucchini, thinly sliced
- 1 cup carrots, thinly sliced
- 1 (15-ounce) can garbanzo beans, drained
- 1 cup macaroni, uncooked
- 3–4 tablespoons grated Parmesan cheese



In a 6–8 quart Dutch oven, melt butter over medium heat. Add stew meat and cook until browned. Stir in broth, tomato sauce, diced tomatoes, onion, celery, and seasonings. Bring to a boil then reduce heat to low.

Cover and simmer for 1 to 1¼ hours or until beef is tender, stirring occasionally. Add cabbage, zucchini, carrots, garbanzo beans and macaroni. Return soup to boil. Reduce heat to low. Cover and simmer for 20–25 minutes or until the vegetables are tender, stirring occasionally. Ladle soup into bowls and top with Parmesan cheese. Serve immediately.

Up North Venison Stew

Deb Finedell, Great Lakes Energy

- 2 pounds venison, cubed
- ¼ cup butter
- 2 cups sliced celery
- 1 large onion, chopped
- 1 medium green pepper, chopped
- 2 tomatoes, cut up
- 3 medium potatoes, cut up
- ¼ teaspoon Italian seasoning
- 3 tablespoons brown sugar
- 1 teaspoon white vinegar
- 3 beef bouillon cubes
- 10 ounces spaghetti sauce
- 2 cups water
- 2 tablespoons chopped parsley



Brown venison in butter (Dutch oven or large pot) over medium heat. Add remaining ingredients, mix, cover and simmer on low heat for 2–3 hours. Enjoy hot!

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



- “On The Grill” due April 4
- “Chicken Challenge” due May 4

Go to micoopkitchen.com for more information and to register.

Olie Bollen (Dutch Fritters, pictured above)

Dr. Jan and Diane Pol

This Dutch pastry is similar to a doughnut-style fritter. A reminder from his childhood in the Netherlands, Dr. Pol says that big celebrations, especially on New Year’s Eve, were never complete without this delicious treat.

- 1 package active dry yeast
- 1 teaspoon sugar
- ¾ cup warm water
- 3 eggs, beaten
- 2 cups milk
- 3 tablespoons light corn syrup
- 1 (1 pound) package raisins
- 4 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon salt
- 1 quart vegetable oil for frying

Dissolve yeast and sugar in water; let stand in a warm place for 30 minutes. Combine eggs, milk, corn syrup, raisins, and yeast mixture in a large pot. Sift flour and salt into the mixture and mix well for 2 to 3 minutes. Test a spoonful of dough to see if it will fall in a lump from the spoon. If not, add a little more water or milk. Let rise in warm place for 2 hours. Heat the oil for frying to 350 degrees in a heavy bottomed, deep skillet. Drop by tablespoon into the preheated oil; fry the fritters until golden brown, about 2 minutes per side. Remove them to a paper towel-lined plate and repeat with remaining dough. Dust with sugar while warm.

Read the full story about Dr. Pol, Michigan’s TV reality star, on page 14 and visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and others.

Midwest In The Community

Neighbor helping neighbor—that’s how your Team Midwest family approaches daily work and efforts to give back. We live, work and serve right here in your local community, and we strive to actively live out our community values in meaningful and impacting ways. In January, we opened up new opportunities for local schools and students through our Strengthening Schools grant awards and volunteer work at a local camp.

4-H Camp Palmer

Team Midwest helped 4-H Camp Palmer, a co-op member in Fayette, OH, expand their popular high ropes course. Camp Palmer purchased 16 utility poles for the course, and our lineworker team of Jon McCarty, Kirk Sander, and Eric Keller set the poles over two days. The camp currently has two courses in use and plans to increase the footprint and accessibility of the courses and link them together. The poles will replace the connection points currently located on trees to provide a more stable and safe base for the courses. Last year, more than 2,000 participated with the ropes course. Camp Palmer’s mission is to engage youth and adults as they build life skills in a community-living environment.



Strengthening Schools 2017

Students from 15 regional public school districts and one ISD will enjoy new opportunities this semester after Midwest Energy awarded \$30,037 in Strengthening Schools grants. The grants are funded with partnership dollars from Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

A committee comprised of co-op members evaluated and scored 60 applications totaling more than \$65,000, then determined the final awards without knowledge of the school, district or community. Committee members included Melisa Shafer of Edwardsburg, Becky Foster of Cassopolis, and Robin Klump of Blissfield.

Awards were presented to the following schools and projects:

- Adrian Alexander Elementary, \$2,500 for technology hardware
- Bangor High School and Middle School, \$1,724 for technology hardware
- Cassopolis Ross Beatty Jr./Sr. High School, \$700 for technology hardware; \$2,200 for video production equipment, and \$2,000 for music stands
- Centreville Elementary, \$455 for STEM science kits
- Clinton Middle School, \$1,500 for Makey Makey program
- Coloma High School, \$2,463 for welders for Metalworks afterschool program
- Decatur Middle School, \$675 for STEM K'nex building sets
- Dowagiac Middle School, \$400 for books
- Hartford Red Arrow Elementary School, \$2,000 for occupational therapy equipment
- Lawrence Public Schools, \$2,500 for the theater program
- Lenawee Intermediate School District, \$2,500 for Stubnitz Environmental Education Program



Sara Youtsey, art teacher at Alexander Elementary School, and Jeff Petterson, principal, celebrate with students the Strengthening Schools award of \$2,500 for classroom technology hardware.



Students surround Mattawan Later Elementary Principal Carrie Wendell after learning they'd received a \$1,400 Strengthening School grant for Minecraft licensing and materials.

- Marcellus Volinia Outcomes School, \$400 for career readiness curriculum
- Marcellus Middle/High School, \$1,970 for video production equipment
- Mattawan Later Elementary, \$1,400 for Minecraft licensing and materials
- Mattawan Middle School, \$1,500 for a beekeeping program
- Niles Howard-Ellis Elementary School, \$1,200 for hands-on learning kindergarten supplies
- Schoolcraft Elementary School, \$1,250 for greenhouse and birdhouse observatory
- Three Rivers Ruth Hoppin Elementary School, \$700 for technology hardware

"It was truly a pleasure to honor the creativity and learning needs in our community through participating in the grant review," Shafer said. "We all worked in a true cooperative manner to share our resources, and I'm excited for the students' opportunities that will result."

Information and applications for the 2017-18 funding cycles will be available at TeamMidwest.com beginning in April. ■

DR. POL

AMERICA'S FAVORITE TV
VETERINARIAN & LOCAL LEGEND



Renewable Energy

Dr. Pol, his wife, Diane, and their team care for countless animals, but they also care about renewable energy. The Pols have a long history with renewable energy, installing solar panels on their farm as early as the 1970s.

"I grew up in the Netherlands," said Dr. Pol. "With the windmills all around, renewable energy has always been a part of my life."

The Pols have invested in two additional solar projects, including their most recent which included installing approximately 5,000 square feet of high-efficiency monocrystalline panels to the barn on their property. They worked closely with their local co-op, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, as well as Ecojiva and CNR Electric.

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.

"It's great watching how much energy is being generated, just since October," noted Dr. Pol. "Even on overcast days power gets generated. I'm looking forward to watching the meter this summer!"

By Emily Haines Lloyd

Photos courtesy of E. Michael Stankevich and National Geographic

Don't let his frank demeanor fool you. Dr. Jan Pol, also known as *The Incredible Dr. Pol* on National Geographic's WILD channel, is all heart.

Even his journey from his native country, the Netherlands, to rural Michigan was an act of love. Pol was an exchange student, staying with a family in Mayville, Mich. That's where he met his future wife, Diane. After he returned to the Netherlands, Diane traveled to Europe where they eventually fell in love.

Growing up on a dairy farm in the Netherlands, Dr. Pol's love of animals led him to veterinary school. After graduation, the Pols were married, and Dr. Pol joined a veterinary practice in Harbor Beach, Mich. "It was a great place to start," said Dr. Pol. "But I also knew I wanted to start my own practice one day."

After 10 years in Harbor Beach, the Pols sought out a more centrally-located area to open their practice. They settled on Isabella County, in the



Check out Dr. Pol's book, *Never Turn Your Back on an Angus Cow*, which is full of amusing and poignant tales from his four decades as a vet in rural Michigan.

heart of Michigan. It was there that the Pols built their practice and their lives.

The life of a country vet is anything but redundant. Dr. Pol has treated everything from large farm animals to beloved family pets. "I've castrated 16 different species of animals," he jokes with a laugh.

It's these offhanded, hilarious and all-too-true comments that likely landed Dr. Pol his own television show. When his son, Charles, now a producer on the show, pitched the idea to some friends in the television business, he described his father as "a real character."

"I'm just a stubborn Dutch boy," said Dr. Pol. "I go around, do my work, and the camera follows. I think people are looking for reality TV that is real."

People certainly are—*The Incredible Dr. Pol* had more than 1 million viewers for its Season 7 premier, making it National Geographic WILD's most-watched telecast in its network history.

Even with his recognizable face, Dr. Pol still sees himself as the local vet.

"I love what I do. I try to help animals the best I can and make their owners happy," he said. "I'd love to see every kid grow up with animals. Kids who are taught to treat animals well become compassionate adults."

Compassion is the hallmark of Dr. Pol's practice and his life—a life that is full of love, adventure and all things incredible. ●

The Pols are members of HomeWorks Tri-Country Electric Cooperative.



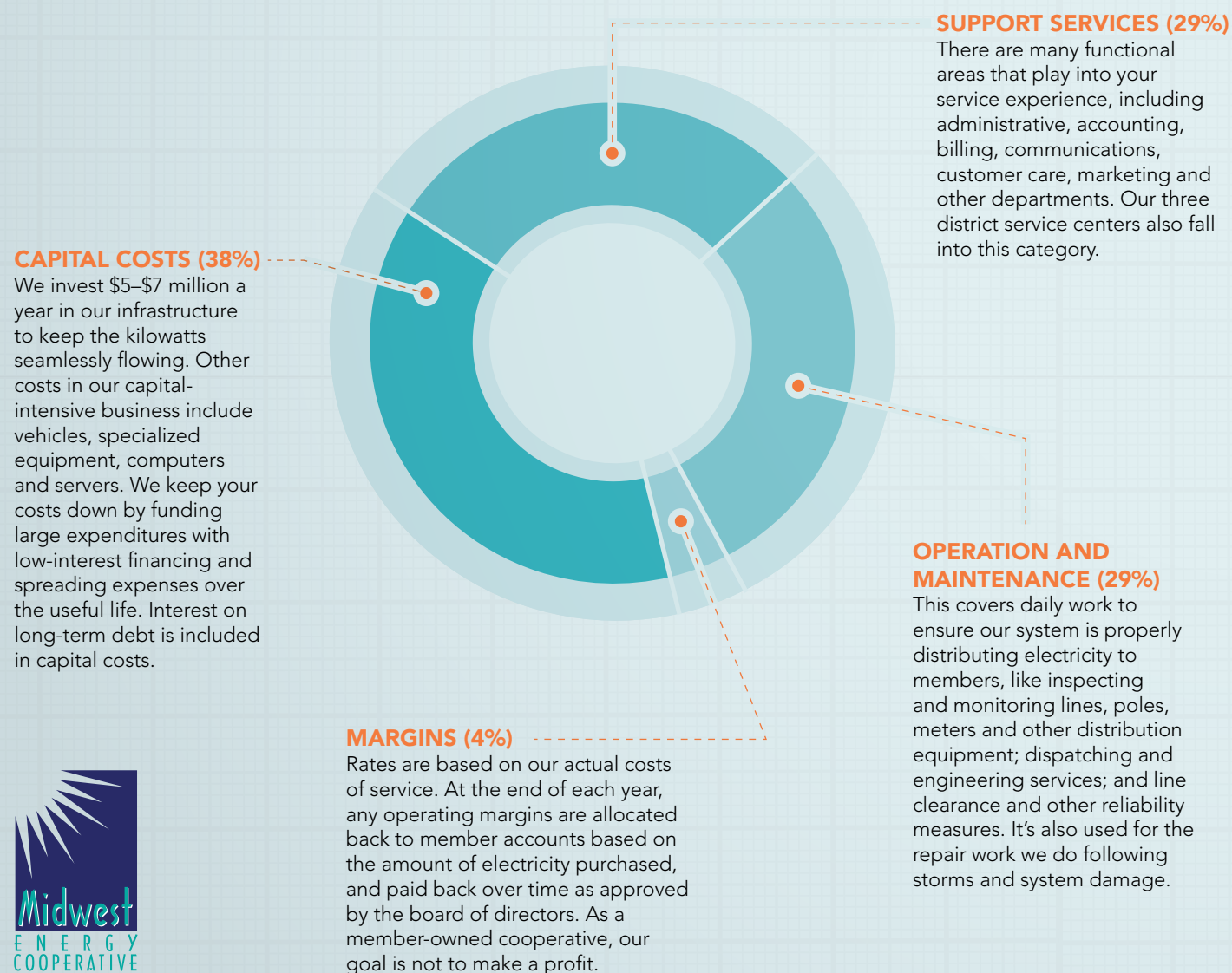
THE COSTS OF DELIVERING RELIABLE ELECTRICITY

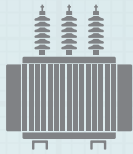
What does it take to have electricity available at the flip of a switch? Well, it's a little bit more than just plugging in to an outlet!

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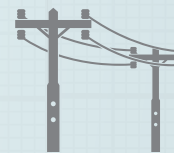
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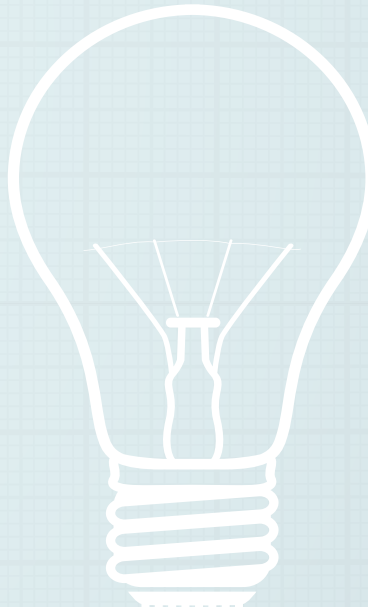
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PRICELESS

I Remember...

Thinking back to my fondest Michigan memories, some of them came during the darkest days of my life.

I am not only a member of Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op, but also an employee for the past 25 years. To me, it is much more than just a place to work; it is like family. We sometimes disagree and squabble—just like family. We tend to get on each other's nerves—just like family. And then we come together when a brother or sister is in need—much like family. When tragedy strikes, we come together in many ways. Whether it be in one another's offices to talk, at a funeral, or as a group meeting with counselors on hand.

I felt like part of the PIE&G family in 2000 when I lost my 2 ½-year-old son, Jordan, suddenly after a very short illness. My co-op family rallied together for my family. They literally delivered a truck load of food to my house. I only remember the pan of chocolate covered cookie bars that I hid in my walk-in closet under a stack of clothes. (Yes, I ate the entire pan of cookies myself.) At the funeral, bucket trucks lined up in front of the church. It was a breathtaking sight for my family. They still talk about it today. As a result of my son's death, I heard positive stories of marriages reconciling, family feuds being settled, and an attitude among many friends and family that life is just too short to not live in harmony with others.

When I returned to work, my PIE&G family was there for me and ready to listen at any moment I needed. And, exactly one year later, my family was able to meet a very sweet little girl that received my son's liver. These were truly some of my fondest memories.

Heather Homan
Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

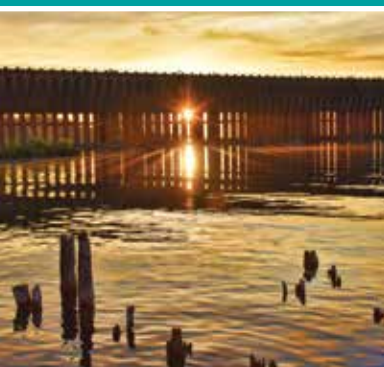


We invite members to share their fondest memories.

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 April 10 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 January 2017 issue is James Pelkey, a Thumb Electric member who correctly identified the photo as the Emergency Ark (Boat Barn) near Caseville on Oak Beach Road.

Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



Jan. Photo



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