

Thumb Electric Cooperative

March/April 2017

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

A photograph of a smiling couple standing in front of a utility building. The woman on the left is wearing a black jacket and a plaid scarf. The man on the right is wearing a black leather jacket and blue jeans. They are standing on a rocky area. In the background, there is a building with a blue roof and several electrical meters mounted on a wall.

## DR. POL

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April 10—  
National Lineman Day

Save The Date—  
Annual Meeting June 10

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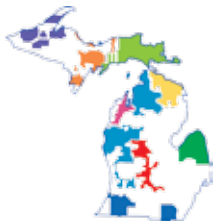
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
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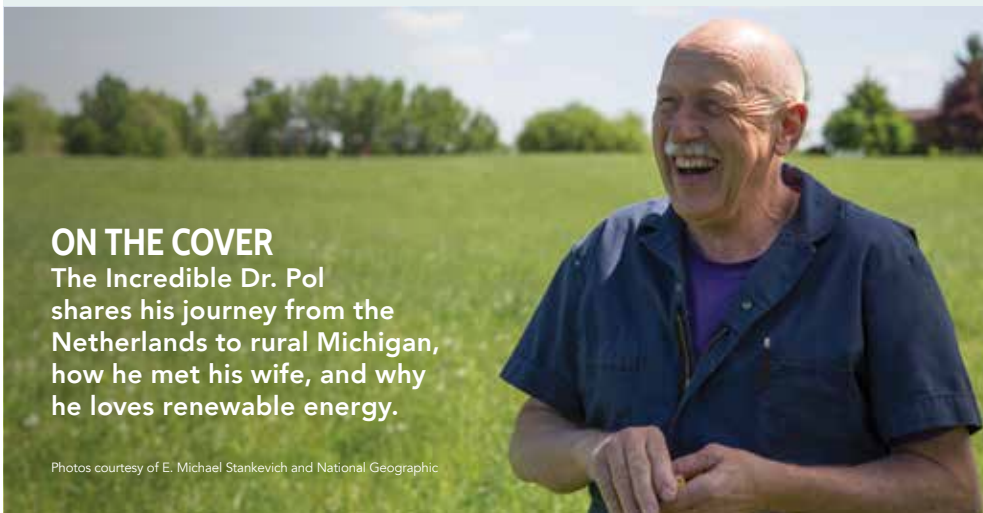
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Photos courtesy of E. Michael Stankevich and National Geographic

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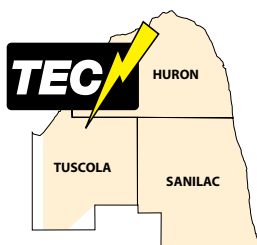
I Remember—Fond Memories Of Love During The Darkest Times

*Heather Homan, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op Member*

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

Guess Our New Mystery Photo And Win A Bill Credit!





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Visit Thumb Electric's website  
[www.tecmi.coop](http://www.tecmi.coop)

*Thumb Electric Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# Appreciating Our Lineworkers



**Dallas Braun**  
General Manager

America's electric cooperatives have designated the second Monday of April as National Lineman Appreciation Day. At Thumb Electric, we have 10 journeymen linemen who are the "first responders" of our electric system.

On April 10, we make a special point of honoring them for the services they perform, around the clock and in dangerous conditions, to keep power flowing and protect the public's safety. They leave their families when an outage call comes in, whether it's dinnertime, a weekend, or a holiday, to find and fix the problem.



TEC Udly lineworker crew left to right: Mike Cleland, Mike Weber, Ray Kwiatkowski, Jim Vogel, and Mike Kozlowski.



TEC Caro lineworker crew left to right: Richard Timko, Brandon Bruce, Rob Eskau, Jeff Swick, and Paul Voss.

Many of you have taken the time to appreciate our linemen. Your comments are passed along to the line crews and other TEC employees. Here are just a few comments from the past year.

- Thanks for working in the windy weather to restore power last night. Great job!
- Called yesterday for an outage. Calling today to say thank you. The crew was very professional, nice and friendly. Great job and was astounded with how fast they did their work.
- Please tell the linemen that fixed our outage that we're THANKFUL for their time!!! We do appreciate it!
- We reported an outage—the workers were very prompt and took care of everything.
- Wonderful service.
- Prompt service considering the weather (raining, snowing and blowing). Keep up the good work.
- Thank you so much to the crews we saw out working so hard to get our power back for us. Great job!
- Your service on our recent outage was excellent.
- Called to say thank you for all that the linemen do. Very appreciative. We know not enough people call to say it, so we wanted to be sure to do so.
- The service I received recently was great. A tree fell and took out the lines. The crew was there and had the power back on within two hours, so a great job! I don't know how you could improve upon this!
- Just wanted to say a BIG thank you for your speediness of getting the power back up last night. Much appreciated!!
- It always seems that an outage is longer than it is; but yes, your crew did a good job, coming at 1 a.m. I know it wasn't fun for them to be out at that time. Thanks for the good service.
- Very pleased. They fixed the outage in the middle of the night. We had company that had to leave next day, so really appreciated the quick service.
- Your repair man had to come out Christmas morning, and he arrived promptly with a smile on his face. Fixed the problem, wished us a Merry Christmas, and was on his way! Thank you.

## Employee Retirements

Every day will soon be "Saturday" for three employees of Thumb Electric as they have recently announced their retirements. Operations Supervisor Ken O'Berski, Mechanic Operator Clarence Maurer and Lineman Richard Timko have provided more than 85 years of combined service to the co-op and its members.

Ken began his 38-year career with TEC in 1978 as engineering and material technician, later being promoted to assistant engineer and then to operations supervisor. For the past 27 years, Ken has held the position of operations supervisor in both Caro and Ubly. Over his career, Ken's technical knowledge and expertise on the distribution, transmission and generation system was leaned on heavily. Ken will be retiring May 1.

Clarence began his 36-year career with TEC in 1980 as a mechanic operator in Ubly. He was responsible for maintaining the fleet of line-trucks and vehicles. He was also responsible for the Ubly generating plant, which included running the generators to produce power. Over the years, as the need to generate power decreased, Clarence assisted other departments, including working with the line crews, the metering department and member services



Ken Oberski



Clarence Maurer



Richard Timko

department—just to name a few. If there was a void to fill, Clarence was always willing to help. Clarence officially retired on February 24.

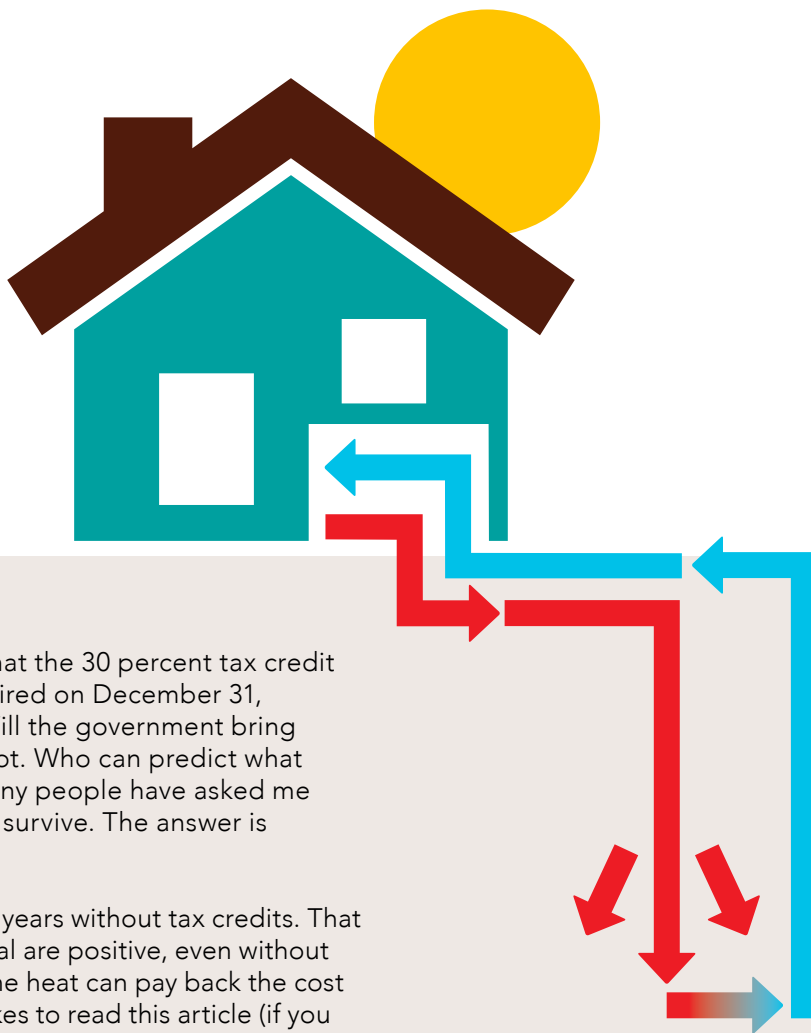
Bringing many years of experience with him, Richard began his 11-year career with TEC in 2006 as a journeyman lineman in Caro. For eight years, he held the position of foreman of the Caro line crews. Many members have likely met Richard, as he took care of the system day or night under any weather condition. Richard will be retiring March 31.

In their roles at the co-op, all three brought dedication, commitment, and a desire to provide the best for our members. We are thankful for their many years of service. We wish them the very best as they enter a new phase of their lives. ■

# Geothermal Systems

The rumors of their demise are greatly exaggerated.

By Larry Kaufman



**M**any 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](http://earthcomfort.com) or [geoexchange.org](http://geoexchange.org) to learn more about geothermal.

# Michigan Legislature Approves Energy Package



**Craig Borr, CEO**  
Michigan Electric  
Cooperative  
Association

**A**fter 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. ■





## Go Paperless And Win A Bill Credit

**That's right—4 winners!**

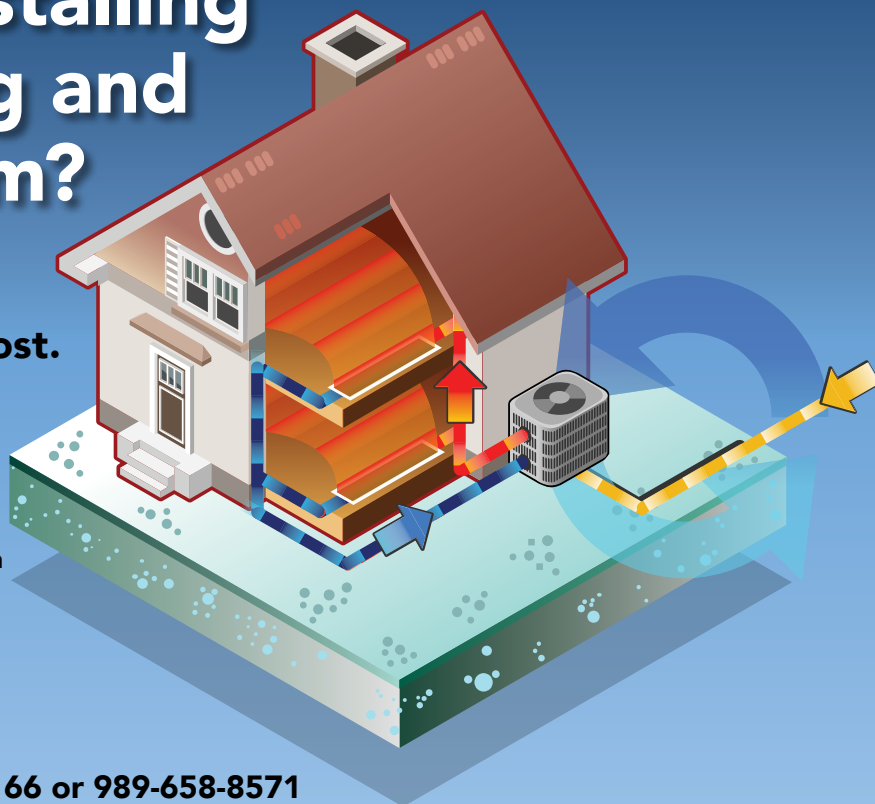
- All members who sign up for paperless billing by June 8 will be entered in the drawing, including current paperless members.
- Sign up online at [tecmi.coop](http://tecmi.coop) or via Smarthub.
- Winners will be announced at TEC's Annual Meeting on June 10.
- Paperless members will receive an email or text letting them know their bill is available to view. No physical copy of the bill will be mailed unless a member falls into shutoff status.

## Thinking of Installing a New Heating and Cooling System?

**Thumb Electric may have a rebate to help with the cost.**

- Geothermal rebate up to \$1,200
- AC and Air Source Heat pumps up to \$450

There are many more Energy Optimization rebates available. For a full listing, please visit our website or call our office.



Call: 1-800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571  
[www.tecmi.coop](http://www.tecmi.coop)



# Your Family Photos



A stroll on a cold, winter day warms the heart as family, visiting from a southern state, enjoys our Michigan winter! *By Kim Galloway*



Family picnic fun. *By Suzanne Aidif*



My son getting ready to take our grandkids for a ride. *By Tom Harrod*



Hanging together—Kensie, Ella and Graycen. *By Suzanne Aidif*



## Photo Fun

Thumb Electric invites members to share their photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*.

Upcoming topics and deadlines are: **Planes, Trains and Automobiles** due **March 20** for the May/June issue and **The Art of Nature** due **May 20** for the July/August issue and **Birds and Feathers** due **July 20** for the Sept./Oct. issue.

To submit photos, and for details and instructions, go to <http://bit.ly/countrylines>

We look forward to seeing your best photos!



# 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](http://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](http://micoopkitchen.com) for this recipe and others.



# Country Lines, Your Communications Partner



For more than 35 years, our co-op members have received *Michigan Country Lines* because it is the most effective and economical way to share information with our members. An empowering communication tool, *Country Lines* keeps members up-to-date about everything going on within their electric co-op. Issues contain news about our services, director elections, member meetings and management decisions members' need to know about as owners of the co-op. The magazine also includes legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Michigan Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its important principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members. The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Michigan Country Lines* on behalf of each member at an average cost of \$4.01 per year, paid as part of members' electric bill. The current magazine cost is 49 cents per copy. *Michigan Country Lines* is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.

## Statement of Non-Discrimination

In accordance with Federal civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity (including gender expression), sexual orientation, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

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To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at [http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint\\_filing\\_cust.html](http://www.ascr.usda.gov/complaint_filing_cust.html) and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

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Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights  
1400 Independence Avenue, SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;

(2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or

(3) email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov).

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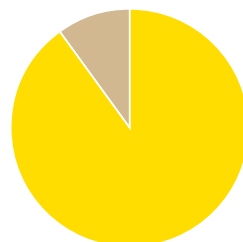
## Fuel Mix Report

The fuel mix characteristics of Thumb Electric Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ending 12/31/16.

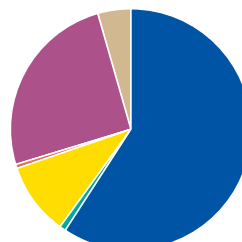
### COMPARISON OF FUEL SOURCES USED

Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
FUEL SOURCE		
Coal	0%	59.4%
Oil	0%	0.6%
Gas	90%	9.8%
Hydroelectric	0%	0.6%
Nuclear	0%	25.4%
Renewable Fuels	10%	4.2%
Biofuel	0%	0.5%
Biomass	10%	0.5%
Solar	0%	0%
Solid Waste Incineration	0%	0%
Wind	0%	2.7%
Wood	0%	0.5%

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Average Fuel Mix



### EMISSIONS AND WASTE COMPARISON

TYPE OF EMISSION/WASTE	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	0.25	7.6
Carbon Dioxide	897	2,170
Oxides of Nitrogen	0.23	2.0
High-level Nuclear Waste	0	0.0083

\*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the 12-month period ending 12/31/16.

The fuel mix data presented by Thumb Electric is the data from CMS Energy which supplies nearly all of Thumb Electric's purchased power.

## Tree Trimming Efforts Continue

Tree trimming will continue at an aggressive rate during 2017. We are seeing fewer outages and shorter duration of outages that do occur because of these efforts. Priorities will continue for line sections that are historically problematic lines, followed by overgrown sections. As time allows, less severe circuits will be maintained. Members in Evergreen Township, and Elkland Township will see crews this spring, as the area has been hit especially hard with diseased and aging trees falling on lines, sometimes from far out of our right-of-way. Members in Freemont Township and Kingston Township will see crews as well as part of regular system maintenance.

Due to a disease in the Ash tree, which is a very popular species of tree in our service territory, we have had to adjust our trimming locations. It has made planning a challenge at times, but we make every effort to contact members ahead of the trimmers. We will send out a postcard to members to let them know

trimmers will be in the area and, at times, we will try and call members to let them know the plan for their area. If you have an updated phone number, please call us with your new contact information.

## Annual Meeting At Thumb Octagon Barn

Thumb Electric Cooperative's Annual Meeting will be held June 10 at the Thumb Octagon Barn in Gagetown. Mark your calendar and join your cooperative members. Registration begins at 9 a.m. and the business meeting will start at 10 a.m. Be a part of the democratic process at your electric cooperative, and plan on attending and casting your ballot for the board of director election. As always, there will be entertainment for the kids, such as balloons, face painting, pony rides and bucket truck rides. When the meeting is over and after you have had lunch, feel free to take in the sites of years gone by and enjoy the Octagon Barn's vast collection of farm, home and early 20th century items. ■

## Plant A Tree In The Right Place

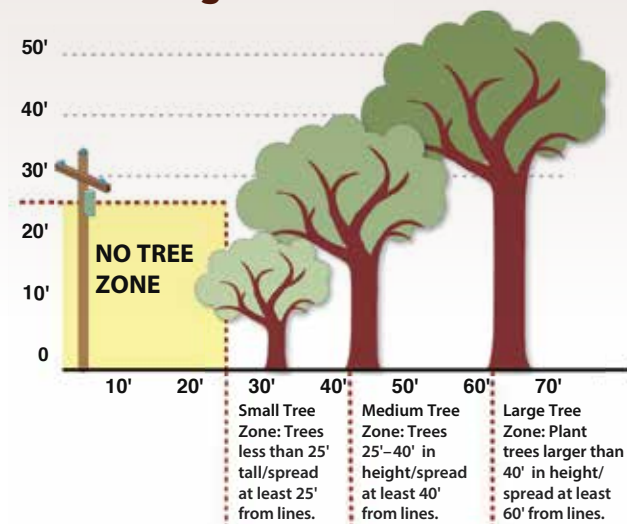
**E**arth Day is April 22. Show the earth some love, and plant a tree. Choose the right tree for the right place and avoid future problems with power lines.

To avoid future electrical hazards, planting tips include:

- Consider the mature height of trees. Any tree that can grow as tall as 25 feet or more should not be planted near overhead power lines. A mature height of less than 15 feet is recommended.
- Do not plant near underground utility services. Tree roots can grow and interfere with underground pipes, cables and wires. Future repairs to these facilities could also damage the health and beauty of nearby plants and trees.
- Keep areas around electric meters, transformers or other electrical equipment free of any vegetation that could limit utility service access.

- Before digging, call 811, the local underground utility locator service, so that accidental contact, damage and injuries can be avoided. ■

## Tree Planting Guide



# 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.*



## Octagon Barn To Host 80th Thumb Electric Annual Meeting

# COMMUNITY COMES TOGETHER AROUND THUMB OCTAGON BARN



**C**ommunity is a powerful force, especially when it partners people from different backgrounds with varying types of skills. The Thumb Octagon Barn stands today as the result of two decades of community partnerships that include the unlikely teaming of a barn and a group of citizens committed to education and history.

Originally built by entrepreneur James Luther Purdy in 1895, the Octagon Barn was part of the Purdy family-owned farm before being sold. After the death of James and his wife, Cora, the Michigan Department of Natural Resources (DNR) purchased the land because they wanted to connect two parcels they already owned. In order to do so, the DNR announced it would need to knock down the original buildings of the Purdy farm.

Upon learning of the DNR's plans, a group of local citizens organized, recognizing the importance of the historical site. With just enough time, the

"Friends of the Thumb Octagon Barn" were able to gather volunteers and organize fundraisers to show the importance of the Barn in the community.

These "Friends" ultimately received a three-year Memorandum of Understanding from the DNR on January 18, 1996, which allowed them to restore the farm buildings. Each building was subsequently restored to tell a story and give a glimpse into its surrounding history. Today, the "Friends of the Octagon Barn" make up the same kind of community that began the movement to "Save the Barn."

"There are so many people from different places in the Tri-county area, bringing different skills to the table, and it makes for a really eclectic, yet bonded, group," says Rose Putman, president of the Barn. "The group always focuses on a common goal of helping the project work."

Now well established, the Barn hosts many annual events for the Thumb community. Fall Family Days allow families to come out and experience an old-fashioned cider mill, blacksmith shop, live music and delicious homemade foods; School Tour events allow students to experience the Purdy home and see what rural education was like for their grandparents or great-grandparents.

"The best part about the Barn is that it makes people friends that might not have been friends otherwise," says Diane Rapson Gabil, leader of the Octagon Barn School Tours. "I've been involved with the Barn for 14 years and people I now call my close friends I probably wouldn't have met otherwise."

Some of these close friends that Diane refers to are from Thumb Electric Cooperative. They have contributed electric cooperative appliances to the Barn in order to create an exhibit showcasing the early days of the cooperative. Moreover, several Thumb Electric Cooperative employees have volunteered during Fall Family Days and School Tours to give safety and bucket truck demonstrations.

"We've been happy to help out and interact with the Octagon Barn over the years," says Member

Services Manager Brad Essenmacher. "The history of the Barn and Thumb align really well. Bringing people together is what the Barn is all about, so it only made sense."

This June, Thumb's employees and members will once again partner with the Octagon Barn. Thumb has reserved the Barn for their 80th Annual Meeting on June 10. Registration will begin at 9 a.m. and the business meeting starts at 10 a.m. As always, there will be good food and entertainment for the kids, such as balloons, face painting, pony rides and bucket truck rides.

"Thumb Electric has been a fabulous partner for us throughout most of the time that we've had ownership and have been running our programs. We're really excited about having the Annual Meeting here because they've been [with us] all along," says Putman. "I'm a member of the co-op and it's going to be great to bring the group to the Barn...It's a wonderful spot for centralizing our rural and agriculturally-focused community." ■



# ANNUAL MEETING

**Saturday, June 10**

**9 a.m.—Registration Begins**

**10 a.m.—Business Meeting**

**Join us for food, games, bucket truck rides, and more!**



# 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*

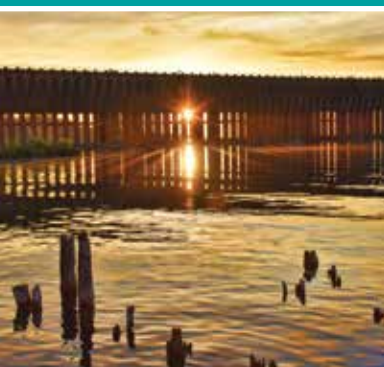


*We invite members to share their fondest memories.*

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#### **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](http://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](http://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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