

Great Lakes Energy Cooperative

April 2017

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



JOSHUA
DAVIS

**MICHIGAN'S
MUSIC MAN**

Board Nominating
Petitions Available

Spring Energy Seminar

Renewable
Energy Options



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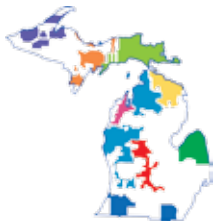
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Michigan-based Joshua Davis has honed an impressive range of skills—songwriter, bandleader, guitarist, and vocalist among others. From his first performance on NBC's *The Voice*, Davis triumphed, and his rootsy, sincere approach emerged as a refreshing alternative and propelled him all the way to finals.



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Thank A Lineworker



Bill Scott
Great Lakes Energy
President/CEO

We depend on our entire staff to keep Great Lakes Energy running smoothly, but on April 10 we honor all lineworkers who often find themselves in dangerous and challenging situations, ensuring our lives are a little brighter and safer every day. These skilled and brave workers repair damaged lines and maintain critical infrastructure, so we have reliable service. Without their hard work and commitment, our co-op would not thrive. No matter the time—day or night, weekday or weekend—if the lights go out, so do they.

Great Lakes Energy lineworkers maintain 14,295 miles of line in our 26 county service territory. We are the third largest electric co-op by line miles in the United States, which means our crews have their hands full when large storms knock down lines throughout our system. The only thing bigger than the challenges they face is their determination to get the job done.

Perhaps you have seen them raising their bucket trucks in howling winds and torrential rains, or working in freezing, icy conditions. They labor around the clock near high-voltage power lines until electricity is restored to every member of our co-op community.

In addition to aiding members in our local service territory, lineworkers are always willing and eager to help when a neighboring electric co-op is affected by a major outage.

We truly appreciate our Great Lakes Energy lineworkers! They are committed to taking care of our community and critical to our success.

We hope you will join us in thanking the many lineworkers—both locally and around the country—who light our lives. Remember, your power works because they do! Use #ThankALineman on social media to show your support. ■



**LINEMEN
CARE
ABOUT
THE
COMMUNITIES
THEY
SERVE.**

#ThankALineman

Three Openings On GLE Board



District 3
Ric Evans



District 4
Larry Monshor



District 5
Dale Farrier

Nominating petitions are available in three districts for Great Lakes Energy (GLE) members who wish to seek election to the cooperative's board of directors.

Three board positions, each for three years, will need to be filled. Qualifying GLE members who reside in districts 3, 4 or 5 can seek election to the board.

Counties by district are:

District 3 – Antrim County

District 4 – Otsego, Montmorency, Oscoda and Crawford counties

District 5 – Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford counties.

The terms of directors Ric Evans of Ellsworth, Larry Monshor of Gaylord and Dale Farrier of Kalkaska expire this year. The three incumbents plan to seek re-election.

To get their names on the ballot, qualifying member-owners of the electric cooperative who maintain a primary residence within its service area must file a nominating petition with the co-op secretary.

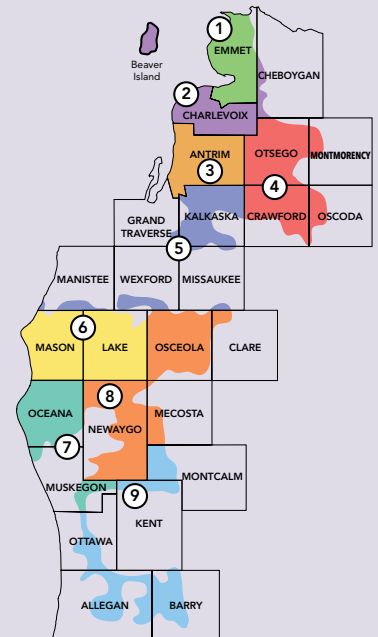
Petitions must be signed by at least 50 active GLE members within the candidate's district.

Petition circulators are advised, but not required, to collect well over 50 signatures because some may not be valid.

Signed petitions returned by mail or in person must be received in the co-op's Boyne City office no earlier than Thursday, May 25, and no later than Friday, June 9.

Petition forms are available by contacting 888-485-2537, ext. 1331.

GLE members in each of the three districts will elect one candidate from within their district to fill the three positions on the board. Mail-in ballots will be sent with the July/August 2017 issue of *Michigan Country Lines*. Winners will be announced Aug. 23 at the GLE annual business meeting. ■



When Do We Vote?

Great Lakes Energy members elect a candidate from within their district to the cooperative's board of directors once every three years.

Find the district you reside in below to determine when you will receive a mail-in ballot that is mailed in July with the annual election issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

2017 Election

District 3 – Antrim County

District 4 – Otsego, Montmorency, Oscoda and Crawford counties

District 5 – Grand Traverse, Kalkaska, Manistee, Missaukee and Wexford counties.

2018 Election

District 1- Emmet County

District 2 – Charlevoix and Cheboygan counties

District 7 – Oceana and Muskegon counties

2019 Election

District 6 – Mason and Lake counties

District 8 – Osceola, Clare, Newaygo and Mecosta counties

District 9 – Ottawa, Kent, Montcalm, Allegan and Barry counties

Thank A Lineworker On April 10

As the “first responders” of the electric co-op family, lineworkers perform around-the-clock duties in dangerous conditions and challenging situations to keep power flowing and protect the public’s safety. These brave members of our community go above and beyond to restore power to their neighborhoods and towns, often in the most hazardous environment. That’s why electric co-ops have designated the second Monday in April as National Lineman Appreciation Day. This year, April 10 is the day we honor the hard-working men and women who keep the lights on.

Resolutions adopted by the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) explain it best: *“Whereas linemen leave their families and put their lives on the line every day to keep the power on; Whereas linemen work 365 days a year under dangerous conditions to build, maintain and repair the electric infrastructure; Whereas there would be no electric co-ops without the brave men and women who comprise our corps of lineworkers.”* Lineworkers everywhere deserve this special day of recognition.



These highly-skilled men and women light our homes and businesses every day. They endure harsh weather and long hours, all to make our lives more comfortable. On April 10 (and every day), please take a moment to thank them. Lineworkers are the heart of the co-op nation, proud and strong.

Use #ThankALineman on social media to show your support for the men and women who light our lives. ■

Plant A Tree In The Right Place

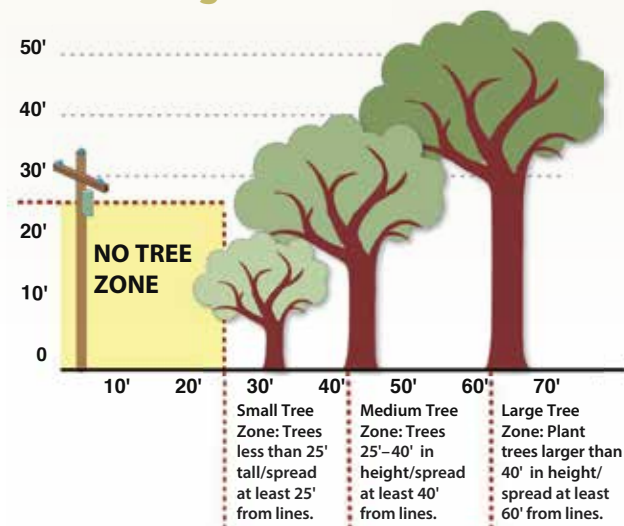
Earth Day is April 22. Show the earth some love, and plant a tree. Choose the right tree for the right place and avoid future problems with power lines.

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





Walk The Line

By Jack O'Malley

Linemen are the backbone of every power system. They are the people on the front lines who maintain the grid regardless of weather conditions. Moreover, while these linemen are restoring power in sometimes the most difficult situations, the backbone of these hardworking individuals are the family members supporting their odd schedules. Spouses keep the home fires burning while their lineworker is on call or out in the field.

Bryan Aerts, a young lineman, met Angie, a college student, on the job with Great Lakes Energy. Their introduction sparked a romance that led to a trip down the aisle and four daughters, ages one through 14.

The wife of a now-seasoned lineman, Angie adapts each day to Bryan's sometimes-grueling work schedule. "It's as if I'm two different people," she explains. "There's mom mode and storm mode. When he's gone, it's like I'm a single mom."

When on call Bryan stays close to home, often missing the kids' basketball games. And holidays are never guaranteed. One Christmas, oldest daughter Brenna asked Santa to bring Dad home in time for the holiday. Bryan had been gone for days after a big storm hit the region. Reminiscent of a scene from the movies, he woke up Brenna at 4 a.m. Christmas morning to let her know he was home. Santa had come through!

While the uncertainty of Dad's schedule, combined with prolonged absences, can be hard on the girls, Angie admits she struggles, too. Shuffling four active kids when Bryan is on call can be a challenge, but her concerns run deeper than the inconvenience of trying to find family and friends to help her while Bryan's away. Angie understands perfectly the risks associated with his job.

Confident in his abilities and the comprehensive safety training programs required of all linemen, Angie and Bryan understand that each situation is different. Ice, wind and falling limbs are out of his control. And every decision made on the job could mean the difference between life and death.

Fortunately, casualties are few. And when the job calls, Bryan knows his girls anxiously await his safe return, proud of their Dad for the sacrifices and risks he takes to ensure the community has power. ■



Jack O'Malley

Photo L to R: Allie is being held by Bryan's wife Angie. Brenna is to the right of Angie, with Audrey to the far right. Caeley is sitting on Bryan's lap.

Photo courtesy of Forbear Photos

Optimize Your Home With A Free Energy Audit

Is your home properly sealed, insulated and ventilated? If you've noticed any issues such as mold, mildew, ice dams, drafts or overall discomfort, your home may require improvements to resolve energy inefficiencies. To better understand and manage your home's energy use and costs, take advantage of the Energy Optimization program's free energy audit!

The Home Energy Optimizer is a brief online survey that analyzes your home's energy use. You will be required to enter some specific information, such as the year your home was built, the type of heating and cooling systems in place, and when various other systems and appliances were purchased and installed.

Once you've completed the survey, you will receive a personalized, comprehensive report, as well as cost-saving tips and recommendations to help

reduce energy waste throughout your household. Additionally, all participants will receive a free energy-saving kit, which includes lightbulbs and other devices to help save energy and water!

How to complete your home energy audit:

- Visit the Energy Optimization website (michigan-energy.org).
- Select your electric utility from the drop-down menu at the top of the page.
- In the left menu bar, select "Online Home Audit."
- Click "Get Started Now!" and complete the questionnaire.

Upon completion of the Home Energy Optimizer survey, your free energy-saving kit will be mailed to the address you indicate. Have questions about the free home energy audit or energy-saving kit? Call us at 877-296-4319. ■

Energy Savings At Your Fingertips

Team up with the Energy Optimization program to improve the comfort, durability and energy efficiency of your home! Complete our Online Home Audit to assess your home's energy performance and receive a comprehensive report featuring cost-saving tips and opportunities.

ENERGY TIP: Receive a **FREE** energy-saving kit when you complete your Online Home Audit!

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319



Better Together



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

Animals Near Me

GLE Photo Contest

Each month members can submit photos on Facebook or on our website for our annual photo contest. The photo with the most votes on Facebook is published here along with other selections. Enter again in April; see details below.

Most
Votes on
Facebook!



The Mighty Grasshopper Hunter—Tara Batema, *Dorr*



16-Month Old Carolina Getting Ready To Rope Her Cows—
Chelsea Erler, *Reed City*



Wonderful Sleigh Ride At Thunder Bay
Resort—Chelse Kissinger, *Cadillac*



Grounded In Nature—Shaun Shoemate, *Fountain*



More Peanuts Please—
Emily Tippet, *Harbor Springs*



Can I Help?—Nancy Tyree, *East Jordan*



Enter Our Photo Contest and Win!

Visit [Facebook.com/greatlakesenergy](https://facebook.com/greatlakesenergy) and click "Photo Contest" from the menu tabs. Not on Facebook? You can also enter the contest at gtlakes.com/photocontest/. Make sure to vote, and encourage others to vote for you, too. The photo receiving the most votes from our online and Facebook contest will be printed in an issue of *Michigan Country Lines* along with some of our other favorites. All photos printed in the magazine throughout the year will be entered to win a \$200 bill credit in December 2017. Submit your best shot and encourage your friends to vote!

The April theme is **Farms and Barns**. Photos can be submitted between **April 1 to April 20** to be featured in the June issue.

MUFFINS & BREAD

These recipes are perfect for breakfast, brunch or snack time.

Banana Chocolate Chip Bread

Pamela Blamer, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup butter, at room temperature
- 8 ounces cream cheese, at room temperature
- 2 cups granulated sugar
- 2 eggs
- 3 cups flour
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups mashed ripe bananas (about 3–4 medium)
- 1 cup chocolate chips (I use mini chips)
- 1 cup chopped nuts, optional

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, beat butter and cream cheese with mixer until combined. Add sugar and eggs. In a separate bowl, combine flour, baking powder, baking soda, and salt. Stir dry ingredients into mixture. Add mashed bananas. Mix. Add chocolate chips. Stir in by hand. Spoon mixture into two greased bread pans. Sprinkle nuts (optional) over batter. Bake at 350 F for 1 hour. Test for doneness.



Hawaiian Loaf

Janice Clark, Cherryland

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1 cup sugar
- 4 eggs
- 1 cup mashed, ripe banana
- 4 cups flour
- 2 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- $\frac{3}{4}$ teaspoon salt
- 1 can (20-ounce) can crushed pineapple, undrained
- 1 cup flaked coconut

Preheat oven to 350 F. Beat butter with electric mixer until light and fluffy. Gradually beat in sugar until light. Add eggs and beat well. Fold in mashed bananas. Stir flour, baking power, baking soda and salt into butter mixture till just smooth (don't over-mix.) Fold in pineapple and coconut. Spoon batter into two greased and floured 9x5 loaf pans. Bake at 350 F for 60–70 minutes or until toothpick inserted in center comes out clean.



Lemon Raspberry Muffins

Mary Ala, Ontonagon REA

- 2 cups flour
- 1 cup sugar
- 3 teaspoons baking powder
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup half-and-half
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegetable oil
- 1 teaspoon lemon extract
- 1 cup fresh or frozen unsweetened raspberries, do not thaw (Blueberries also work well.)

Preheat oven to 350 F. In a large bowl, combine flour, sugar, baking powder and salt. In another bowl, mix eggs, cream, vegetable oil and extract. Stir into dry ingredients just until moistened. Fold in berries. Fill cupcake liners $\frac{2}{3}$ full. Bake at 350 F for 18–20 minutes.

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

- “Chicken Challenge” due May 4
- “Apple Recipes” due July 5

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



Garlic Cheddar Chicken

Angie and Bryan Aerts

In honor of National Lineman Appreciation Day on April 10, here is a family favorite for a busy day from Angie Aerts, wife of Great Lakes Energy lineman, Bryan Aerts.

- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup butter
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup dry bread crumbs
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- $1\frac{1}{2}$ cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried parsley
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon dried oregano
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon ground black pepper
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon salt
- 8 skinless, boneless chicken breast halves—pounded thin

Preheat oven to 350 degrees F. Melt the butter in a saucepan over low heat and cook the garlic until tender, about 5 minutes. In a shallow bowl, mix the bread crumbs, Parmesan cheese, Cheddar cheese, parsley, oregano, pepper, and salt. Dip each chicken breast in the garlic butter to coat, then press into the bread crumb mixture. Arrange the coated chicken breasts in a 9 x 13 inch baking dish. Drizzle with any remaining butter and top with any remaining bread crumb mixture. Bake 30 minutes in the preheated oven, or until chicken is no longer pink and juices run clear.

Read the full story about the life of a lineman on page 7 and visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and others.

Attend A Free Energy Seminar

A free energy seminar for Great Lakes Energy members will be held Saturday, June 3, at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Ludington.

Learn about home heating and cooling options with geothermal and air-source heat pumps and Energy Optimization (EO) programs that offer incentives to help co-op members save energy. They include rebates for the purchase of furnaces with variable speed blower motors, heat pump water heaters, Wi-Fi-enabled or smart occupancy-sensing thermostats, refrigerators, televisions, lighting and more. In addition, information on free online audits will be provided.

Local heating and cooling companies and Great Lakes Energy staff members will be on hand to answer questions related to heat pumps.

Co-op members will learn about other incentive programs offered by Great Lakes Energy, too.

Door prizes will be awarded. Winners will receive energy saving gifts. ■



Register Now

Saturday, June 3, from 10 a.m. to noon.
Holiday Inn Convention Center
East Ballroom
4079 W. U.S.-10, Ludington

Space is limited, so please register by calling 1-888-485-2537, ext. 8958, or email: events@glenergy.com.



UTILITY POLES ARE NOT BULLETIN BOARDS

Think before you post that sign!
Staples, nails and tacks used to hang signs and fliers create dangerous obstacles for electric lineworkers.
Their jobs are dangerous enough – help us keep them safe!



AMERICA'S ELECTRIC
COOPERATIVES

New Digital Learning Opportunity

The Mason County District Library in Ludington is helping to meet the informational needs of its local residents with technology-based learning through the use of 30 new Playaway Launchpad learning tablets.

"Many people in our area do not have internet access at home or access to computers and digital devices such as tablets and smart phones," explains Sue Carlson, the library's assistant director. "They often need assistance discerning truly educational material from advertising and sales."

Playaway Launchpad is a secure, pre-loaded learning tablet featuring high-quality, ad-free learning apps grouped into packs by subject area, theme, grade level, and age. Children's apps feature favorite characters like Sponge Bob and Max & Ruby. Teen and adult apps feature foreign language learning, mathematics, memory games, SAT test prep, and book trivia.

The library received a \$3,000 Great Lakes Energy People Fund grant that covered the purchase. ■



Young library patrons, from left, Mac and Noah discover learning is fun with the Playaway Launchpad tablets. Helping them is Patti Skinner, manager of Mason County District Library's Scottville branch.

JOIN



JOIN PEOPLE FUND PLUS

Now you can make a greater impact in your local community with People Fund PLUS.

Choose a People Fund donation level in addition to your rounded-up amount. Your donations are awarded in the form of grants to local community nonprofit groups.

All People Fund contributors have the chance to win a \$100 bill credit twice per year. In 2016 the People Fund awarded \$204,752 in grants to local nonprofits. Visit gtlakes.com to see the list of grant recipients in your area.

JOIN TODAY!

Working together, we can help enhance our local communities and meet the needs of so many.

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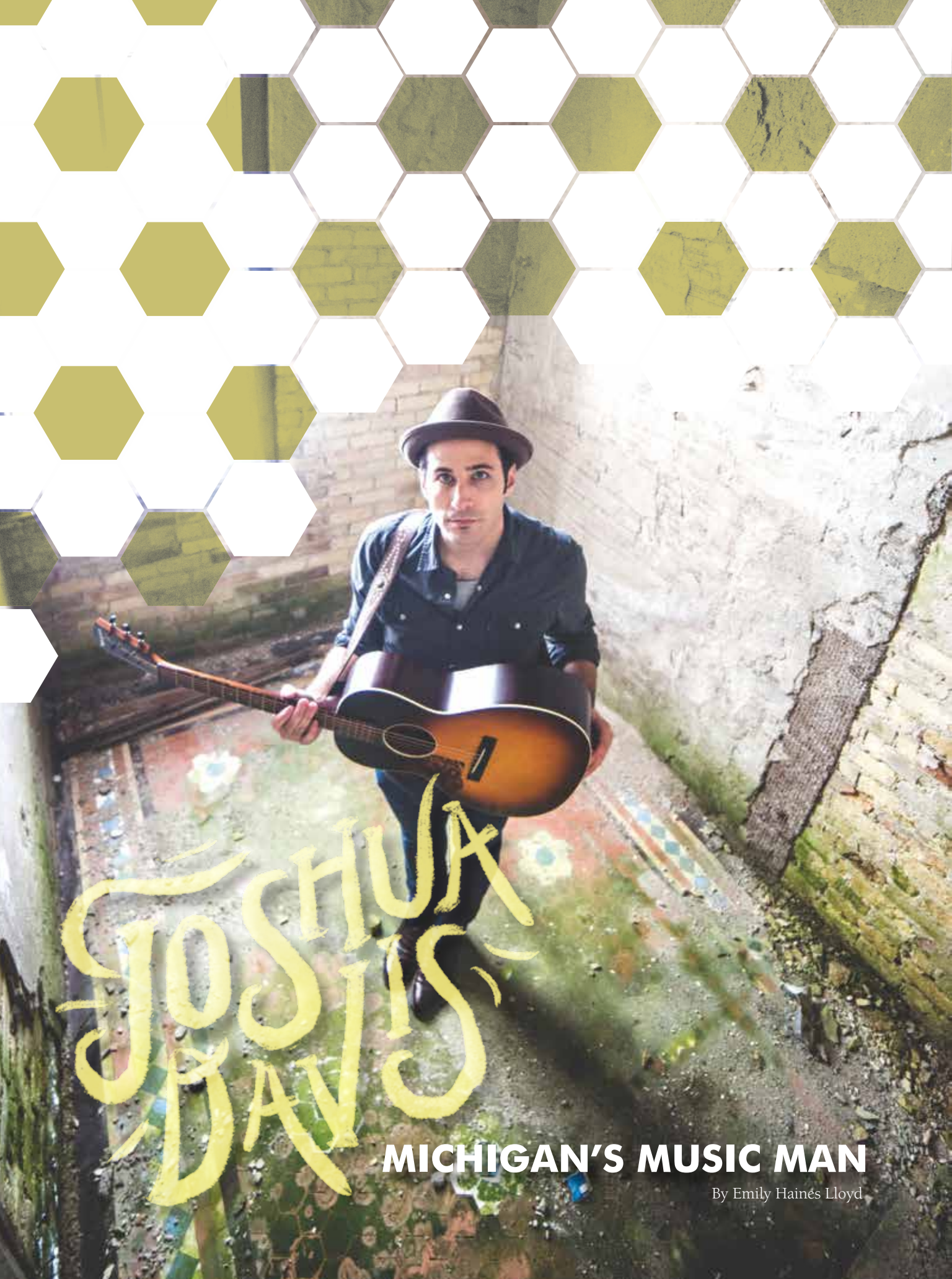
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Call 888-GT-LAKES or visit gtlakes.com/peoplefundenroll to join.




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JOSHUA
DAVIS

MICHIGAN'S MUSIC MAN

By Emily Hainés Lloyd



Many people were introduced to Joshua Davis on NBC's *The Voice*, where he stunned audiences with his authentic, grassroots sound and Midwest charm. However, those who are tuned into the Michigan music scene have known Davis for ages, both as a solo artist and member of the popular band, Steppin' In It. Fans close to home weren't at all surprised by his popularity on the show or that he made it all the way to the show's finals.

Born in Marquette and raised on the east side of the state, Davis comes from deep roots in both music and humility.

"My parents lived off the grid—in the woods, no running water, no electricity. Real pioneer-type stuff," Davis said. "They took me to folk music festivals as a kid and all of that really had an effect on me."

Davis describes folk music as "music by and for the people," and that legacy has definitely impacted his career and his lifestyle.

"There was a point where my wife and I knew we either wanted to move to a larger city or find a place in the country," explained Davis. "Eventually we chose a home in Leelanau County. We'd been coming up here for years—playing music, vacationing, camping—it's remarkable—all the beauty, fresh water and community we have here."

Community is another popular theme with Davis, who is a member of Earthworks Music, a collective group of independent artists who use music to raise awareness, mentor youth, build community and celebrate local culture. While Davis is involved with many community efforts that range from social and hardship causes to environmental work, he notes that fine arts education for kids is especially close to his heart.

"Obviously, I love music and I think it's important to pass on the history and power of music to kids," said Davis.

Davis has taught classes at Interlochen, the prestigious music school in northern Michigan. He has taught songwriting and instrumental classes to children, as well as adults, through the school's College of Creative Arts program.

"Interlochen is an incredible place," said Davis. "There's such a unique energy there and so much talent and enthusiasm; it's hard not to be inspired by the students."

Davis has settled back into life in the Mitten State after the rush of additional attention created by *The Voice*. While Los Angeles provided an opportunity of a lifetime, this husband, father, activist, teacher and, of course, musician has returned home to Michigan where there's nothing like real life to inspire new music.

After *The Voice*, Davis got right back to the studio, cutting a seven-inch vinyl with two tracks "Always Gonna Be Here For You" and "Let Me In." These tracks are included on his most recent album, *The Way Back Home*, released in February 2017.



Renewable Energy Program

Three Ways To Participate

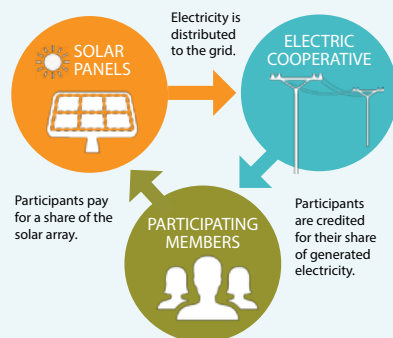
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Community Solar

Community Solar offers members the benefits of solar without the installation and maintenance expense involved with owning your own solar panels. Of the three programs, it is the lowest cost option for those interested in investing in renewable energy.

How does it work?

Members purchase a subscription in the SpartanSolar community array located across from our power supplier's headquarters in Cadillac. One subscription entitles a member to a share in the energy produced by the solar array. GLE continues delivering energy to the subscribing members, who receive a solar credit on their bills. Members have nothing to install or maintain and can cancel at any time.



Option Details

- 15-year agreement
- Credit of \$0.10/kWh generated
- Subscription cost: \$600/panel upfront or \$10 monthly bill charge for five years
- Energy Optimization rebates up to \$150 per panel for 20 panels when you pay in full

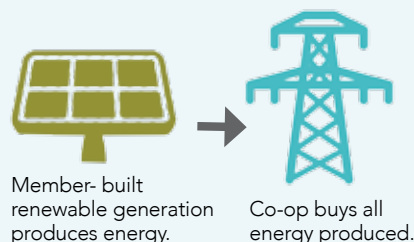
2

Buy-All/Sell-All

If a member's goal is to produce more renewable energy than they use, this program is for them. Of the three programs, this could involve the largest investment due to the larger renewable energy generating system the member would likely install.

How does it work?

The member installs up to a one megawatt (MW) renewable energy generating system (solar, wind, etc.). Our power supplier buys all electricity the system generates at \$0.10 per kWh. This option turns a member into a true energy supplier to the co-op.



Option Details

- 20-year agreement
- \$0.10/kWh for energy generated on premises and placed on the grid
- One MW cap
- Energy Optimization rebates up to \$3,000

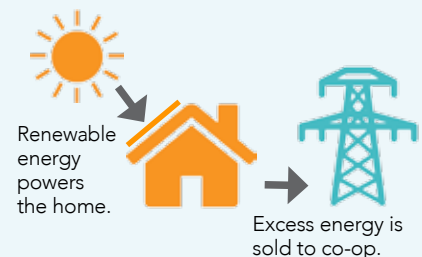
3

Net Metering

This program was revised and is for members whose goal is to meet their home's energy needs with their own renewable energy generating system.

How does it work?

Every kWh of renewable energy produced by the member and used in their home is a kWh the member doesn't have to buy from GLE. The savings is based on our retail rate. Should a member produce more energy than they use, they will receive a bill credit of \$0.056 per kWh for any excess energy they put on the grid.*



Option Details*

- 10-year agreement
- Retail offsets for kWh produced and used on premises
- \$0.056/kWh for energy generated and placed on the grid
- 20 kW cap
- Energy Optimization rebates up to \$3,000

*Program changes in effect for new systems in production after June 1, 2017. Contact us for details.

In addition to these programs, all members receive nearly 20 percent of their power from clean, renewable sources due in large part to our power supplier's investment in wind energy generation in Michigan.

Visit spartansolar.com for more information or call 888-GT-LAKES, ext. 8957.



Pay Your Way

Great Lakes Energy offers several convenient Pay Your Way options for paying your electric bill.

AutoPay: Your payment is automatically deducted from your bank account or charged to your credit/debit card.

ePay: Pay on line at my.gtlakes.com. Make a one-time payment with a check or credit card. Enroll in e-billing to stop receiving paper bills.

PhonePay: Contact us during business hours or use our 24-hour automated phone payment option. We accept payment by credit card or check over the phone.

Pay Stations: Visit any of the local participating businesses that will accept payments for Great Lakes Energy bills (no past due amounts).

FlexPay: Pay in advance and manage your electricity use on a daily basis. No late fees, no reconnect fees and no deposits involved with this plan.

Mobile App: Download the Great Lakes Energy mobile app (for Apple and Android) to pay your bill and get the latest news about GLE programs and services.

You can also visit any of our eight GLE offices and make your payment in person or use our dropbox.

For more information visit gtlakes.com or contact us at 888-GTLAKES. ■



Spring Savings

Shop and save with your Co-op Connections® discount card. Find bargains online or use your card at participating businesses that offer savings on dining, auto repair, fast-food takeouts, gardening, fishing, golf, car washes, gifts and more. Valuable offers from local and national merchants are available.

In addition, save up to 85 percent on prescription drugs and refills at participating retailers. Other healthy savings discounts are available, too. Visit healthysavings.coop for more information.

The best part about the Co-op Connections® card is it's free to Great Lakes Energy members. This is a discount card, not a credit card.

Review the discounts by visiting our website, gtlakes.com, or use the Co-op Connections mobile app. Visit the App Store and search for Co-op Connections.

Don't have a card or internet access to the list of discounts? Simply call us at 888-485-2537, ext. 8957, and start saving today.

I Remember...

Memories Of 1940s Michigan Farm Life

Born in the winter of 1929 at our home on Elder Road in Alden, Mich., I was the ninth child in a family of 12. When World War II ended, life started to become normal again. My dad was back home from Detroit where he had worked during the war to earn money for a new barn—as ours had blown down from high winds in 1940.

Having no barn meant my dad had to rent a barn a half-mile away on Helena Road for our livestock. It was up to my mother, brother and me to tend to our livestock while dad worked in Detroit. Mother would get my brother up at 4:30 a.m. every day to go milk the cows before going to school in Elk Rapids. We were transported to school by bus at that time. It was my job to let the cattle and horses out of the barn at noon to go down to the cistern, and break the ice (during winters), so they could have a drink of water. I was in the seventh and eighth grades during that time at Alden Elementary School.

In 1946, after dad returned home, he was able to build a new barn with steel stanchions and automatic milkers. He also was able to repair the well that had quit working when I was quite small. I remember we had to carry our drinking water for years from our neighbor's property. We hauled water from the creek, and my mother would heat it in a copper boiler for washing clothes. She washed our clothes by hand on a wash board until she finally had a gasoline washer for all of us.

In 1947, I was a senior at Elk Rapids School, and the first day returning home from school after the Christmas holiday I received the best surprise—a fully lighted house! Mom and dad would now have life a little easier. Electricity was God's blessing to my parents! They deserved it!

I would never trade those first 17 years of growing up with hard work and a loving family. Electricity sure made life much easier, for which we were all thankful. Not having electricity for the first part of my life made me appreciate it as a real commodity. Today, I'm thankful for all the people that work hard to keep our lights on.

*Erma Barber Deater, Great Lakes Energy
Cooperative member for more than 50 years*



Actual photos from 1946–1947

*We invite members to share
their fondest memories.*

**Country Lines will pay \$50 for
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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
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