

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES



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The Earth's temperature  
is regulated by water.



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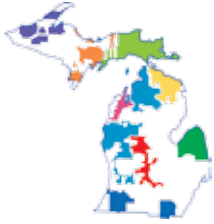
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Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.

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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.

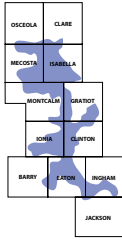
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## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative

### Blanchard office:

3681 Costabella Avenue  
Blanchard MI 49310  
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

### Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue  
Portland, MI 48875  
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

### Electric bill/account questions:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-562-8232

### Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

### Service questions/outages:

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



Chris Reed with his daughters, Holly, left, and Grace, right.

# Appreciate Your Local Linemen

By Chris Reed, Director of Electric Operations

When I was asked to write about Linemen Appreciation Day 2017, I thought of different ways to approach this. There are so many aspects to this line of work; it's difficult to choose.

I think the best way I can honor all of the linemen I have had the privilege of working with, as well as linemen all across the country, is to help you all learn a little bit about what it is we do. If you've noticed, I don't say what we do every day because every day is different.

That is one of the many things I loved about line work; there really is no average day. People often say, "You're so lucky, you get to work outside in the beautiful weather." What they don't think about is that we are also outside in the worst weather!

Don't get me wrong! We know going into this work what we will be exposed to, and we welcome it as part of the challenge.

Oddly enough, many of my fondest memories are of storm restoration work. Working as a team with the skilled crews that make up our Blanchard and Portland line departments, to restore power to our members in all conditions, is more rewarding than I could ever express.

Whether a lineman is wading through waist-deep snow, chest-high water, or thorn bushes over his head (usually in the dark of night!), his goal is to restore power to our members. Sometimes it means missing anniversaries, birthdays, even Christmas—and those missed holidays we never get back.

So, the next time Mother Nature leaves you without power and you're missing the big game on TV, please take a moment to think of those linemen out there and what it is they might be missing to get your lights back on. ■

To read more about linemen and their families, turn to page 16.

Chris Reed joined HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative in 1988 as an apprentice lineman. After becoming a lineman, he became a crew leader, then Portland operations coordinator, and, in 2015, he was named director of electric operations.

# Survey Shows Ownership Makes A Difference

In late 2016, an independent polling company surveyed HomeWorks Tri-County Electric member-owners and propane customers on a number of questions from satisfaction to use of the internet.

Last month, we covered the high customer satisfaction index and the 12 attributes of service that you rated us highly on. This month we'll take a closer look at the relationship between our members and the co-op.

Over the past several surveys, we've asked, "Do you consider yourself a customer of HomeWorks, a member-owner, or both?" As a cooperative, we are owned by those we serve, so if you purchase electric service from us, we consider you a member-owner. But we wanted to know how you feel about it—and what that means in terms of your loyalty and satisfaction.

The numbers have been fairly steady since 2003. At least 50 percent of respondents say they felt like a member-owner or customer and member-owner.

When we then asked about customer satisfaction, those who only consider themselves customers registered 85 percent satisfaction, while the member-owners rated us at 91 percent.

Further, we asked if they would switch utilities to get a five percent to 15 percent discount on their electric bill. While just 52 percent of the member-owners would switch, 71 percent of the customers would go elsewhere for a discount.

The survey also found that 88 percent of our members are using the internet, after a steady increase from the 50 percent level recorded in the 2000s. Of those, almost four in 10 use a cell or mobile device to connect, which makes it important for HomeWorks to have a mobile-friendly website and easy-to-access services, down to the "Call Now" button on our Facebook page.

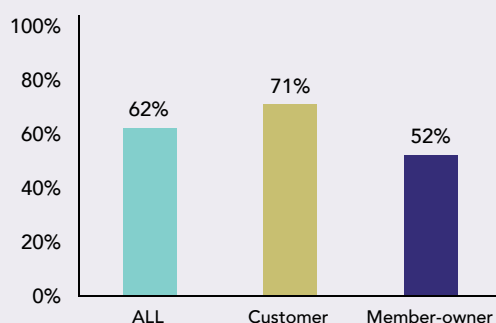
Also, nearly 40 percent of members said they would prefer to receive an electronic bill rather than paper. Through our SmartHub program, you can sign up quickly and easily for electronic bills, then view a PDF file once a month, and even save the file to your home records. It's a win-win-win; paperless is better for the environment, creates less paper clutter for you and helps HomeWorks control costs! ■

## ATTITUDE & PERCEPTIONS

### Co-op Satisfaction — By Relationship



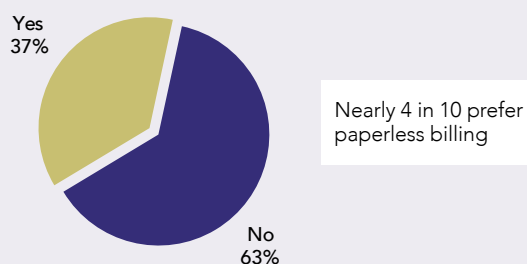
### Switch For Discount — By Relationship



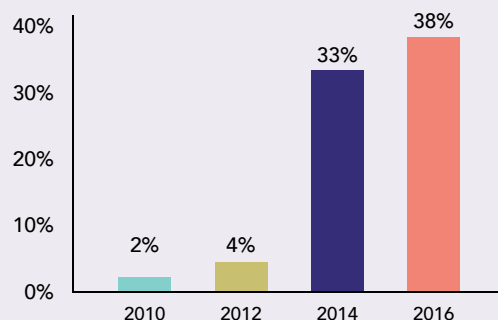
"Member-owners" have higher overall co-op satisfaction than "customers." More "customers" would switch for a lower rate.

## COMMUNICATION ISSUES

### Prefer To Receive Bill Electronically Over Paper?



### Connect With Cell, Mobile Device



The trend in internet use continues to rise. Almost 4 in 10 consumers use a cell or mobile device to connect with us.

# 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

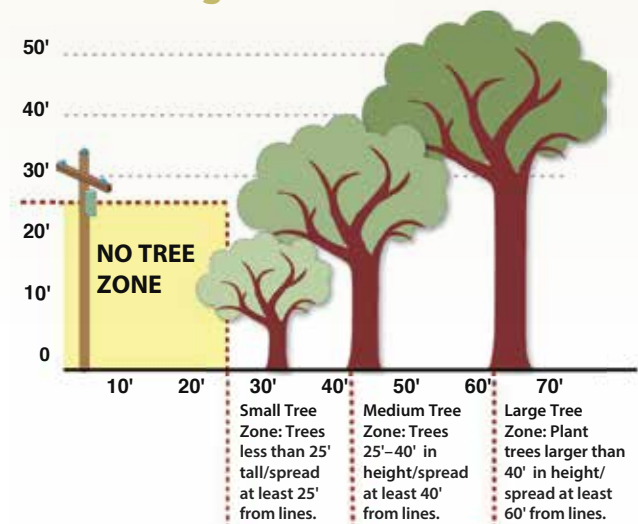
Earth Day is April 22. Show the earth some love, and plant a tree. Choose the right tree for the right place and avoid future problems with power lines.

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](http://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](http://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](http://michigan-energy.org).





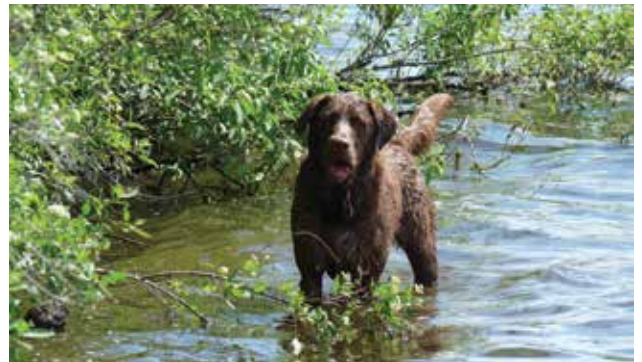
Jody Strang of Vermontville reports, "I was bald eagle scouting near Portland and stopped on my way home to take a picture of these pretty deer standing in the field. While I was there, a bald eagle flew by and made this shot so much more interesting, to say the least."



Sue Mills from DeWitt caught an unusual moment, saying "Our groundhog keeps up on the news."



Merrie Girvin of Hubbardston says, "I was very fortunate to capture mother and fawns in my backyard."



Phyllis Snider from Barryton shared this Snap Shot of "Our big baby, Beau, enjoying the cool feel of the water."



Bonnie Fowler, who lives in Alma and gets HomeWorks Tri-County Electric service at Ashley, says "This picture was taken in the evening close to sunset down my road. My daughter loves the cows, so we stopped to say hello. I think they enjoyed the company."

### Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

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

"The Art of Nature," Deadline: **May 15** (July-August issue)

Go to [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org) and select *Country Lines* under the Electric tab to submit your photos and see additional themes. It's fast and easy. To send by mail: include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, and details about your photo. Mail to Attn: *Country Lines* Snap Shots, 7973 E. Grand River, Portland, MI 48875. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos.

### Submit Your Photo!

Contributors whose photos we publish in 2017 will be entered into a drawing and *Country Lines* will choose two winners for a bill credit of \$100 each on their December electric bill, due in January 2018!

# 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
- ¾ 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
- ½ teaspoon salt
- 2 eggs
- 1 cup half-and-half
- ⅓ 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 ¾ 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](http://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.

- ½ cup butter
- 4 cloves garlic, minced
- ¾ cup dry bread crumbs
- ½ cup freshly grated Parmesan cheese
- 1½ cups shredded Cheddar cheese
- ¼ teaspoon dried parsley
- ¼ teaspoon dried oregano
- ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper
- ⅓ 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](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.

## Time Set Aside for Members to Comment Before Cooperative Board Meetings

The first 15 minutes of every board meeting are available for members who wish to address the board of directors on any subject. The next meetings are on April 24 at Blanchard and May 22 at Portland. Both meetings will be held at 9 a.m. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

## People Fund Helps With Housing, Nutrition

Using funds donated by members through rounding up your energy bills each month, the Tri-County Electric People Fund has given financial assistance totaling more than \$2 million to mid-Michigan families and organizations in need.

### Meeting on Jan. 25, the People Fund board of directors made seven grants totaling \$8,716.66, including:

- \$3,000 to Housing Services of Mid-Michigan in Charlotte for their housing assistance program;
- \$2,000 to Clinton County Senior Center in St. Johns to support their nutritional bingo program;
- \$200 to First Congregational Church in Portland to purchase food pantry items;
- \$419.49 to a Gratiot County family to help with housing expenses;
- \$1,700 to an Ionia County family to help with housing expenses;
- \$749.36 to a Montcalm County family for assistance with medical bills; and
- \$647.81 to a Montcalm County family to help with housing expenses. ■

### How to Apply for a Grant

The Tri-County Electric People Fund provides grants to individuals and organizations in the co-op's service area for food, shelter, clothing, health, and other humane needs, or for programs or services that benefit a significant segment of a community.

Write to 7973 E. Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI. 48875, for an application form and grant guidelines, or visit the People Fund tab at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org).

**Note:** Applications must be received by April 10 for the April board meeting, and by May 22 for the May board meeting.



# Together We Can Have A Greener Future

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative and our members support clean, renewable energy. Here are some new or updated programs to help us do that.

With help from SpartanSolar and Wolverine Power Cooperative, we have a new Community Solar program and a new Buy-All/Sell-All program to go with changes to our Net Metering tariff.

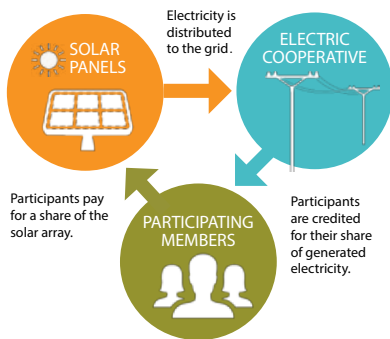
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## Community Solar

*This is the easiest and lowest-cost way to get the benefits of solar power.*

### How does it work?

A panel subscription entitles you to a share of the energy produced by our SpartanSolar community array. We continue delivering your energy, and you'll receive solar credits on your bill. There is nothing to install, nothing to maintain, and you can cancel at any time. **Visit [spartansolar.com](http://spartansolar.com) for more information.**



### Option Details

- 15-year agreement
- Credit of \$0.10/kWh generated
- \$600/panel upfront or \$10 monthly (for five years) payment subscription
- Energy Optimization rebates up to \$150 per panel (up to 20 panels) when you pay upfront

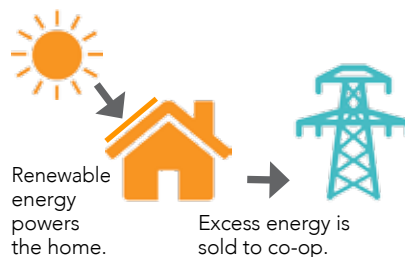
2

## Net Metering

*Offset your energy usage with your own electric generation. Use what you need, sell what you don't.*

### How does it work?

After you complete the installation of a renewable energy generation system, we'll install a special two-way meter that records how much electricity you use and how much you are putting on the grid. Every kWh you produce and use in your home is a kWh you don't have to buy from us. If you use more than you produce, you will be billed for your usage. If you produce more than you use, a credit of \$0.056 per kWh will be placed on your bill for the excess.



### Option Details

- 10-year agreement
- Retail offsets for kWh produced and used in facility
- \$0.056/kWh generated and placed on the grid
- 20 kW cap

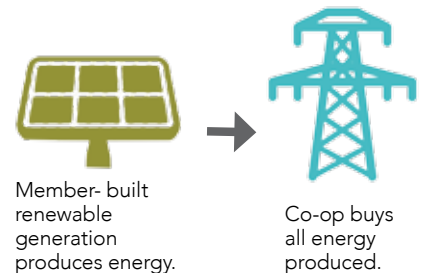
3

## Buy-All/Sell-All

*Become a generator. Install a solar or wind system and sell all the electricity it produces to us.*

### How does it work?

You install a system (maximum 1 MW in size) on your property. We'll install a meter on your system that tracks all the energy you produce. We buy all electricity the system generates at \$0.10 per kWh. With this option, you are a true energy supplier to your co-op. If your goal is to generate more energy than your annual usage, buy-all/sell-all is the way to go.

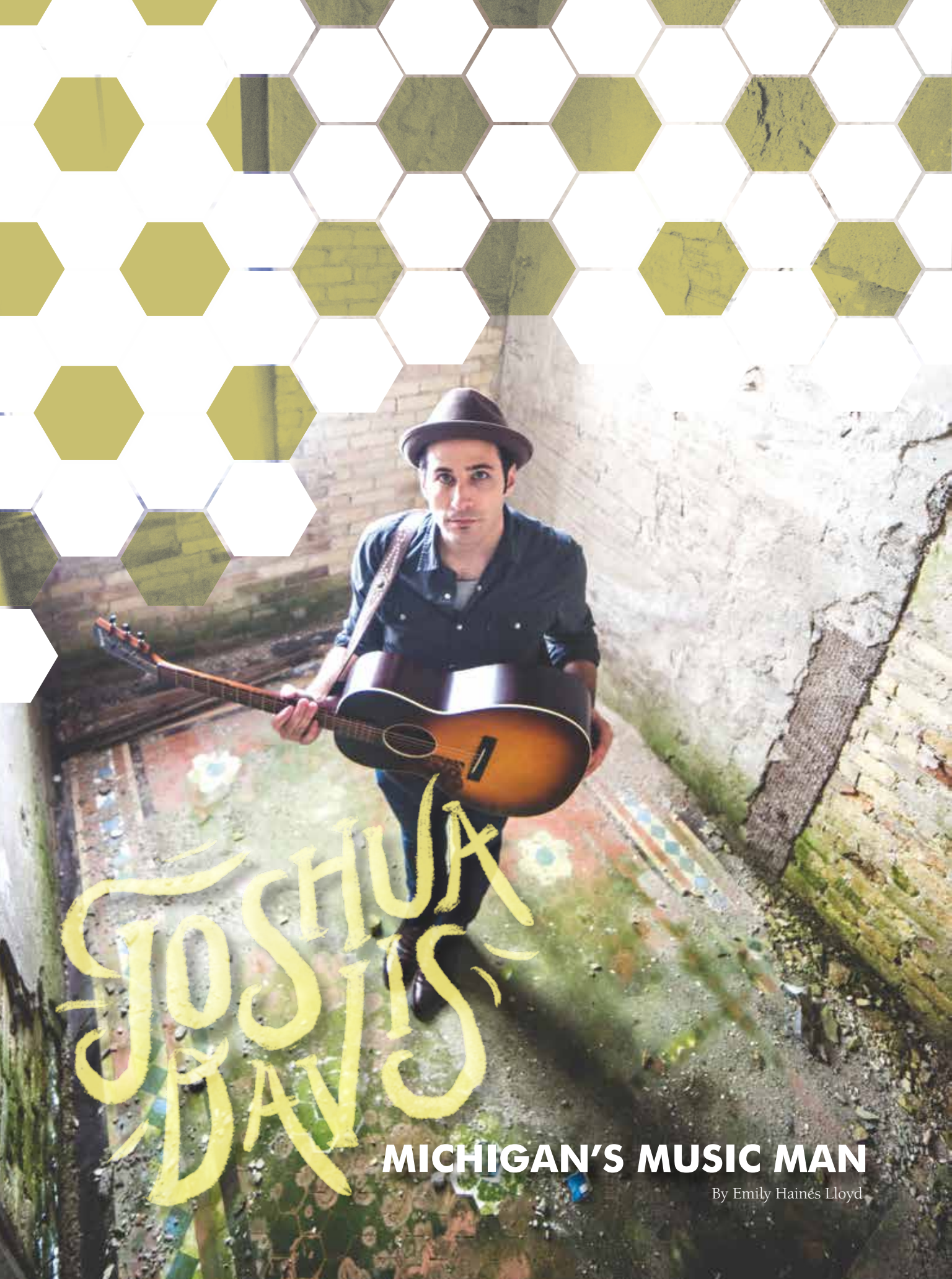


### Option Details

- 20-year agreement
- \$0.10/kWh generated and placed on the grid
- One megawatt cap
- On premises

**In addition to these programs, all HomeWorks Tri-County members receive nearly 20 percent of their power from clean, renewable sources, due in large part to Wolverine's investment in Michigan wind energy generation.**

**For more information, visit [spartansolar.com](http://spartansolar.com) or call 800-562-8232, ext. 1213.**



GOSHUA  
BAVIS

**MICHIGAN'S MUSIC MAN**

By Emily Haines Lloyd



**M**any 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.**

# Love On The Line— The Life Of A Lineman's Family

By Lesa Barker

**O**n Monday, April 10, we celebrate National Lineman Appreciation Day. On this day, we want to not only recognize our linemen, but their spouses and families. Our linemen form a solid team with one job: to deliver safe, reliable electricity.

That job can change as fast as the weather does. And with that change comes dedication not only from the linemen, but also from their families. In their own words, they share with us what life is like as the wives and families of HomeWorks linemen.

*"If they sent a lineman to the moon, there wouldn't be a dark side."*

—National Rural Electric Cooperative Association,  
"Changing Lives, One Light At A Time"

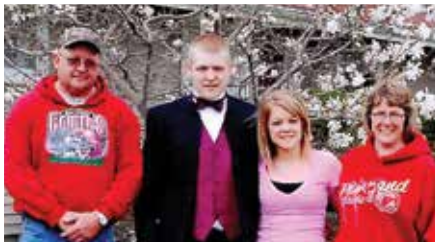


The Birch Family, Blanchard

Sally, wife of Jody Birch

**Being the family of a lineman is something that my children and I are proud of; however, it's not always easy.** Special events such as holidays and birthdays can be hard, when at any moment these plans will have to be changed. Long hours during storms have been so difficult at times. **We are aware of the dangers of his job, and we pray for his safety.** However, we know that he is out helping people in our community, and we are so glad he is able to do this. From the time the kids were little, even though they missed their daddy, they wanted him to bring the power back on for everybody. This is why we are proud of our lineman, husband and dad!





The Parkhouse Family, Portland

## Amy, wife of Brad Parkhouse

**As the wife of a lineman, there is not a day that goes by that you don't worry.** The late night calls when they are on call and have to go out and work in bad weather are difficult. I think the hardest part was when the kids were little and he had to miss Christmas due to winter storms. That is hard for everyone.

## Jen, wife of Chris Vallier

What is it like to be the wife of a lineman? **Disappointment**, when the phone rings and he is on call during every holiday, birthday, ball game and family function. **Thankfulness**, for his love of the job when he hangs up from that call with a smile and says, "I get to go to work!" **Worry**, if he has packed enough dry socks and snacks. **Joy**, when he makes it home after every storm and I know that his on-call partner and team kept everyone safe. **The sense of community**, from each lineman, his wife and children, and the HomeWorks organization that no one else seems to quite understand. **Pride**, when our children tell people that their dad is not with us because he is "helping a family without power." Over the years I have found that I am extremely blessed to be the wife of a lineman.



The Vallier Family, Portland



The Warchuck Family, Blanchard

## Tracey, wife of Rick Warchuck

**Being the wife of a lineman is rewarding as well as terrifying at times.** Eighteen years ago as I started my life with a wonderful man, he also started his life with his mistress: linework. I soon learned that no matter the weather, no matter the time of day, the holiday or special occasion—when she calls, linework is the top priority.

Being a lineman is one of the most dangerous trades, but can also be one of the most rewarding. Being a wife of a lineman can be one of the most terrifying experiences of your life, as well as one of the proudest. **This is not a job for the weak of heart, it takes your entire heart to be a lineman, a line wife, or part of the very unique line family.**

## Caitlyn, wife of Jeremy Zbytowski

When Jeremy is out working during the night, **I tend to wake up almost every hour to see if he has made it home safely.** When he's out on storm work, I worry about him being too tired, wonder if he ate anything, worry if he needs dry clothes, and ask myself how I am going to manage the kids' extracurricular activities on my own. Somehow things always work out. He might be tired, cold, wet and hungry, but when he comes home safely that's what really matters. Being a line family isn't always tough. **We are blessed to be close with other linemen and their families.** Knowing the kind of people my husband works with keeps my mind at ease. I have had a ritual for the last 11 years and that is to tell him to "be safe" every morning. I love my lineman, and I am so proud of him.



The Zbytowski Family, Portland

# 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
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) or email to [cdorr@meca.coop](mailto:cdorr@meca.coop)

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## Watch your mailbox for your personal invitation.

Knowing more about your electric cooperative helps you stay involved, and that helps us run HomeWorks Tri-County Electric for the benefit of you and your neighbors.

Our annual membership meetings start at 5:30 p.m. Enjoy a light, Michigan-made supper, followed by a short business meeting at 6 p.m. You'll have a chance to ask questions and win prizes, such as energy certificates worth \$10, \$25, or even \$50, and one lucky member will leave the meeting with a grand prize of a 40" Westinghouse Smart 1080p LED HDTV.

Bring your kids, too. Besides enjoying a free meal, all youths ages 5-16 have a chance to win an iPad Mini. And, everyone goes home with a special, thank you gift.

Watch your mailbox for your family's personal invitation. See you there!

### This year's dates and locations are:

- May 15** – District 5  
Fulton Middle School Gym
- May 16** – District 1  
St. Mary's Church Hall, Charlotte
- May 17** – District 6  
Beal City High School
- May 18** – District 7  
St. Michael's School, Remus
- May 22** – District 4 (Election)  
Montabella Jr-Sr High Cafeteria
- May 23** – District 3  
Eagle Park Hall
- May 24** – District 2 (Election)  
St. Edward's Church Hall, Lake Odessa

Doors open and a light supper is served at 5:30 p.m., followed by a business meeting at 6 p.m.

Watch your mailbox in late April for information, a map, and your registration card.



Like us on Facebook to keep up with these events!