

# MICHIGAN COUNTELTINES



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Rural Michigan's Political Couple

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Reliability Measures**

**Power Restoration:  
Bucket Trucks To Boats**

**Experience Fiber-  
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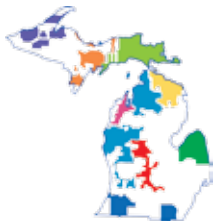
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives  
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**May 2017**  
**Vol. 37, No. 5**

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**Michigan Country Lines**, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Lansing, Mich., and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

**Subscriptions** are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors.

**POSTMASTER:** SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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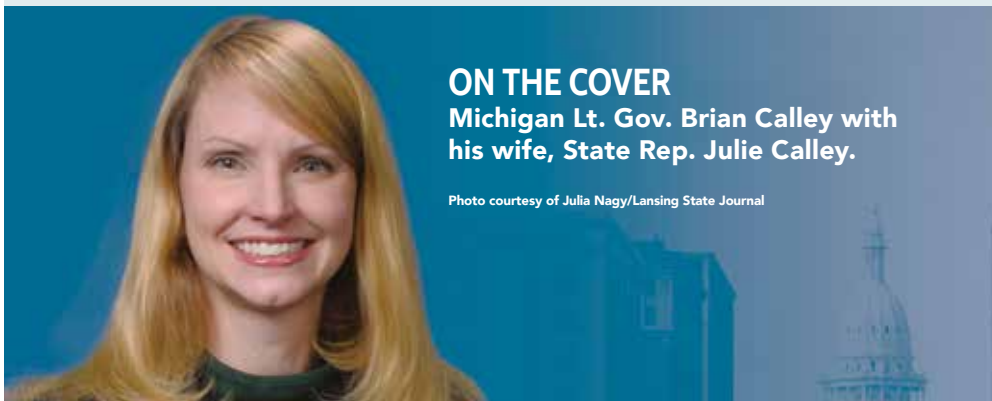
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Please notify your electric cooperative. See page 4 for contact information.

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Photo courtesy of Julia Nagy/Lansing State Journal

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## I Remember...

**We invite members to share their fondest memories.**

*Country Lines* will pay \$50 for stories we publish.

### Guidelines

1. Approximately 200 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Only one entry per household, per month
4. *Country Lines* retains reprint rights
5. Please include your name, address, email, phone number and the name of your electric co-op
6. Submit your memories online: [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com)





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*Midwest Energy Cooperative is an equal opportunity provider and employer.*

# Enhancing Your Reliability With First Smart Grid Application



**Robert Hance**  
President/CEO

If the first quarter is any indication of what Mother Nature has up her sleeve for 2017, batten down the hatches, my friends.

Four major weather events impacted tens-of-thousands of our members over the 3-month period, including the early March windstorms that resulted in the largest combined statewide power outage event in Michigan history.

I engaged with several members during our 2017 district meetings about these unusual weather circumstances, and the question that came up without fail was, "What if you'd never implemented the line clearance program?" And my reaction, without fail: "I can't even imagine how much worse it would have been."

We've taken a strategic and aggressive approach to right-of-way maintenance over the last 15 years, and the results show. Not only have we prevented many trees and branches from ever touching a line, but we've also created better access in the easement for crews to restore power when something does happen.

Our largely overhead system will never be entirely protected from the elements of nature, equipment failure, and human interference (think chainsaw-wielding, weekend warriors or car-pole accidents), but we're taking yet another step this summer to better manage your reliability.

We've talked for months about our investment in a robust, fiber communications infrastructure. It makes our smart grid ready for specific applications that will enhance your service experience.

Up first: Distribution Automation (DA). As we invest in proactive reliability measures, DA represents a huge leap in marrying our grid with tools that will allow for real-time monitoring and intelligent control.

In the simplest of terms, DA allows individual devices to sense the operating conditions of the surrounding grid and make adjustments to improve power flow and optimize performance. It provides early detection of equipment that might not be working properly, allowing us to address issues before your service fails.

These intelligent devices also identify when an outage occurs, isolate the issue, and reroute power to minimize the overall impact. They also alert the crew to the approximate location and cause of the fault, which should take some of the time and guesswork out of restoration efforts. A line outage that impacts 200 members today may be minimized to just a handful of customers in the future.

First-in-class innovations and solutions—it's what we do to enhance your rural experience. Follow our blog at [TeamMidwest.com](http://TeamMidwest.com) to watch the story unfold over coming months! ■

# Hance Represents Rural Technology On NRTC Board

**B**ob Hance, president and CEO of Midwest Energy Cooperative, won reelection to the NRTC during February's annual meeting for electric cooperatives in San Diego. Hance ran successfully against Shannon Thom, CEO of Henry County Rural Electric Membership Corporation, New Castle, IN, for the District 4 position, representing Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia.

NRTC is a member-owned technology partner providing solutions to help its 1500 electric and telephone cooperative members bring all of the advantages of today's evolving technology to rural America. NRTC's products and services are developed specifically to meet the needs of rural utilities and their customers. These needs include: integrated smart grid and utility solutions, advanced energy, broadband infrastructure and managed network services, wireless technologies and programming distribution capabilities for video providers.



"I'm honored by the confidence of my regional colleagues to represent their interests at the board table," Hance says. "Midwest Energy Cooperative continues to push the technology envelope as we invest in our distribution system and deploy broadband internet solutions to our own membership. I'm eager to use our experiences to help shape the future for a more technologically-connected rural America." ■

## 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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(1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture  
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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# Choosing The Right Air Conditioner For Your Home

**D**o you have a central air conditioner (AC) in your home that is at least 15 years old that still works but is not very efficient? Replacing an inefficient air conditioner with a more efficient model could reduce your electric bill. A new AC unit is 20 to 40 percent more efficient than one from the 1990s—and ENERGY STAR®-certified systems are even more efficient.

How much money you save by replacing your current AC unit depends on how often your AC runs and your electric rate. The best way to determine possible savings is to have an in-home assessment conducted by a qualified heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) professional or a certified energy auditor. Electric co-ops are often interested in reducing peak summer loads and sometimes offer information, rebates or a list of qualified professionals.

Your contractor needs to size the system to your home. A unit that is too small will not cool your home to the levels you want. If it is too large, it may not dehumidify your home sufficiently, and it will cycle on and off more frequently, which can increase wear and tear on the system and shorten its life significantly. To size the system, the contractor will look at the efficiency of the home by checking insulation levels. If you add insulation where it's most needed, you may be able to install a smaller AC unit and enjoy greater comfort and lower cooling costs. The contractor should also assess your ductwork, which is often poorly designed, leaky or inadequately insulated.

It's good to know there are several air conditioning options suited to different situations. It may or may not be practical to change to a different type of system.

Central air conditioning is one of two types: either split or packaged. A split system, which has the cold coils inside the home and an outside unit exhausting heat, is the most common. Packaged systems, which are sometimes installed because of space constraints, combine these functions into one box located outside the home.

A heat pump can provide cooling and heating in homes with or without ducts. If you are currently using propane or natural gas as your fuel source, this may be a good option.

A ductless mini-split heat pump can be an efficient way to cool up to four zones inside the home. If your existing ductwork is in bad shape or poorly designed, this could be a good solution.

Window units are much less efficient than other options, but they can still be effective for cooling a single room. It's worth paying a little more for a new ENERGY STAR-compliant unit, rather than the dusty \$80 unit from the yard sale.

Evaporative (or "swamp") coolers are an alternative in very dry climates. While they use a quarter of the energy and are less expensive to install than central air conditioning, they also require more frequent maintenance. ■

**Replacing an aging air conditioner is a great way to improve comfort, cut energy costs and reduce peak energy demand.**



# Thunderstorm Safety Tips

**W**hen thunderstorms are rolling your way, stay safe with these helpful tips from the American Red Cross:

- Listen to local news or NOAA Weather Radio for emergency updates. Watch for signs of a storm, like darkening skies, lightning flashes or increasing wind.
  - Postpone outdoor activities if thunderstorms are likely to occur. Many people struck by lightning are not in the area where rain is occurring.
  - If a severe thunderstorm warning is issued, take shelter in a substantial building or in a vehicle with the windows closed. Get out of mobile homes that can blow over in high winds.
  - If you can hear thunder, you are close enough to be in danger from lightning. If thunder roars, go indoors! The National Weather Service recommends staying inside for at least 30 minutes after the last thunder clap.
  - Avoid electrical equipment and telephones. Use battery-powered TVs and radios instead.
  - Shutter windows and close outside doors securely. Keep away from windows.
  - Do not take a bath, shower or use plumbing.
- If you are driving, try to safely exit the roadway and park. Stay in the vehicle and turn on the emergency flashers until the heavy rain ends. Avoid touching metal or other surfaces that conduct electricity in and outside the vehicle.
  - If you are outside and cannot reach a safe building, avoid high ground, water, tall and isolated trees, as well as metal objects such as fences and bleachers. Picnic shelters, dugouts and sheds are also NOT safe. ■



## ALWAYS CALL BEFORE YOU DIG

**For your safety and for the protection of underground utility lines, always follow these steps before starting any digging project.**

1. Contact MISS DIG at 811 or [missdig.org](http://missdig.org)
2. Wait three business days for utility owners to mark their lines
3. Respect the marks
4. Dig with care



**Know what's below.  
Call before you dig.**  
visit [missdig.org](http://missdig.org) for more information

# Is Your Central A/C Ready To Take The Heat?

Along with all the wonderful things summer brings comes the costly effort of keeping your home cool and comfortable. If your central A/C is due for an upgrade, or if a tune-up is enough to keep it running efficiently, the Energy Optimization program is here to help! We provide cash incentives to help make energy-saving improvements more affordable.

**New Central A/C:** If your central A/C system is more than 20 years old, it's time to upgrade! Install a new ENERGY STAR® central A/C and save up to 20 percent in cooling costs annually. Or, opt for a central air-source heat pump or mini/multi-split air-source heat pump system to save even more. **Energy Optimization program cash incentive: \$150–500.**

**A/C Tune-up:** Ensure your central A/C runs as efficiently as possible by scheduling a tune-up. A tune-up can help reduce energy usage,

prevent costly breakdowns, and will allow you and your family to enjoy cleaner, healthier indoor air. **Energy Optimization program cash incentive: \$50. ■**

## COMBO CASH INCENTIVES NOW AVAILABLE!

Save even more when you purchase a combination of qualifying energy-saving equipment:

Cash Incentive	Equipment	Bonus Incentive	Maximum Total Incentive
HVAC Combo Bonus	New qualifying ECM blower motor AND new central A/C unit, air-source heat pump, or ground-source heat pump system at the same time.	\$100	\$800
Smart HVAC Combo Bonus	New qualifying ECM blower motor AND new central A/C unit, air-source heat pump, or ground-source heat pump system AND a WiFi-enabled or smart thermostat at the same time.	\$150	\$950

Visit [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) or call 877.296.4319 for additional energy-saving information and rebates.

## Cool off and save energy this summer!

Beat the heat without breaking the bank! Upgrade to a high-efficiency cooling system or tune up your existing system to save energy and money. Receive cash back from the Energy Optimization program for:

- New central A/C (\$150-\$500)
- Central or mini/multi-split air-source heat pump (\$150-\$500)
- Central A/C tune-up (\$50)

ONLINE: [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org) PHONE: 877.296.4319



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

# Jump In



# Planes, Trains & Automobiles

The votes are in, and we're happy to share the winning photo (and some great runners-up) from our March photo contest. Thanks to everyone who submitted a photo, voted and spread the word by sharing the post on Facebook.

**Visit [teammidwest.com/photo-contest/](http://teammidwest.com/photo-contest/) to view photos.**

Most  
Votes On  
Facebook!



Sarah Harwood, Adrian—My New Wheels!



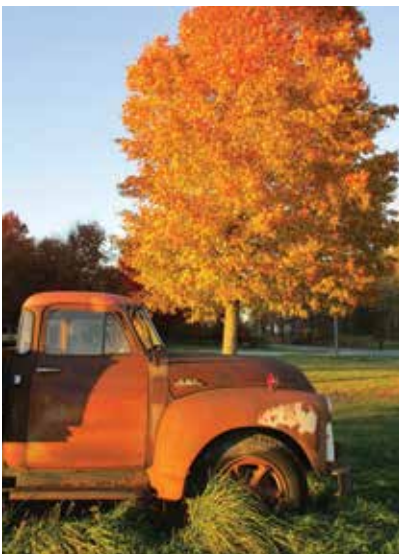
Nichele Rohacs, Niles—1961 Cadillac DeVille.



Stacy Ford, White Pigeon—Production Line.



Ed Marshall, Decatur—Downtown, The Old Days.



Ed Marshall, Decatur—GMC In The Fall.

## Enter Our Photo Contest And Win A Bill Credit!

### A winner every month!

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

Our **May** theme is **The Art of Nature**. Photos can be submitted from **May 1** to **May 20** to be featured in our July/August issue.

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

# BREAKFAST AND BRUNCH

These sweet and savory breakfast or brunch ideas are sure to please.

## Orange Cranberry-Carrot Muffins

*Luise Bolleber, Cherryland*

- ⅓ cup butter, melted
- ½ cup sugar
- 2 eggs
- Juice and zest from 1 orange
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1¾ cups all-purpose flour
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- ¼ teaspoon salt
- 2 cups finely shredded carrots
- 1 cup fresh or frozen cranberries, coarsely chopped

Heat oven to 350 F and place paper cups in a muffin tin. Whisk sugar and butter together in a medium bowl until blended. Beat in eggs, orange juice and vanilla. Combine the flour, orange zest (peel), baking soda, baking powder and salt in a separate bowl. Add to creamed mixture just until combined. Fold in carrots and cranberries. Fill muffin cups three-fourths full. Bake 25 minutes or until a toothpick inserted in the center comes out clean.

▶ Watch a video on this recipe at <https://goo.gl/HN697I>

Photos—831 Creative







## Peggy's Stolen Stuffed French Toast

Jessica Waite, Great Lakes Energy Cooperative

- 1 loaf Italian bread
- 1 stick butter, melted
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 8 ounces cream cheese
- 8 eggs
- 1 cup milk
- ¼ cup maple syrup

Preheat oven to 375 F. Tear half of bread loaf into ¼" cubes and place in bottom of 13×9 greased pan. Cube cream cheese and place evenly throughout. Top with the remaining loaf in ¼" cubes. In a separate bowl combine remaining ingredients. Pour over bread mixture. Pat down with a spatula, so bread is soaked. Cover with tinfoil and let sit overnight. Bake for 45 minutes covered. Serve immediately with extra maple syrup.



## All-In-One Breakfast Bake

Mary Ellen Seguin-Adomat,  
Cherryland Electric Cooperative

- 1 pound plain pork sausage
- 6 eggs
- 2 cups milk
- 1 cup shredded sharp Cheddar cheese
- 6 slices bread, torn into pieces
- 1 tablespoon dry mustard
- 1 cup sliced fresh mushrooms

Preheat oven to 350 F. Butter a 13×9 glass baking dish. Brown sausage and drain on paper towels; set aside. In a large bowl, beat eggs, then add milk and beat again. Stir in remaining ingredients, including sausage. Pour into baking dish. Bake for 45 minutes. This can be prepared the night before and refrigerated; pop it in the oven in the morning.



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

• "All About Apples" due July 5

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

## Raspberry Pie (pictured above)

Rep. Julie Calley

If you're as busy as Rep. Julie Calley, you'll appreciate this simple, but scrumptious, pie recipe that's a favorite in the Calley home.

- 1 pie crust, store bought or homemade
- 1 3.4-ounce package vanilla instant pudding
- 2 cups milk
- 3 ounces cream cheese
- 1 teaspoon almond extract
- 1 3-ounce package raspberry Jell-O
- 1 cup boiling water
- 9 ounces fresh raspberries
- ¼ cup chopped nuts (optional)

Prepare and bake pie shell for open face pie. Let the pie shell cool. Combine pudding, milk, cream cheese and almond extract. Beat for 2 minutes. Pour into pie shell and chill until firm. Mix Jell-O with boiling water and chill until partially set. Gently stir in the raspberries and nuts. Pour over vanilla filling and chill until set.

Read the full story about the Calleys on page 14 and visit [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com) for this recipe and others.





# BE PREPARED

**B**efore Mother Nature rears her ugly head with spring and summer storms, prepare for the possibility of an extended power outage. The following are suggested items to keep on hand, but consider your own unique individual and family circumstances as you create your emergency kit.

- **Water:** At least one gallon per person, per day for drinking and sanitation. Don't forget the pets.
- **Food:** Non-perishable, especially items that don't require cooking. A hand-operated can opener is helpful.
- **Lighting:** Flashlights, candles and matches.
- **Telephone:** Cordless phones won't work during an outage, so have a corded phone available. Make sure cell phones are fully charged if outages are possible.
- **Communications:** Have your mobile devices fully charged if outages are imminent so you can stay in the know. A battery-powered radio is also helpful.
- **Medical:** First-aid kit ready with any needed medical supplies and filled prescriptions.
- **Personal sanitation:** Moist wipes, hand sanitizer and garbage bags.
- **Tools:** Wrench or pliers to turn off utilities.
- **Battery-powered or wind-up clock.**
- **Extra blankets.**

## Safety Tips:

- Stay away from downed power lines, and call us immediately to report one.
- Don't touch a person or object in contact with a power line; the electric current could flow through you.
- Stay inside your car if it comes in contact with a power line.
- Turn off all appliances during an outage to avoid a circuit overload when power is restored. Leave on one lamp to alert you to restoration.
- Never leave burning candles unattended.

Keep freezer and refrigerator doors closed. Food will stay frozen for 36 to 48 hours in a fully-loaded freezer, and about 24 hours in a partially-filled freezer. ■

## Outage reporting at your fingertips

When you're in the dark and trying to report your power outage, there's nothing more frustrating than sitting in a crowded phone queue waiting for the next available representative. We offer easy and convenient ways to report your outage.

**SmartHub:** SmartHub is our secure online and mobile platform, the quickest and easiest way to report your outage from the comfort and convenience of your computer or mobile device. Report your outage through the online portal at [TeamMidwest.com](http://TeamMidwest.com), or use the free SmartHub app available through your iTunes or Google Play store. From the online site you can also sign up to receive outage-related notifications by email or text.

You can also text your outage. A short registration process is required for new users of these convenient platforms. Learn more by clicking on the Outage Central icon at [TeamMidwest.com](http://TeamMidwest.com).

**Telephone:** Our telephone system is equipped with an automatic outage reporting system; just dial 800-492-5989 and follow the prompts. We must have a current telephone number on your account. Update your account information using SmartHub or calling our office.

We have limited incoming telephone lines that are adequate for regular business operations, but may become taxed in a major outage situation. If you call and receive a fast busy signal, please use one of the alternate methods, or hang up and try again.

Please do not use email or social media to report your outage as these platforms are not staffed 24/7.



## Power Restoration: From Bucket Trucks To Boats

From bucket trucks to boats, we got the job done to restore power to our members after ferocious storms with sustained winds in excess of 50 miles per hour canvassed the entire state on March 8. Gov. Rick Snyder, in a press briefing with officials from the state's two biggest utilities, called the windstorm "the largest combined statewide" power outage event in Michigan history. "Every corner of the state was affected by this storm," he said.

The unusual late-winter windstorm resulted in nearly 8,000 members without power as the storms caused broken poles and many downed trees

and power lines. It was the second major storm in just a week in southwest Michigan, following the late February weather event that included three confirmed tornadoes.

Crews worked for 55 hours before all service was restored. One of the heroic and creative restoration stories involved one crew on a boat in a swampy pond pulling out a downed line while a second crew worked from the ground and pole.

It's all in a day's work to serve our members. ■



# — small town to — CAPITAL CITY

## Rural Michigan's Political Couple

By Emily Haines Lloyd



Rep. Julie Calley with her husband, Lt. Gov. Brian Calley and children Collin, Reagan and Karagan.

Down a country road in Ionia County, not too far from where she grew up on a sesquicentennial farm, Julie Calley lives a fairly normal life. Julie is a wife, mother of three and devoted public servant. Of course, she's also married to the lieutenant governor of Michigan, Brian Calley, but her career takes her to Lansing as the representative for the 87th District in the state's House of Representatives.

The pair are a rare commodity in Lansing, with Brian serving his final two years as the lieutenant governor of Michigan while Julie began a two-year term in January. She now holds the seat that her great-grandfather Herbert Powell, grandfather Stanley Powell and her husband have all held. Both Calleys also have served as Ionia County commissioners.

One wouldn't think of small-town Portland as a hub of Michigan politics, but for Representative Julie Calley, it's sort of the family business.

"My family has a legacy of public service," said Calley. "My mother has served at the township level for almost as long as I've been alive. She just retired last





“It boils down to making government work better for the average citizen. Politics can overcomplicate things. It has to center back on the community we’re serving—a person-centered approach.”

year as a township trustee. My grandfather and great-grandfather both served in the state legislature, so public service is definitely in my blood.”

Julie notes that one doesn’t need to have a long heritage of politics in the family in order to serve. “There are usually a number of local boards which need more interest and participation. There are numerous empty roles on the county level that sometimes have only one candidate or sometimes not even one. There is a definite need for public servants.”

It may have been that desire to serve that drew Julie and Brian together. High school sweethearts, the Calleys married as she was finishing a degree at Northwood University and Brian at Michigan State University.

After college, the Calleys moved back to Ionia County. Julie had worked in commercial real estate while her husband made his mark in the state political scene, but Julie always stayed involved in local politics. Calley was chairwoman of the Ionia County Board of Commissioners and chairperson of the Michigan Community Service Commission. She also served two terms on the Republican State

Committee. Now, as Julie is still in the early part of her two-year term in the Michigan House of Representatives, she is taking her local experience to the state level.

“It boils down to making government work better for the average citizen. Politics can overcomplicate things. It has to center back on the community we’re serving—a person-centered approach.”

Julie’s experience living in a rural setting has actually driven her work approach. While she notes that the jump from roughly 9,000 constituents to approximately 90,000 constituents is daunting, she is utilizing the same relationship-building skills she used on the local level in her new role. Her experience in small-town Michigan is an inspiration as she moves forward, building relationships in the state’s House of Representatives.

“Those who choose to live in the country tend to have a certain independence and yet reliance on one another,” Julie concluded. “So when a problem arises, it’s typical for neighbors to band together and take care of one another. Identifying a need and taking care of it—I wish we could see more of that.” ■

# Let Your Co-op Help You With A New Water Heater



**Y**our water heater is more than an appliance tucked away in the corner of your home. It rinses the afternoon play off grubby fingers before dinner; washes the dirt off well-worn work jeans; and brings happy smiles to a bubble-covered baby.

We depend on our water heater for many of life's daily activities, but like electricity, don't tend to think about it until it stops working.

If your water heater is approaching the end of its useful life, or you're ready to better manage your energy costs with a high-efficiency model, your co-op can help. Our program puts a 50-gallon Rheem high-efficiency electric water heater in your home for only \$125 out of pocket. It features a .95 efficiency rating and comes with a full, one-year, in-home warranty through Home Depot, and a six-year limited warranty on tank and functional parts. Comparable units are \$400 and above at most retail outlets.

How does the deal work? Co-op members who are homeowners and use a minimum of 400 kilowatt-hours a month can take advantage when they participate in our load management program. During periods of peak electric usage, we control the electricity to your water heater. This reduces system demand, which can lower power supply costs. Control does not exceed five hours a day, and typically occurs three to four times per month between 3-9 p.m. Water in your insulated tank will stay hot and accessible during the control period.

What's in it for you? Qualified members purchase the water heater over 66 months using the \$4 monthly load management credit on the bill. After the 66 months, the credit continues under the terms of the program.

As an added incentive, our Energy Optimization (EO) program provides a \$50 mail-in rebate and a free hot water savings kit (pipe wrap, low-flow showerhead and low-flow faucet aerators) for eligible members.

Ready to pick up your new water heater? Visit us from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the Cassopolis or Adrian office, or 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. in Paw Paw. For more information or to see if you qualify, please call us at 800-492-5989, or visit one of our offices. ■

## More Great Deals At EO Store

**Want some great deals on energy efficient lighting? Our Energy Optimization (EO) program provides two quick and convenient ways for Michigan residential members to purchase the products you want and need and save up to 50 percent with instant rebates.**

**Visit any of our district service centers or visit the online store at [Michigan-Energy.org](http://Michigan-Energy.org) for a quick and convenient purchase. Items vary between the on-site and online stores.**

# Experience Fiber-Speed Internet At Community Open Houses

Fiber internet fever is spreading across southwest Michigan as Midwest Connections, a service of Midwest Energy Cooperative, continues building its communications infrastructure. Nearly 4,000 homes and businesses are now surfing the web at previously unknown and unprovided speeds. Have you signed up yet?

We will host a series of monthly open houses beginning in May to give co-op members an opportunity to test drive the fiber internet service and experience what the buzz is all about. Team members will be on hand from 4–7 p.m. to answer questions, and technology stations will be available for guests to experience the look and feel of a real high-speed service. Anyone who signs up for new service during an open house will receive a credit of \$49.95 on their first bill—one free month of basic residential service.

To RSVP for your preferred venue, visit [TeamFiber.com](http://TeamFiber.com) or email your name and service address to [jenna.zache@teammidwest.com](mailto:jenna.zache@teammidwest.com) or call Jenna at 269-445-1071. Learn more about fiber internet and see where you are in the five-year construction plan at [TeamFiber.com](http://TeamFiber.com). ■



## Join us on any of the following dates:

Tuesday, May 16  
Cass County Council on Aging, Cassopolis

Thursday, June 8  
Hamilton Township Hall, Decatur

Wednesday, July 12  
Community Baptist Church, Edwardsburg

Tuesday, August 22  
Lewis Cass ISD, Cassopolis

Tuesday, September 19  
Volinia Baptist Church, Decatur

Tuesday, October 24  
Midwest Energy Cooperative, Cassopolis



Cooperative offices will be closed on Monday, May 29, in observance of the Memorial Day holiday. Payments may be made at the drop box and will be posted on the next open business day.

**From our family to yours, have a happy and safe Memorial Day weekend.**



# Disability 101: A Lesson in Respect

By Jack O'Malley, WTCM 103.5 FM Traverse City and host of Jack's Journal on 9 & 10 News

"Well, Jack," said the doctor, examining my foot while studying X-rays of my heel. "If that tendon tears, it's going to be a bear to fix. You need foot surgery." Not one to argue, I took his advice.

In the days prior to surgery, I prepared for my recovery: two to four weeks off my feet, hobbling unsteadily on crutches and learning how to steer my scooter, followed by a week or two walking with a cane.

"Easy enough," I thought. With a foot brace, prescriptions and disability parking permit in hand, I was feeling confident!

After a relatively pain-and-incident-free first few weeks, I had mastered the dance—juggling my brief case, foot brace, scooter and crutches, jostling them in and out of the car, all while balancing on one leg. Lugging everything through a near freezing parking deck at least twice per day, I quickly tired of the hassle. But the end was near! Soon the doc would give me the all-clear, and it would be just me, my brief case, and my intricately-carved, walnut-stained Beechwood walking cane, which was an accessory I hoped would offer an air of distinction (unlike my scooter).

But then, a complication—a complication setting my recovery back at least two weeks. And then another setback.

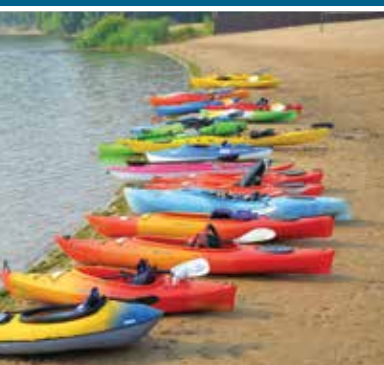
In mid-December, with mobility still dependent on the knee scooter and crutches, my wife and I attended a music program in search of some much-needed holiday cheer. Entering an auditorium brimming with families, grandparents and students, we noticed all handicapped-accessible rows were full, many seats occupied by young children. While obvious I couldn't use the stairs, no one moved. Dismayed, I found a folding chair by the entrance while my wife took a seat elsewhere in the auditorium.

Initially frustrated at being separated from my wife, I paused. Since surgery, folks had repeatedly grabbed doors, held elevators and carried bags for me. While some were oblivious, the vast majority of those I "bumped" into kindly offered assistance. Plus, I had a light at the end of the tunnel. I would recover. Eventually.



Yet this situation forced me to ask a tough question. What about those people suffering permanent disabilities, many of whom regularly experience these types of situations? What about people discouraged from going out because of limited parking and seating, who feel uncomfortable asking for help, overburdened with medical equipment, and just overwhelmed with the situation in general?

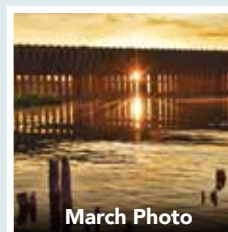
Though I'm still not 100 percent, doctors assure me I'll make a full recovery. In the meantime, my respect and appreciation for those with a permanent physical or cognitive disability has only deepened. My hope now is to encourage others to think twice when in public. Save those reserved parking spaces and seating sections for those people and families who could really use it. Open a door, offer a seat, and give a smile to someone who genuinely needs it. I know I will. ■



## «« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by June 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 March 2017 issue is Walter Seavoy, an Ontonagon County REA member, who correctly identified the photo as the Lower Harbor Ore Dock in downtown Marquette, Mich. Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



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- Request a Quote
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TeamMidwest.com



# FIBER OPEN HOUSES

Come Test Drive Fiber-Speed Internet

Staff will be available from 4-7 p.m. at all of the dates and locations below. Sign up for service at an open house and receive a free month of service\*!

**Tuesday, May 16**

Cass County Council on Aging  
60525 Decatur Road, Cassopolis

**Thursday, June 8**

Hamilton Township Hall  
52333 CR 352, Decatur

**Wednesday, July 12**

Community Baptist Church  
28647 US-12, Edwardsburg

**Tuesday, August 22**

Lewis Cass ISD  
61682 Dailey Road, Cassopolis

**Tuesday, September 19**

Volinia Baptist Church  
19526 Marcelus Hwy, Decatur

**Tuesday, October 24**

Midwest Energy Cooperative  
60590 Decatur Road, Cassopolis

**Visit [TeamFiber.com](http://TeamFiber.com) to RSVP for your preferred venue.**

\*Free month of basic residential service valued at \$49.95. Midwest Connections is an unregulated service of Midwest Energy Cooperative.