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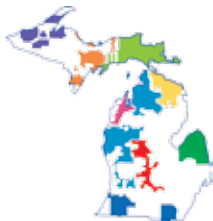
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

June 2017
Vol. 37, No. 6

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Publisher
**Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association**

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.

Association officers are **Robert Kran**, Great Lakes Energy, chairman; **Mark Kappler**, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric, vice chairman; and **Eric Baker**, Wolverine Power Cooperative, secretary-treasurer. **Craig Borr** is president and CEO.

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

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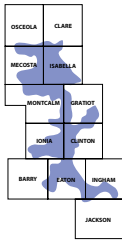
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Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy® Cooperative 

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

Portland office:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue
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Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

Electric bill/account questions:

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

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Educating Ourselves And Our Stakeholders



Mark Kappler
General Manager

Testifying before the state legislature's House Energy Policy Committee recently was a great opportunity to shine a light on our cooperative form of business. Even though Michigan's electric co-ops serve nearly 300,000 homes and businesses, we are small and relatively unknown compared to Consumers Energy and Detroit Edison!

Craig Borr, our statewide association's executive vice-president, gave the legislators an overview of co-ops and explained that we were formed to serve those who live in rural areas. Then I had the chance to tell them how we work together to provide reliable electric power to our member-owners.

With our line maintenance programs, aggressive right-of-way clearing, and well-trained linemen, we work every day to make sure the lights stay on for rural families.

Legislators were surprised to learn that our mutual aid agreements also cover the small municipal utilities around the state, such as the cities of Portland and Eaton Rapids. We helped the City of Portland restore service after the tornado in 2015, for instance, and they recently sent a crew to help ours after this past March's wind storm.

I also pointed out that co-ops took the lead in using new technology like automated metering systems. These meters are simply tools that help us provide energy use information to our members, as well as being useful during outage restoration.

All of these subjects are topics we have brought before you, our member-owners, through this magazine, our Facebook page, the website and at district and annual member meetings.

We also provide scholarships to area students, Classroom Technology Grants to schools in our service area, and help support the National Rural Electric Youth Tour, all of which are designed to encourage future energy leaders and our local community.

Cooperative Principle 5 is Education, Training & Information. We believe an informed membership is a valuable asset to a cooperative, which is why we invest in these various means of communication. ■

Students Win Touchstone Energy Scholarships



Hali Maybank



Ryan Powell



Bryce Thelen



Kaylynn Brecht



Francis Pytlowany

Five area high school seniors will receive Touchstone Energy Scholarships from HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative this year. Scholarship winners are chosen based on a combination of academic achievements, leadership both at school and in their community, and their own statements regarding career goals and financial need. This year's awards included three one-time scholarships of \$1,000 each and two one-time scholarships of \$500 each.

- **Hali Maybank**, daughter of Michael and Susan Maybank of Lakeview, graduating from Lakeview High School, who plans to study pre-law, psychology and social work at Alma College;
- **Ryan Powell**, son of Dave and Tina Powell of Weidman, graduating from Beal City High School, who plans to study audio production and technology with an emphasis in electrical

engineering at Michigan Technological University; and

- **Bryce Thelen**, son of Mark and Cindy Thelen of Westphalia, graduating from Pewamo-Westphalia High School, who plans to study business finance at Central Michigan University.

Receiving \$500 each toward their education are:

- **Kaylynn Brecht**, daughter of Mark and Terri Brecht of Riverdale, graduating from Alma High School, who plans to study pastry baking at The Culinary Institute of Michigan at Baker College; and
- **Francis Pytlowany**, son of Frank and Tammy Pytlowany of Lake Odessa, graduating from Lakewood High School, who plans to study architecture technology at Grand Rapids Community College, then construction management at Ferris State University. ■

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative A Special Member Meeting is set for 9 a.m., June 26, at the Portland office.

The board of directors will consider changes to the cooperative's rates and tariffs at its meeting on June 26, 2017, to be held at the cooperative office at 7973 East Grand River Avenue, Portland, MI. The meeting will start at 9 a.m., and is open to all members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative.

The session will begin with an opportunity for members to provide direct input to the board of directors, without filing a formal request under cooperative policy. Members are asked to come to the lobby by 9 a.m. and request to speak to the board; staff will direct interested members to the meeting room. Time constraints on each member's comments will be at the discretion of the board president, but members are asked to keep comments to less than five minutes.

The following item will be considered. Members will have an opportunity to address the board on the proposed changes prior to board action.

- Discuss participation in the State of Michigan's Low Income Energy Assistance program at the cost of a surcharge, to be determined by the state, on each residential customer's monthly energy bill.

Notice of changes or additions to the cooperative's rates or service rules shall be sent to all members, as required by P.A. 167, by publication in *Michigan Country Lines* at least 30 days prior to their effective date.

Participation: Any interested member may attend and participate. The location of the board meeting site is accessible, including handicapped parking. Persons needing any accommodation to participate should contact HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 800-562-8232 a week in advance to request mobility, visual, hearing or other assistance. Comments may also be made before the meeting date by calling General Manager Mark Kappler at 517-647-1281, or by email at mkappler@homeworks.org.

Valerie Brader On Michigan's Energy Future

In the last few years, the state of Michigan has dealt with public concern over various energy issues. Cherryland Electric Cooperative recently sat down with the Executive Director for the Michigan Agency for Energy, Valerie Brader, to discuss the challenges and opportunities our state faces as Michigan's Electric Cooperatives continue to modernize their energy portfolio.



Q: How does the state view solar power production in Michigan?

Solar has gotten much cheaper. Even in 2012, it was much more expensive than other resources. Now, it is more cost competitive. The new energy legislation asks the Michigan Public Service Commission to look at the value of solar in a very specific way. Most utilities in our lower peninsula are summer peaking utilities. That means they have the highest demand at the height of the summer when everyone's air conditioning is turned on. Solar can be really valuable to summer peaking utilities. When it's coming in at a time when there is plenty of other power, it can be less valuable. How valuable solar really is needs to be evaluated on a utility-by-utility and state-by-state basis.

Q: What are our biggest opportunities for reducing waste in the state of Michigan?

Michigan has a huge amount of energy waste reduction opportunities. If you look around, Michigan's housing stock is a little older than our neighbors. Older typically means the insulation is not as good. Homeowners should make sure that the lights in their home have been swapped out to LED lightbulbs and make an effort to get insulation in the right spots. New furnaces are an opportunity, too. Just 15 years ago your furnace was probably 80 percent efficient; now there are 92 percent or 96 percent efficient furnaces for about the same amount of money. There are a lot of opportunities for people to improve their homes and to be more comfortable at a lower cost of energy.

Q: What is the condition of the energy generating capacity in Michigan?

In the lower peninsula, about 90 percent of our demand must be met with in-state resources because of the physics of the grid. With all the coal plant closures, we are running a lot closer to our margins than usual. The concern is making sure that everyone, no matter who you are a customer of, is helping to pay for the new plants we need. Electricity is different from most products in that if we don't have enough supply for everybody, nobody gets any power. The grid will collapse if supply doesn't meet demand, causing widespread outages that take hours to fix. One of our goals is to make sure that we don't ever face those kinds of outages. The new legislation ensures that every supplier of electricity must meet their share of reliability requirements.

Q: How much capacity do you think will be built over the next 5–10 years?

That is one thing that the new legislation will help us answer. All rate-regulated utilities must file an integrated resource plan. They essentially show a prediction of what their demand is going to be and how they are going to meet it. ■

Listen to the entire interview
at <https://cherrylandelectric.coop/2017/03/valerie-brader-michigans-energy-future/>

Perform An Annual Safety Inspection On Your Boat And Dock To Prevent Electric Shock

For boating and water safety, there are items you must legally have on your watercraft—life vests, a fire extinguisher, throwable flotation devices, and properly working lights—but make sure the boat and the dock are safe, too. Sadly, there have been incidents of electric shock drownings. It happens when a current, often from a short circuit in the wiring of boats or in a dock, spreads through the water. As a result, those who are in the water will be electrocuted and end up drowning.

To help prevent accidents, the National Electrical Contractors Association says:

- All installations should be performed by a professional electrical contractor.
- All dock receptacles must comply with the National Electrical Code, which mandates a ground fault circuit interrupter (GFCI). A GFCI measures a circuit's current and senses any imbalance (such as a discharge into the water), which trips the GFCI and cuts off the power.
- Test any GFCIs every month. Locate them along the ramp to the dock so they can be easily tested by local fire departments.
- Metal dock frames should have "bonding jumpers" that connect all metal parts to an on-shore grounding rod. This means any dock part that becomes energized by electrical malfunction will trip the GFCI or circuit breaker.
- Ask neighbors if their dock electrical systems have been inspected and are up to code.
- Household wire is not suitable for boats.
- Do not use wire nuts (these are for solid conductor wire, which should never be on a boat) or splice connectors which can cut wire strands!
- Fuses are rated to protect the wire, not the stereo. If a fuse blows continuously, something else is wrong.
- If you rent a dock or boat, notify the owner of safety violations immediately.
- Have your boat's system (especially with onboard generators) checked at least annually and when something is added or removed.
- Ropes, string, masts and rigging also conduct electricity—don't be the common ground between water and electricity! ■

See SafeElectricity.org for more tips.



Look For The ENERGY STAR!

In the market for a new appliance or electronic device? Look for the blue ENERGY STAR® label! ENERGY STAR products are tested and certified to use less energy and meet higher standards of quality and performance. Make your purchase even more affordable with cash incentives from the Energy Optimization program!

What is ENERGY STAR?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced ENERGY STAR in 1992 to help consumers identify energy-efficient products. The ENERGY STAR label can now be found on major appliances, lighting, electronics, and even new homes and commercial buildings. Since the early 1990s, ENERGY STAR has helped consumers save \$362 billion in utility costs.

Did you know?

ENERGY STAR products can use up to 75 percent less energy than standard models!

Peace of mind:

To earn the ENERGY STAR label, a third-party certification process ensures that all products:

- Contribute significant energy savings.
- Deliver the features and performance consumers demand, *plus* greater energy efficiency.
- Back up energy savings claims with comprehensive testing. ■

Save now with Energy Optimization program rebates!

Product	Efficiency comparison (vs. a new standard model)*	Energy Optimization program rebate**
Clothes washer	Uses 35% less water and energy	\$125
Computer	Uses 60% less energy	\$50
Dehumidifier	Uses 15% less energy	\$75
Dishwasher	Uses 5% less energy and 15% less water	\$75
Chest Freezer	Uses at least 10% less energy	\$75
Refrigerator	Uses 9% less energy	\$200
Television	Uses at least 25% less energy	\$50–100
Room air conditioner	Uses 15% less energy	\$50

View all incentives at michigan-energy.org or call **877.296.4319** for details.

*All data according to energystar.gov.

**Incentive amounts are subject to change.

Brighten your future with ENERGY STAR®!

Upgrade your outdated, energy-wasting appliances and electronics to ENERGY STAR models today. Use up to 75% less energy and watch the savings roll in!

Take advantage of cash incentives:

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- Dehumidifier - **\$75**
- Dishwasher - **\$75**

VISIT OUR WEBSITE FOR A FULL LIST OF INCENTIVES!

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org

PHONE: 877.296.4319



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

A large, stylized graphic with the words 'Cool Savings' in a light blue, bubbly font. The background of the entire advertisement features a pink piggy bank wearing sunglasses and sitting on a beach chair, with a beach and ocean in the background.



Bonnie Fowler of Alma, who uses Tri-County Electric service near Ashley, shared this Snap Shot of one-year-old SJ Moon and his pal, Petey, checking on the cows at his grandparents' farm.



Kathleen Ellwood of Eaton Rapids sent this photo of the Dysinger farm barn in Perry. Her Dad, Duane Dysinger, hangs the wooden quilt blocks that her mom, Loyola, paints.



Rebekah Haigh of Charlotte says, "This is my son, Zachary, who loves tractors and rides them any chance he gets."



Christine Loose from Baroda, who uses Tri-County Electric service near Lake, sent in this Snap Shot of a morning sunrise on the Vogel farm, viewed off Winn Road.



Jan Thelen from Portland says, "This is 'the lane' that our grandchildren use between their home and ours to visit us. My husband and I were coming home from their house one day and the view just struck me as beautiful."

Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

"Birds and Feathers," Deadline: **July 17** (September issue)

"Life's a Beach (Michigan Waters)," Deadline: **August 15** (October issue)

"Decorative Mailboxes," Deadline: **September 15** (November-December issue)

Go to 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!

ON THE GRILL

Step up your grill game with these summer recipes.

Grilled Flatbread With Vegetables & Hummus

Randy Rippentrop, Cherryland

- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 2 tablespoons Greek seasoning (or Italian seasoning)
- 3–4 cups mixed vegetables (red onion, eggplant, red bell pepper, zucchini, mushrooms, etc.)—cubed into bite-sized pieces
- 1 cup baby spinach
- 4 naan flatbreads
- 1 cup roasted red pepper hummus
- 4 tablespoons feta cheese, crumbled
- 1 cup mozzarella cheese, shredded
- red pepper flakes
- balsamic glaze

Heat a gas grill to medium heat. In a mixing bowl, combine olive oil, garlic and Greek seasoning with the cubed vegetables. Place vegetables on the grill in either a mesh grill basket or onto aluminum foil. Grill until vegetables are soft. Remove vegetables from the grill and immediately mix in the baby spinach so that it will wilt. Place naan flatbread on the grill facing down for a couple of minutes until warm and lightly brown.

Remove naan breads and place on a baking sheet. On each naan, spread ¼ cup hummus and 1 cup of the grilled vegetables. Sprinkle feta and mozzarella cheese on top. Shake red pepper flakes on top to taste. Turn grill to low and place the assembled naan flatbreads on the grill for about 5 minutes or until cheese is melted. Remove from grill and drizzle with balsamic glaze.

As an option, two grilled chicken breasts can be cubed and added to the vegetable mixture before putting it on the naan.

Naan is a leavened, oven-baked flatbread found in the cuisines of India and other Central and Southeast Asia countries.



Watch a video of this recipe at
<https://goo.gl/Lfls7F>

Bacon Wrapped Chicken Jalapeño Delights

Deb Finedell, Great Lakes Energy

- 1 pound boneless chicken breast
- 1 tablespoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon onion powder
- 1 tablespoon pepper
- 2 teaspoons seasoned salt
- 1 teaspoon paprika
- 1 small onion, cut into strips
- 15 jalapeños, halved and seeded
- 1 pound bacon



Photo—Deb Finedell

Cut chicken into strips, slicing breasts the length of a jalapeño and about a half inch thick. Place chicken and seasonings into baggie and coat. Place chicken strip and onion into a half jalapeño. Wrap with a piece of bacon and secure with a toothpick.

Grill about 20 minutes until bacon is crisp. Serve with blue cheese dressing.

Steak Pitas Topped With Grilled Mushrooms & Onions

Cathy Miller, Midwest Energy

- 1 flank steak, trimmed of excess fat
- 1 pound fresh mushrooms, sliced
- ¼ cup onion, chopped
- ¼ cup butter
- ¼ teaspoon Mrs. Dash
- 4 whole wheat pita pockets
- steak sauce



Photo—Cathy Miller

On a large piece of heavy duty foil, combine mushrooms and onions. Dot with butter and season. Bring edge of foil together to seal. Place on grill on low heat, and grill 15 minutes or until vegetables are tender. Place steak on preheated grill and

cook to desired doneness, about 6 to 7 minutes on each side for medium-rare. Remove from the grill to a cutting board and let rest for 10 to 15 minutes before slicing. Thinly slice the steak on an angle. Serve immediately. To assemble the sandwiches, fill pitas with meat and veggies. Top with steak sauce.



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 1
- “Slow Cooker Favorites” due August 1

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

Gorgonzola And Dried Cherry Salad (pictured above)

Barbara Bull

If you get a chance to meet up with Barbara Bull at Cherry Point Farm and Market, be sure to grab some delicious dried cherries and make this light, satisfying salad.

- ¼ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- 2 tablespoons raspberry vinegar
- 1 clove garlic, minced
- ⅛ teaspoon fine sea salt
- ground black pepper, to taste
- ½ cup toasted walnuts
- ¼ cup dried cherries
- 1 head leafy green lettuce, torn into bite-size pieces
- 1 Granny Smith apple, peeled and thinly sliced
- ½ red onion, thinly sliced
- ½ cup crumbled Gorgonzola cheese

Whisk together oil, vinegar, garlic, salt and pepper in a small bowl to make a dressing.

Toss walnuts, cherries, lettuce, apples and onions together in a large salad bowl.

Top with dressing and toss gently to coat. Garnish with cheese and serve.

Read the full story about Barbara Bull on page 14, and visit micoopkitchen.com for this recipe and others from our co-op members.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Blanchard on April 24, your board of directors:

- Set April 1 as the Record Date for the list used for district meeting membership rolls.
- Reviewed the board election process, in light of two contested elections in 2017.
- Discussed the March 8–9 wind storm, its challenges, and lessons learned from it.
- Learned about HomeWorks' computer network and how each part of the network is protected from unwanted intrusion.
- Authorized two donations of \$2,500 each as matching grants for CoBank's Sharing Success program, made to EightCAP Supportive Services for Veteran Families Program and the Grand Ledge Emergency Assistance Program (GLEAP), from unclaimed capital credit funds.
- Reviewed and approved Board Policy 101 – Policy Formulation and Approval as read, and Board Policy 404 – Retirement of Capital Credits as amended, with the addition of a word for clarification.

- Learned there were 115 new members in March.
- Acknowledged the March safety report, listing employee training, and employee and public incidents. ■

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 scheduled for 9 a.m. on June 26 at Portland, and 9 a.m. on July 24 at Blanchard. 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 Libraries, Food Pantry

Meeting April 19 at Portland, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made 10 grants totaling \$5,805.34, including:

- \$825 to Barryton Area Mobile Food Pantry for food truck deliveries;
- \$275 to the Adult Handicap Program, Charlotte, for their summer handicap bowling program;
- \$250 to Home Township Library, Edmore, to purchase magazine subscriptions for the library;
- \$1,250 to Helping Hands of Eaton County, Charlotte, to purchase personal care items for clients;
- \$860 to Wheatland Township Library, Remus, to buy a computer, printer, and office program;
- \$322.21 to an Ingham County family to help with housing expenses;
- \$885 to an Ionia County family for housing expenses;
- \$219.41 to an Isabella County family to assist with housing expenses;
- \$318.72 to a Mecosta County family to help with housing expenses; and
- \$600 to a Montcalm County family to pay housing expenses. ■



Classroom Technology Grants Help Students Learn

Fourteen mid-Michigan schools received nearly \$25,000 in Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grants this spring. Applications for 2018 grants will be available this fall at homeworks.org. Watch *Michigan Country Lines* all year for more grant announcements.



Reed City Schools received \$1,671.24 to purchase a 3D printer, headphones, and robotics materials for students to use at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Shown accepting the grant are, from left, Emily Boza, Technology Coordinator Rob Breedlove, Keegan Weck, Joe Shewan, Braedon Killian, and Lily Andreas.



At Beal City Elementary, Katie Hull's kindergarten class enjoyed posing with the "big check." The money was used to upgrade classroom projectors in several classrooms, including Ms. Hull's.



These Beal City second graders, taught by Carrie Smith, also enjoy their new classroom projector.



Explore Cherry Point Farm & Market

AND UNWIND AT MICHIGAN'S MOST BEAUTIFUL FLORAL MAZE

By Emily Haines Lloyd



Pictured above is Barbara Bull, owner of Cherry Point Farm and author of several books based on her farm life experiences.

Cherry Point Farm and Market in Oceana County is as deliciously tart and sweet as the cherries it produces, as imaginative and welcoming as its lavender labyrinth, and as chock full of history and stories like its owner delights in telling. A fourth-generation farmer, Cherry Point owner Barbara Bull began her career selling cherries and pies as a young girl at a card table stand her older sister set up.

Barbara's early start as a pint-sized entrepreneur paved the way to what is now Cherry Point Farm and Market. From around the country and world, families visit Cherry Point Farm and Market—not only to snatch a gorgeous quart of cherries on their travels, but also to visit the buildings, lavender labyrinth and herb garden. Tourists and locals sometimes are fortunate to catch a fish boil, watching Barbara and her team go through the almost-scientific steps and listening for stories peppered into this timeless event. Visitors can also enjoy Tuesday Teas or Sunday's Flapjacks and Fruit. No matter what the event, in the midst of it all is Cherry Point's owner, Barbara, telling stories, listening to stories and quietly taking mental notes.

"I've always loved history and storytelling," Barbara explained. "I would listen to my grandfather tell his stories about our family history, and his stories made those people real to me."

On the occasion of Bull's fifth decade on the farm, she got an idea.





Fish boils are an event, a gathering and a tradition with taste!

"I had spent 50 consecutive years working at the farm market—listening to people's stories and telling my stories. I knew I wasn't retiring or getting a gold watch," Bull jokes. "So, I decided to tell the story of my first 50 years on the farm."

And that's what she did. Armed with a love of reading and writing and a snowy off-season, Bull wrote the love story of herself and Cherry Point Farm—"A Point in Time."

With each season after that, as she puts on a picking bucket, prunes trees or braids strudels in the market, Bull is either dreaming up improvements for the farm or new stories. Her second book, "Blackberry Ridge," was a collection of newspaper articles by a local writer, Charles W. Jay, who was one of the original settlers in the area. The book combines stories from Jay and townspeople that together capture life in the late 1800s.

"It was amazing to research Jay, read his articles in the paper and get a glimpse at life in that time," Bull said. "[He gave me] such wonderful insights—thoughts and concerns on health, weather, community development. The most amazing thing was how little has changed. We're having these same conversations today."

One particularly snowy January, Bull had another idea. "I looked out the window and it was still snowing, and I thought, 'Okay, I'll do another book.'"

That book became her first fiction novel, a cozy mystery called "Cloud Cottage" that, given Bull's mental note-taking, takes place on the shore of Lake Michigan in the lush fruit belt and is unsurprisingly full of long-time family connections and traditions. It's the first of three in the series.

For locals and travelers not familiar with Cherry Point Market, it's well worth the visit to Oceana County.

The sweet cherries or mouthwatering pastries are not quickly forgotten. An experience at the farm generates repeat customers and even encourages strangers to become friends.

Bull encourages visitors to take their time while wandering through the maze like a meditative experience. Some lucky farm-goers who make a lasting impression may find their way into Bull's next novel. Of course, the most compelling character Barbara has created is the one she is in real life.

"You can only hope you have enough time to accomplish all the dreams you've dreamed up," said Bull. "All you can do is follow your instincts, listen to where you need to be and what you need to be doing and you'll get there." ■

Barbara Bull, owner of Cherry Point Farm and Market, is a member of Great Lakes Energy Cooperative.

To learn more, visit cherrypointmarket.net or call 231-861-2029. Cherry Point Farm and Market is located at 9600 West Buchanan Road, Shelby, MI 49455.

The Beautiful Lavender Labyrinth

Cherry Point Farm and Market allows visitors to indulge in delicious treats, including cherries, sweet jams, and baked goods. But the highlight is the lavender labyrinth.

Be sure to wander through the massive and stunning lavender labyrinth filled with calming aroma and colorful hues.

Bull teamed up with local artist and architect Conrad Heiderer in 2001 to create the flower-shaped design, allowing visitors to walk through rows and rows of perfectly arranged flowers with an herb garden at its center.

The lavender peaks in the springtime and continues to bloom throughout the summer and then dries out and is picked once fall arrives.

Bull encourages visitors to take their time while wandering through the garden, slowing down to breathe in the lavender-scented air and enjoy a meditative experience.

Members Enjoy
**2017
DISTRICT
MEETINGS**



Democracy is the cornerstone of any co-op, as members show here during a straw poll vote at the District 1 meeting.



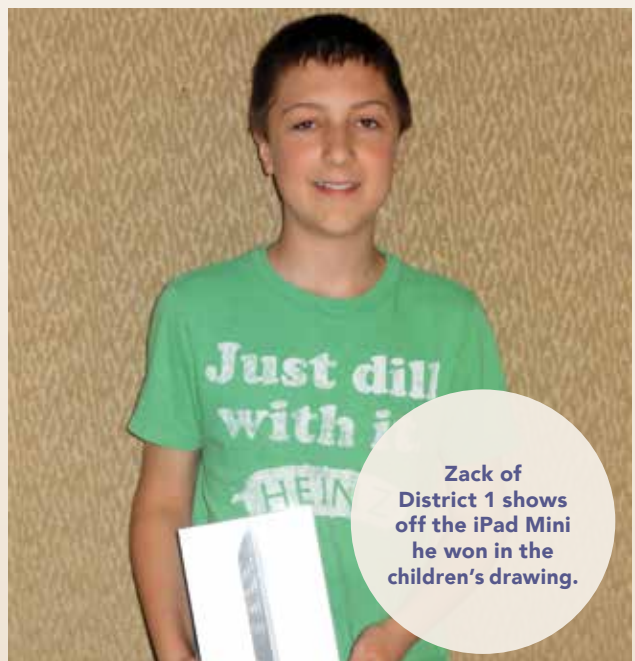
Khloe from District 5 has fun trying on some lineworker equipment.



District 1 member Kay MacKenzie dons a hard hat to commemorate HomeWorks Tri-County's 80th anniversary.



Members enjoy a light Michigan-made supper of Koegel hot dogs, Better Made chips and homemade cookies.



Zack of District 1 shows off the iPad Mini he won in the children's drawing.

All photos by Charly Markwart

Two Members Win iPads For Going Paperless

Over the winter, we offered members who participate in our Paperless Billing program the opportunity to win an iPad Mini as a thank you for their help in reducing paper and postage costs.

We included all members already participating, and those who signed up during our contest period, plus those who added the Autopay service to make their lives even more convenient.

The iPad Mini winners are shown here accepting their prizes—but we consider all of you winners for joining the Paperless or Autopay programs!

We offer our member-owners a number of convenient, time and money-saving services including paperless billing, autopay, budget billing, and the free SmartHub app. Take advantage of any or all of these services by calling 1-800-562-8232 or logging into your account at homeworks.org. ■



Amanda Feldpausch (center) from Fowler stopped by our Portland office to pick up her iPad Mini from customer service representatives Becky Beard (left) and Angie Martin.



Michael Critchfield of Stanwood, shown with his wife Jacqueline and service dog Benson, received his iPad Mini from Blanchard customer service representative Sara Nartker (right).

I Remember...

Sometimes You've Got to Get Lost to Find Your Way

I decided to make Michigan my permanent home in an unlikely spot—while bodysurfing waves in Lake Worth, Florida. I'd hitchhiked from my hometown of Grand Rapids out to Colorado, then meandered my way back east and down along the seaboard. I thought I'd found Nirvana in "The Sunshine State."

I was in my 20s, lost, confused and unsure about my life's compass; after thumbing this way and that, Florida seemed a good fit. But faced with the prospect of whether to take a job as a carpenter's apprentice to an old salt remodeling waterfront homes, my mind wandered back to my precious land of four seasons—Michigan.

How could I leave in my rear-view mirror the northwest wind that whipped waves on Lake Michigan into a pandemonium? Or the inland lakes and rivers that abounded with fish and the promise of canoeing adventures? Where else would I find the romance of so many lighthouses, the lull of crickets and cicadas and fireflies?

So I thumbed my way back to Michigan, married a girl who abandoned a future in Maine for life with me, and we put down stakes. In a year or two, we hope to retire to the small cottage I hand-built 30 years ago near the "Big Lake" in the beautiful confines of Oceana County and continue staying put.

Tom Rademacher, Great Lakes Energy

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 at countrylines.com or email to cdorr@meca.coop

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MEMBERS

**Building a
brighter tomorrow,
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Introducing our renewable energy program

Renewable energy is important to you. It's important to us, too. That's why we're proud to introduce our renewable energy program. Designed to help members meet their renewable energy goals, the program offers several options to fit your needs. Maybe you're looking to stick your toe in the water, or perhaps you're ready to dive into the deep end. Either way, we've got you covered. Visit homeworks.org or give us a call at 1-800-562-8232 to find out what option is right for you.