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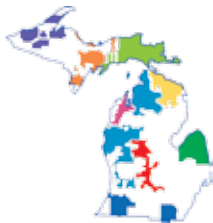
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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

October 2017
Vol. 37, No. 9

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**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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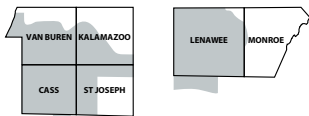
I Remember...

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 or email to cdorr@meca.coop



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Midwest Energy & Communications is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Triple Plays And Home Runs



Robert Hance
President/CEO

I love baseball and was hoping this was the year my beloved Detroit Tigers would make it back to this month's World Series. But I realized very early in the season that post-season play wouldn't be in the cards for us.

Like most fans, I love the energy and excitement of an out-of-the-ballpark home run, but nothing sparks my baseball love more than the rare, fast-and-furious, triple play. That's just baseball magic.

We have our own magical triple play unfolding here at Midwest Energy & Communications, and I believe it will be nothing short of a home run for those we serve.

This month we launch a long-awaited video option as part of our fiber internet service. Now you can bundle fiber internet, phone and video, or any combination of the three, in one easy and convenient package. It's the latest chapter in the magical story of what we're doing to transform the rural space.

We've spent a lot of time researching video options, both in terms of what's available and what our members want and need. The industry has changed dramatically with the introduction of streaming content and "over-the-top (OTT) programming." In a nutshell, OTT is film and television content delivered over the internet, without requiring users to subscribe to a traditional cable or satellite service. It includes commonly-known services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. The days of traditional cable or satellite lineups are going by the wayside as technology has created better ways for users to customize their own viewing experiences.

We've learned through our research that you want options. You don't want to pay for 200 stations only to access the handful that you regularly use. And you don't want to give up your local stations.

Welcome to the magical world of MEC triple play.

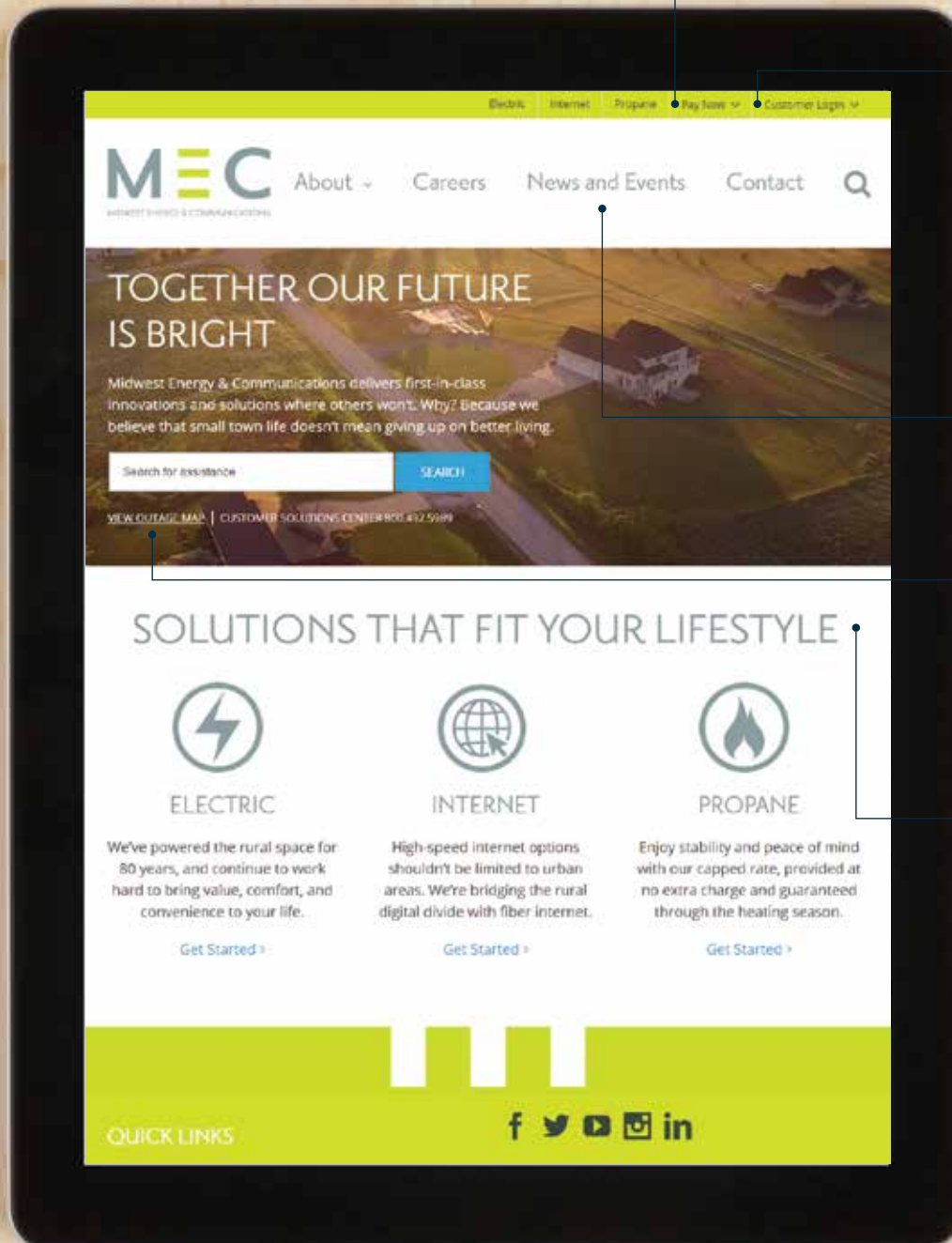
Beginning this month, we will help set you up with the video options you want and need. The ViewLocal app, accessible through a number of streaming devices, gives you access to all of your regular local channels over our fiber internet. We'll help you combine that with an OTT or streaming option of your choice to create the viewing lineup you want and need.

Many are nervous to cut the cord, meaning getting rid of a traditional cable television offering. But as alternative options continue to become available, more people are taking the plunge, saving money and gaining control.

Ready to explore the magical world of the MEC triple play? Visit [teammidwest.com](https://www.teammidwest.com) to learn more. ■

CO-OP NEWS

Just like our new name and logo, **teammidwest.com** just got a great new look with you in mind. Everything you want and need to know about Midwest Energy & Communications is all accessible within one easy-to-use, great new site. Visit us today.



Make a payment on your account without registering or logging in under **Pay Now**.

Log in to SmartHub and manage your account(s), pay bills, check your usage and more. Your electric, propane and internet SmartHub links are all easily accessible on the **Customer Login** menu.

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View the Outage Map directly from the home page, or click on the **Electric** tab for the outage map and more about your electric service.

Learn about all of our products and services under **Electric, Internet, and Propane**.

Co-op Careers Offer Paycheck And A Purpose

By Justin LaBerge

October is National Cooperative Month! Every day in this country, more than 75,000 men and women go to work at America's electric cooperatives to keep the lights on for 42 million energy consumers in 47 states.

It's challenging work, but in addition to a paycheck, co-op employees go home each night knowing they've helped make their communities better places to live.

Over the next five years, thousands of workers will get to experience that sense of purpose and pride as America's electric cooperatives hire nearly 15,000 employees nationwide. These new hires will replace Baby Boomers reaching retirement age and accommodate organic growth in the energy industry.

Many career options

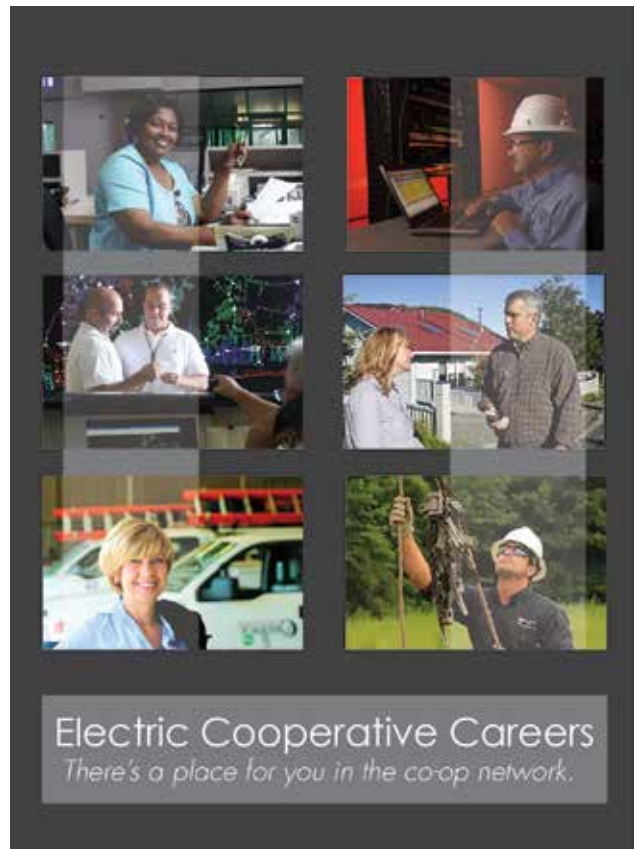
A lineworker high atop a pole is the first image that comes to mind for most people who think about electric cooperative employees. It's true that lineworkers comprise the largest segment of the co-op workforce—approximately 25 percent—but it takes a variety of talents to keep a cooperative running smoothly.

Information technology and engineering are two rapidly growing career opportunities at co-ops. The need for more high-tech workers is driven by the shift to a smarter electric grid and the growth of renewable energy sources that must be carefully monitored and managed.

Other in-demand career paths at electric cooperatives include finance, member services, equipment operators, energy advisors, communications and marketing, purchasing, administrative support and human resources.

Second careers

Some people think the only time to start a new career is fresh out of high school or college. While the energy industry offers many rewarding careers to recent grads, it is also a great place to start a second or third career.



Lineworker training programs offered through community colleges are growing in popularity among people who previously worked in oil and gas, manufacturing, mining, forestry and other similar industries.

Make a difference

As not-for-profit, member-owned, locally-based businesses, America's electric cooperatives offer careers that allow employees to make a difference in the communities they serve. Cooperatives are guided by a set of principles that put people ahead of profits and offer fulfilling work to those who enjoy serving others. ■

How to find a co-op job

Interested in joining the co-op family? To learn more about the opportunities available across the cooperative network, visit careers.touchstoneenergy.coop or by visiting Michigan co-op websites at countrylines.com.

What can you do to prevent *carbon monoxide poisoning*?



- **DO** purchase and install carbon monoxide detectors that meet Underwriters Laboratories (UL) standard 2034-95. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for proper placement, use and maintenance. If the detectors plug into the wall, be sure they have a battery backup.
- **DO** leave the house if the alarm sounds on your CO detector. Go to a hospital emergency room or call 911 if anyone is feeling sick. If no one is sick, call the emergency number for your heating service or 911. Stay out of the home until your heating service or fire department says it's okay to go in.
- **DO** have a heating professional inspect, clean, and adjust your fireplace, wood stove, gas appliances including furnaces and water heaters, and chimneys/vents every fall—before the start of home heating season.
- **DO** purchase gas appliances that vent their fumes to the outside. Have them installed by a heating professional.
- **DO** read and follow all of the instructions for any fuel-burning devices.
- **DO** make sure that your car, truck, or boat has a working, airtight exhaust system. Repair exhaust leaks immediately.
- **DO** pay attention to symptoms (headache, dizziness, tiredness and/or a sick feeling in your stomach), especially if more than one person is feeling sick or if people and pets are feeling sick.
- **DON'T** operate fuel-powered machines such as generators, power washers, or mowers in buildings or semi-enclosed spaces.
- **DON'T** cook or heat with a grill indoors, even if you put it inside a fireplace.
- **DON'T** run vehicles in the garage, even if the door is open. Carbon monoxide can build up quickly and enter your vehicle and home.
- **DON'T** sit in a parked vehicle with the engine running for a long period of time, especially if your car is in snow.
- **DON'T** use gas stoves or ovens to heat your home.
- **DON'T** use an un-vented gas or kerosene space heater indoors.
- **DON'T** close the damper to the fireplace unless the fire is completely out and the coals are cold.
- **DON'T** ride in covered pickup truck beds or campers. Air moving around the vehicle can draw exhaust in.
- **DON'T** swim or play near the back of a boat where the motor gives off exhaust.
- **DON'T** ignore symptoms! You could die within minutes if you do nothing.

For more information, contact the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services by calling **1-800-648-6942** or visit **michigan.gov/carbonmonoxide**.

Energy Assistance For Income Qualified Residents

We know that utility bills can easily pile up for folks with limited incomes. The Energy Optimization program is here to help! We provide a number of products and services to help qualified residents improve the energy performance of their homes—which, in turn, reduces electric bills.

Equipment Evaluations And Replacements

Is your refrigerator at least 10 years old? If so, there's a good chance it uses twice as much electricity as a new ENERGY STAR® certified model.

If you qualify for this service, an Energy Optimization program representative can visit your home to evaluate your refrigerator. If the refrigerator is determined to be highly inefficient, you could be eligible for a new replacement at no cost. In some cases, water heaters may also be eligible for free replacement if they meet program criteria.

Energy-saving Devices And Installation

Kits containing energy-saving devices are available to qualified residents. You may receive a letter in

the mail regarding a free kit. Or, you can request your kit at a participating food pantry, Salvation Army, or church. Most kits include:

- LED bulbs and night lights
- Faucet and shower aerators
- Smart power strip

Weatherization Assistance

We partner with Michigan's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP) through local Community Action Agencies to support energy efficiency home improvements for income-qualified residents. To learn more about this opportunity, call 517-373-8896 or visit benefits.gov/benefits/benefit-details/1861. Families that have received services through WAP have seen their annual energy bills reduced by an average of \$437 per year.

To find out if you qualify for Energy Optimization programs or to learn more, call 877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org.

Helping Hands

Energy Assistance

We know it can be difficult to keep up with energy costs. Families or individuals eligible for assistance based on income levels can receive:

- In-home equipment evaluations
- Refrigerator and water heater replacements
- Energy-saving devices (with installation)
- Weatherization assistance

ENERGY TIP: Call us or visit our website for program eligibility information.

877.296.4319 michigan-energy.org



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.

Life's A Beach—Michigan Waters

Most
Votes On
Facebook!



Lori Haley, Three Rivers—Life's Better At The Beach

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



Jamie Halsted, Mattawan—Our Furry Photo Bomber



Jim Cripe, Marcellus—August Evening On Cedar Lake



Joshua Halsted, Mattawan—Sunset Flight



Paige Linback, Niles—Sunset At Lake Michigan During Memorial Weekend

Thank You For Participating In Our Photo Contest

Beginning in 2018, we will no longer host a photo contest. Please stay tuned in our November/December issue for our last winner, and thank you for your creative and spirited entries.

SLOW COOKER

Put your slow cooker to work with these hearty recipes.

Photos—831 Creative

Slow Cooker Chicken Chili (pictured)

Diana Johnson, Great Lakes Energy

- 3–4 boneless, skinless chicken breasts (thighs don't work as well)
- 1 can corn, undrained
- 1 can Rotel diced tomatoes, undrained, or chili tomatoes (or both)
- 1 package ranch dressing mix
- 1 can chili beans
- 1 can northern beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 can black beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 package chili seasoning mix or Mexican seasoning packet (or make your own)
- 1 jar salsa of choice
- 1 8-ounce package cream cheese

Layer in order in a 6-quart crock pot. Do not mix. You can add more corn, beans, salsa, tomatoes according to taste. Cover and cook for 6 to 7 hours on low. Mix and add pepper to taste.

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

Pizza Tot Casserole

Kris Hazeres, Alger Delta

- 2 pounds ground beef
- ¼–½ cup onion, diced
- 1 can (10.5-ounce) cream of mushroom soup
- 1 can (10.5-ounce) cream of chicken soup
- 1 can (14-ounce) pizza sauce
- about 37 pepperoni slices
- ½ cup green pepper, chopped
- 2½ cups shredded mozzarella
- 32-ounce bag tater tots



Brown beef in a skillet with onion over medium-high heat and drain. Mix beef mixture with soups. Spray slow cooker with cooking spray. Pour mixture into your slow cooker and spread out evenly. Pour pizza sauce evenly over

mixture. Place pepperoni slices evenly across the top. Spread green peppers evenly across pepperoni slices. Sprinkle cheese on top. Cover with tater tots.

Place aluminum foil on top. Cover and cook for 3 hours on high. Remove aluminum foil and continue cooking on high. Optional: Place in your broiler (on high if you have the choice of high/low) for 2–4 minutes, watching very closely.

Chicken Tacos

Helen Pische, Great Lakes Energy

- 1½ pounds boneless, skinless chicken breast
- 16-ounce jar salsa
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 15-ounce can black beans or pinto beans, drained
- 1 tablespoon chili powder
- 1½ teaspoons cumin
- ½ teaspoon oregano
- ¼ teaspoon cayenne pepper
- ¼ cup water
- Toppings: shredded cheddar cheese, cilantro, lime wedges



Spray a 6-quart slow cooker with cooking spray. Place chicken breast in the pot. Add remaining ingredients, stir, cover and cook 4 hours on high. Stir when done; the chicken should

shred easily. Serve with taco shells or on rice. Top with shredded cheddar cheese, cilantro and lime wedges.



Ken Silfven, special advisor for communications at the Department of Natural Resources, has been using this recipe for Venison Pot Pie for years. He can't remember exactly where it originated, but it's become a favorite in his home. Ken notes that it does take a little time to prepare (at least for him), but the results are totally worth it.

Venison Pot Pie

- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 3 tablespoons minced parsley leaves
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 teaspoon allspice
- 1 tablespoon chopped thyme leaves
- ¼ cup red wine
- 1 pound pork loin, diced into ½ inch pieces
- ½ pound venison, diced into ½ inch pieces
- ¼ cup olive oil
- 1 cup diced celery
- 1 cup diced carrots
- 1 teaspoon minced garlic
- 1 small, diced onion
- 1 medium potato, peeled and diced small
- 2 cups chicken broth
- 2 rounds prepared pie crust (about 9 inches)
- 1 beaten egg

Preheat the oven to 400 F. Combine the salt, pepper, parsley, cinnamon, allspice and thyme in a big bowl. Make a marinade by stirring in the red wine. Add the meat and coat it thoroughly. Cover and marinate at least 30 minutes. Use a medium pot to heat olive oil and add the celery, carrots, garlic and onion. Stir for 5–10 minutes until soft. Add diced potato to the pot and stir, then add the meat and brown slightly while continuing to stir. Lower the heat and add the chicken broth. Simmer for 30 minutes and then remove from the heat so it can cool. Spoon the meat mixture onto the already-prepared pie crust. Place the top crust on top, seal it and pinch it with a fork. Cut slits in the top and then brush it with the egg wash. Put the pie on a baking sheet and bake for 45 minutes. Let it cool for a few minutes before serving.

Read the full story about Michigan's DNR officers featured on the Outdoor Channel's "Wardens" show on page 14, and find this recipe and others at micoopkitchen.com.

MI
co-op
KITCHEN

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

"Healthy Salads"
due November 1

"Flatbreads and Pizzas"
due December 1

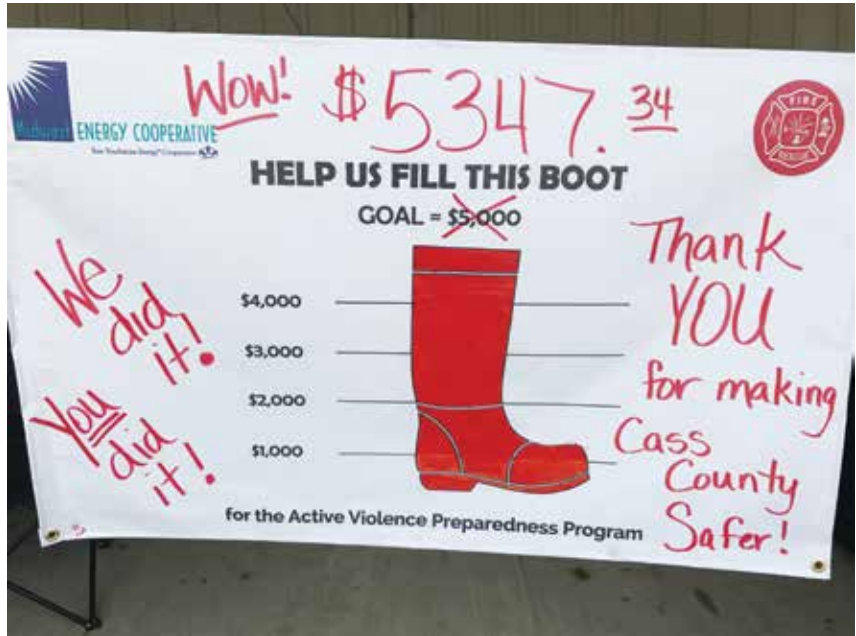
Go to micoopkitchen.com for more information and to register.

Serving Those Who Serve

Midwest Energy & Communications is more than your local electric, propane and fiber internet provider. We live, work and actively volunteer in the very communities in which we serve. In July, we had a truly unique opportunity to serve those who serve us: our first responders.

Events of mass violence, unfortunately, have become more common and result in a need for special equipment and training to ensure that EMTs and firefighters can access victims as quickly as possible. The Cass County Active Violence Preparedness Program provides equipment and training to help local first responders react more effectively to these unpredictable situations. The goal is to help them access “warm zones” that are not in immediate danger where they can help victims before a situation is completely neutralized. “Minutes save lives,” said Paul Harris, captain of the Edwardsburg Fire Department.

It costs \$1,000–\$1,500 per person for this training and equipment, and our local fire departments do not have the funding to purchase these critical supplies. That’s where we came in.



MEC and the local community answered the call to help local first responders.

On Aug. 1, we invited the public to enjoy a meal at the Fireman’s Grill at the Cass County Fair. Our employees served meals and, in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative, pledged to match proceeds from sales and donations that day, up to \$5,000.

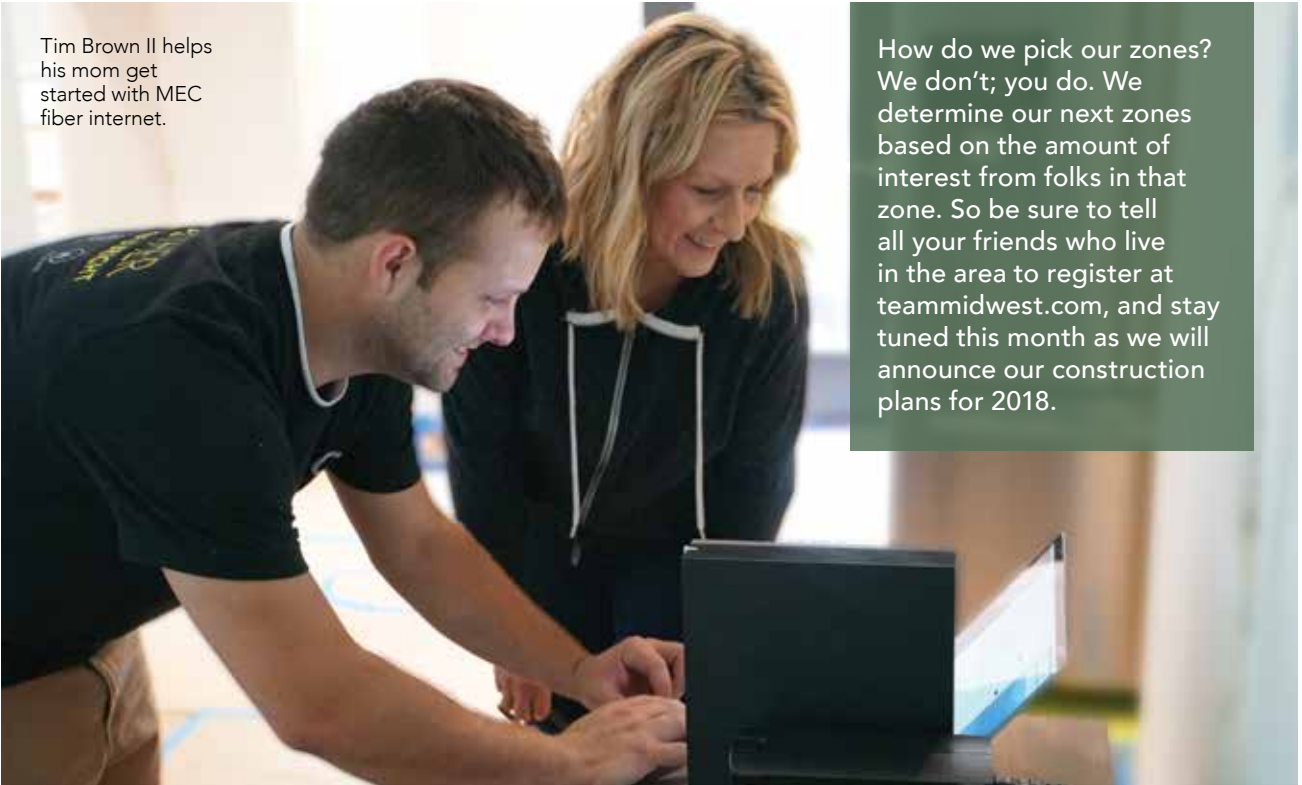
“We are proud to support our local first responders in their efforts to get training and equipment for these situations that unfortunately are becoming more commonplace in today’s world,” said Patty Nowlin, vice president of corporate communications at MEC.

The community answered the call and generated \$5,347.34. With our donation, the day’s total proceeds were \$10,347.34, an amazing result that will go a long way towards making our community safer.

“We, the fire service, realized how under-prepared we are if an active violence situation occurred in Cass County. We’re all [police, fire, EMS] going to be there if, God forbid, something happens. This program will place us in a greater stage of readiness to serve our citizens,” said Harris, “We have no doubt that the overwhelming success of our efforts at the fair is a direct result of MEC’s involvement and dedication to the cause.” ■



MEC employee Denise Smith serves food to a fairgoer at the Fireman’s Grill during the Cass County Fair.



Tim Brown II helps his mom get started with MEC fiber internet.

How do we pick our zones? We don't; you do. We determine our next zones based on the amount of interest from folks in that zone. So be sure to tell all your friends who live in the area to register at teammidwest.com, and stay tuned this month as we will announce our construction plans for 2018.

Father, Son, And 5,000 Strong

Fiber internet fever continues to spread across southwest Michigan; in August, we reached a major milestone: our 5,000th installation. This celebration was special not only because it marked a significant milestone in our efforts to bridge the rural digital divide, but also because of the family nature of the actual installation.

In 2014, Midwest Energy & Communication (MEC) contracted with Ace Cable, a local fiber installation company, to install our aerial drops. Owner and co-op member Tim Brown, Sr., who lives in Marcellus with his wife, Donna, loved being part of the extended team bringing fiber internet to southwest Michigan, but he was eager for his own turn to have service installed at his home. Tim and Donna were thrilled to be part of the 2017 construction plan and ecstatic when their Aug. 24 installation date arrived.

What made that date event more special was the installation technician: their son, Tim Brown II.

Apparently, fiber installation is in the Brown DNA. Two sons currently work with their dad at Ace Cable. Moreover, in 2014, the younger Tim Brown joined MEC as our first installation and maintenance

technician. Every day he helps families experience a life-changing moment when they cross the digital divide and gain access to the world that their urban counterparts have enjoyed for years.

Tim II is also a MEC member from Marcellus, so in typical father-son fashion, the two started some friendly jabbing about who might get fiber internet first. In September 2016, the race was on as we officially announced Marcellus as part of the 2017 build. Tim, Sr. joked that if his son were selected first, he wouldn't do the drop to his house. Naturally, Tim II chided back that if his dad got selected, he wouldn't perform the installation. The rivalry continued until Tim II was up for install. When asked how dad took the news, Tim said, "He was happy for me, but he's happier now that it's his turn."

"We've loved being part of this project as a family," said Donna. "We've gotten to catch up with neighbors and watching it all happen around us has been so fun."

"I can't believe it is here and happening. It's going to be a whole new world for us. I've never able to use Netflix or anything like that. I'm so excited and can't wait to see what I've been missing," said Donna. ■

Wild, Wild Midwest

WARDEN



Conservation Officer Mark Leadman scans the landscape in Michigan's District 1 located in the Upper Peninsula.



Conservation Officers Chris Simpson and Dave Rodgers seized nearly 60 illegally taken waterfowl in southwest Michigan's District 7.

The Outdoor Channel Captures Michigan's Finest Conservation Officers In Action

By Emily Haines Lloyd

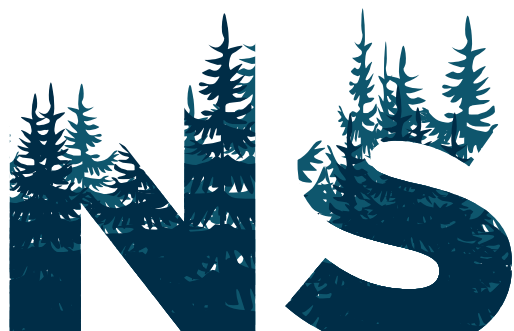
The Michigan Department of Natural Resources' (DNR) mission statement makes its purpose clear: maintain the safety of all while enforcing the laws that safeguard the natural resources of our state. Just like their fellow police officers, the conservation officers of the DNR are committed to serve and protect—even when their jurisdiction includes serving and protecting water, wilderness and wildlife around the state.

It's noble work, and yet the approximately 250 conservation officers aren't often seen or recognized for their efforts. That's because this small number of conservation officers must cover the entirety of both the Upper and Lower Peninsulas—making their districts sometimes hundreds of square miles.

However, Michigan conservation officers are becoming much more noticeable since the 2017 airing of "Wardens" on The Outdoor Channel. The show, which up until 2016, had been filmed in the state of Montana, has now turned its camera lens on The Great Lakes State.

"The resources in Michigan were one of the main reasons The Outdoor Channel had its eye on Michigan as a new location for 'Wardens,'" said Jon Ross, senior editor of Wolf Creek Productions, the producers of the show. "Great hunting, off-road vehicles, lakes and rivers—Michigan is ripe with hunting, fishing and outdoor recreational experiences."

"Wardens" chronicles the lives of conservation officers across America, with the focus on Michigan's finest.



The Michigan Department of Natural Resources is committed to the conservation, protection, management, use and enjoyment of the state's natural resources for current and future generations.

Watch "Wardens" on the Outdoor Channel Mondays at 2 a.m., Fridays at 10:30 a.m. and Saturdays at 9:30 p.m. (EST) for the month of October. Viewers can also check for air times by visiting outdoorchannel.com/wardens



"Our goal from 'Day One' was to use this partnership (between the Michigan DNR and The Outdoor Channel) as an educational tool," said Ken Silfven, special advisor for communications at the DNR. "It's important that citizens not only understand what we do, but why we do it."

The DNR is committed to ensuring all of Michigan's residents and visitors are able to enjoy the outdoor recreational opportunities of the state. It's the conservation officers' responsibility to make sure that is done both safely and legally.



"Wardens" showcases the men and women who protect our public lands in a variety of situations, such as nabbing poachers in high-stakes sting operations, snowmobiling through grizzly bear country, or tracking down illegal fishing operations in freezing rivers, lakes and streams. The show seeks to bring an understanding of the conservation officer's job and why state laws need to be enforced. It also looks to generate interest in outdoor recreation while enhancing the public's appreciation of the DNR's role. As a bonus, the program has increased recruitment efforts by sparking interest in careers as Michigan conservation officers.

"The show was meant to educate viewers about the need to protect our natural resources," said Silfven. "It is also meant to give them a firsthand look at the men and women who wear the green and gray uniform of a Michigan conservation officer. Based on the feedback we're receiving, the show is doing just that."

Top and bottom: Conservation Officer Mark Leadman is filmed by Kristin Ojaniemi as he patrols Michigan's Upper Peninsula District 1 in November 2016, for the opening of the state's firearm deer season.

Your Neighbors: Hard At Work For You This Winter

Fall is here, and as our minds turn to changing leaves, football, the approaching holidays and all things pumpkin spice, our propane team is geared up to keep you warm all winter long.

As always, we will continue to provide stable, no-guess pricing regardless of what the weather—or the propane market—does. However, we're about more than just delivering gas and moving on to the next job. We've built a team of individuals dedicated to providing top-notch service with every customer interaction.

Our front-line propane family includes nine servicemen. You've probably seen many of them out and about as many are active members of the very communities they serve. As we move into another heating season, we want to take an opportunity to introduce you to just a few of the hard-working men who will take care of you this winter.

Jeromy Bogue was raised with a commitment to community. His father is the chief of the Penn Township Fire Department, and Jeromy has been a volunteer firefighter on the same department for 15 years. He is a leader at the Legacy 4H club and coaches little league baseball in Cassopolis.

Kevin Clayton also volunteered as a firefighter for over 20 years. Andy Badner has two antique booths at a store in Niles and often helps find and buy pieces for clients. Joe Pagels makes maple syrup, and Billy Meggs has volunteered for local pet refuges and other organizations.

Billy not only helps serve our propane customers, he is one. Andy was a customer for 17 years before recently moving.

Several of our team members enjoy hunting and fishing, with deer and walleye being popular game choices. Camping and four-wheeling are also favorite pastimes. No matter the hobby, our team has one thing in common: they value the bond they share as a team and the opportunity to interact with you, our customers.



Pictured top, left to bottom, right: Joe Pagels, Jeromy Bogue, Dustin Bushouse, Andy Badner, Jeremy Corey, Sam Zimmerman, Mike Wright, Billy Meggs, Robin Albrecht, Kevin Clayton, and Frank Walker

"I like meeting members and have had the opportunity to correct a potentially unsafe situation," said Kevin.

Mike Wright commented, "Our great teamwork makes everything great. And our dedication to teamwork within the MEC family and with our members is a large source of pride for us."

We don't simply sell a product; we offer the value of comfort and safety. Additionally, our many delivery and billing options give you the control you need to manage your budget and lifestyle. We are what we have always been: neighbors helping neighbors live better. ■

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THE DREADED VAMPIRE LOADS



By Tim Tate, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

Perhaps you are familiar with an undesirable aspect of the electronic and IOT (internet of things) revolution: vampire loads. Vampire loads come from devices that use electricity even when they appear to be off. The primary culprits are chargers, set-top television boxes, instant-on televisions and gaming systems. There are others, but these four represent the major offenders.

Chargers take the 120 VAC (volts alternating current) power at the outlet and reduce it down to the voltage required by the connected device, usually 5 to 12 VDC (volts direct current). Obviously, when your device is charging, the charger is using electricity, but you might be surprised to learn that chargers are still using small amounts of energy even when they're not connected to a device.

Television set-top boxes also consume energy when they appear to be inactive. Anytime the set-top box's lights are on, it is using power. Like chargers, they use more when the television is on, but they are always working – even when the TV is off. This is especially true for those devices with a DVR function that records your favorite TV shows.

The instant-on television is another culprit. The intention of the “instant-on” feature is instant gratification for the viewer, meaning no waiting for the TV to turn on and warm up. Unfortunately, for that convenience, the TV must be on at nearly full power. So, in this mode, it can be a real energy drain.

The typical gaming console can use as much energy as a regular refrigerator even when it's not being used. Make sure to check the console settings and disable automatic updates, which is where the energy drain comes from.

So how does the average family combat these dreaded vampire loads?

Fortunately, you just need to change how you handle these energy-sucking electronics. Here are a few suggestions.

- Unplug chargers when not in use.
- Invest in smart power strips. These look like normal power strips but have a twist; one of the outlets is the “master” that receives power all the time. The others are off. When the device connected to the master outlet turns on, the rest of the outlets receive power too. For example, have the television in the master outlet and when you turn it on, the set-top box, speakers, streaming devices, etc. will turn on too.
- Turn off the instant-on function on your TV. Turn off set-top boxes that do not contain the DVR functionality or use a smart power strip.
- Disable automatic updates in gaming consoles and turn the console completely off when you finish using it.
- When replacing any device or appliance, look for an EnergyStar rated product.

Check with Midwest Energy & Communications for additional suggestions and energy-saving advice. ■

I Remember...

Growing Up With Family And Community

Throughout my growing up years, my father and grandfather farmed together in Michigan's Lapeer County. They were both full-time farmers until the mid-1950s when dad began working elsewhere. Our 160-acre family farm included milk cows, hogs, sheep and chickens with all the basic crops—hay, corn, wheat and oats. The fields, livestock and garden provided almost all the food we needed and cash for everything else. As children we each had our chores, so my brother and I fed the chickens and gathered the eggs. Our one-room school was at the corner of the farm. By the age of 10, I drove the tractors and in my teen years worked the fields. Our milk was sold through a cooperative dairy. Feed and fertilizer were purchased through the farm co-op. Grandpa owned stock in the regional electric company. Neighbors worked together during seasons of harvesting. In this way I learned the very early value of living and working



Ben is on the tractor, second from left.

together with mutual respect and partnership, both within the family and the community, values I continue to hold highly in our day.

Ben Bohnsack, Alger Delta Cooperative Electric Association

My Grandfather's Life

His name was Albert Doezeema. He had a scar on his arm and scar on his leg, and one day he told me his story:

In the 1930s, he was lucky that he had a job with a Grand Rapids power company as a lineman. Jobs were scarce then, and he told me that the company had him work every other week so that twice as many men could have work due to the Great Depression. One day, he was at the top of a 35-foot pole and somehow touched a line that was powered with 7200 volts. He was knocked from the pole and hit the ground. He broke many bones and

had burns on his arm and leg. He said that they figured the shock of hitting the ground started his heart back up, or else he would not have survived. After recovering from the incident, he transferred to the company warehouse and was point man for the next 35 years. I always think about how linemen put their life on the line when they work so closely with powerful electricity. My grandfather surviving that electrical incident in the 1930s was a miracle at that time. He lived to be 89.

Donna Miller, Cherryland Electric Cooperative



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A person is lying on a beige couch in a living room, holding a remote control and watching a television. The room has a brick fireplace and a large window in the background.

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