

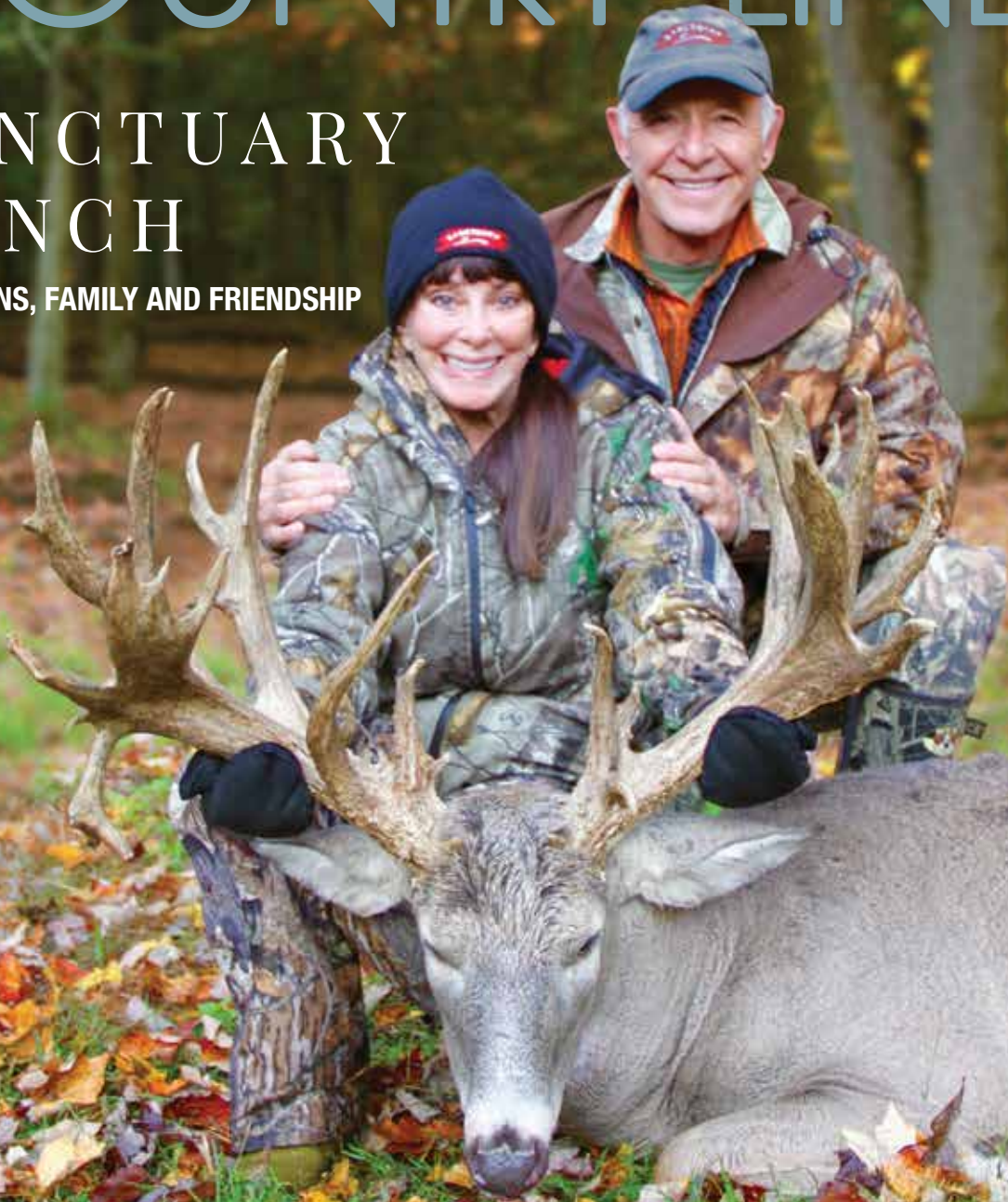
HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

November/December 2017

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

SANCTUARY RANCH

TRADITIONS, FAMILY AND FRIENDSHIP



Planning Fiber Service

Meet Director Corinna Batora

Saying Goodbye To
Denise After 27 Years



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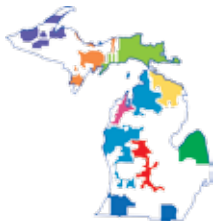
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Change of Address:

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

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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

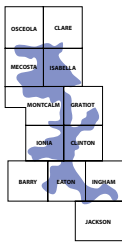
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Making Changes To Benefit All Members



Mark Kappler
General Manager

Your board of directors recently voted on two significant issues that will eventually affect every member-owner of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric.

First, they authorized a change in director elections to mail balloting, starting in 2018. For years, we've held voting at district member meetings in May, with the option of requesting an absentee ballot. Participation has ranged from two percent to nine percent over the years.

One of our cooperative principles is democratic member control. We believe mail balloting will encourage more member participation here, as it has at many other co-ops in Michigan and across the US.

Members will have the choice of casting a mail ballot, or waiting to vote in person at their district meeting. District 3 (Clinton County except for Bingham, Duplain, and Greenbush townships) and District 6 (Clare and Isabella counties) will be the first to vote this new way in 2018.

This change will move up the entire election process by about a month; watch for full details in the January issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

Second, and I know this is something many of you have asked and waited for, the board authorized staff to begin work on a fiber-to-the-home service for 1) high-speed internet and telephone access, and 2) a "utility of the future" network connecting our substations and providing vital data to our engineering and operations teams.

We anticipate the engineering, permitting, financing, legal, and planning tasks will take at least a year, so our goal is to hook up our first retail customers by fourth quarter 2018.

This service is intended to reach to every member of the cooperative, but considering the thousands of miles of fiber that must be strung, we are looking at a minimum five to six year project before we can get to everyone.

Eighty years ago, we began bringing new technology to rural farms and families by building electric lines across the countryside. This new initiative will be equally life-changing once our members realize all they can accomplish with access to high-speed internet. ■



Meet One Of The Members Of Your Co-op's Board Of Directors

Corinna Batora

By Charly Markwart

"I love interacting with people."

If you've ever spoken to HomeWorks District 5 Director Corinna Batora, you probably walked away feeling like you'd known her for years. It could be her past experience running a bed and breakfast, and her easy way of turning strangers into friends. Or perhaps it's the time she has spent teaching others as a training developer for the State of Michigan. More than likely, though, it's just her genuine heart for people shining through.

"I love interacting with people," said Batora. "There's always so much to learn from everyone you come in contact with, and so many opportunities to get to know the people around you. I like to take advantage of all of those. I just enjoy being with people."

That passion for people flows seamlessly into her service on the HomeWorks board of directors, to which she was elected in 2016.

"I'm very honored to be a member of the board," she said. "It means my members trust me to represent them and their interests. I'd like to have them think of me as someone who can represent them well, someone who hears them and someone who can be relied upon to do the right thing."

Batora's involvement with the cooperative originated in 1997, when she and her husband of 25 years, Tom, built their home on HomeWorks lines in rural Elsie, where they still live with their 15-year-old son, Anthony. Soon, they began attending their district meetings, and when the position of district secretary opened up, Corinna ran and was elected. Four years later, she was elected District 5 Director.

"The more I learned about the co-op, the more pleased I was to be a part of it," she said.

Reflective and insightful, Batora often speaks of her gratitude for the opportunity to be associated with an organization built by and for its members.

"A cooperative is so different from any other kind of business," she said. "A co-op is owned by its members, and they have a voice in what we do. As a board, we try to make the best decisions we can to benefit all of our members. That's how we run our business."

Helping to run that business, she says, has presented her with the challenge of a steep learning curve, but she loves every second of it.

"I'm reading and learning every night so I can be the best director I can be and represent my members well," she said.

Outside of her work on the board and her job with the State of Michigan, where she currently works as the employee development manager for the department of procurement, Batora enjoys cooking, decorating, music, boating and, most importantly, spending time with her family and friends.

"I try to spend as much time as I can with them," she says, "because they're not going to be around forever, and you need to cherish every moment you can." ■

On your board of directors, Corinna represents District 5, which is Gratiot and Saginaw counties, and Bloomer, Crystal, and Evergreen townships in Montcalm County. She was elected to the board in 2016. For more on Corinna, including video of our interview with her, go to <http://bit.ly/2eUHXwx>

Home Heating Assistance Programs • 2017–2018 Season

Program: Winter Protection Plan
Contact: Your Local Utility Company

Income Guidelines 2017–2018	
# in Household	150% Poverty Guide Maximum Income
1	\$18,090
2	24,360
3	30,630
4	36,900
5	43,170
6	49,440
7	55,710
8	61,980

Add \$6,270 for each additional member.

Note: All customers 65+ are eligible regardless of income. Customers are responsible for all electricity and natural gas used. At the end of the protection period, participants must make arrangements with their utility company to pay off any money owed before the next heating season.

The **Winter Protection Plan (WPP)** protects enrolled seniors and low-income customers from service shut-offs and high utility bill payments during the winter months (Nov. 1–March 31). If you are eligible, your utility service will remain on (or restored with the WPP) from Nov. 1 through March 31, if you:

- pay at least 7% of your estimated annual bill each month, and
- make equal monthly payments between the date you apply and the start of the next heating season on any past due bills.

When the protection period ends (March 31), you must begin to pay the full monthly bill, plus part of the amount you owe from the winter months when you did not pay the full bill.

Participation does not relieve customers from the responsibility of paying for electricity and natural gas usage, but does prevent shut-off during winter months. You qualify for the plan if you meet at least one of the following requirements:

- are age 65 or older,
- receive Department of Health and Human Services cash assistance, including SSI,
- receive Food Assistance,
- receive Medicaid, or
- household income is at or below the 150% of poverty level shown in the Income Guidelines chart at left.

Senior citizen customers (65 or older) who participate in the WPP are not required to make specific payments to ensure that their service will not be shut off between Nov. 1 and March 31. Service for seniors can be restored without any payments.

Program: Home Heating Credit
Contact: Mich. Dept. of Treasury

# Exemp.	Max. Income	# Exemp.	Max. Income
0–1	\$13,271	4	\$27,071
2	17,871	5	31,671
3	22,471	6	36,271

Add \$4,600 for each exemption over 6.

You can apply for a **Home Heating Credit** for the **2017** tax year if you meet the income guidelines listed at left or you qualify based on alternate guidelines including household income, exemptions, and heating costs. Additional exemptions are available for seniors, disabled claimants, or claimants with 5% or more of their income from unemployment compensation.

If you qualify, you may receive assistance to help pay for your winter heating bills. **Forms are available mid- to late-January wherever tax forms are provided or from the Michigan Dept. of Treasury (517-636-4486, or michigan.gov/treasury).** The Home Heating Credit claim form must be filed with the Michigan Dept. of Treasury **no later than Sept. 30 each year.**

Program: Earned Income Credit
Contact: U.S. Treasury Dept.,
 Internal Revenue Service
irs.gov/EITC
 Michigan Dept. of Treasury
michigan.gov/treasury

The **Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)** is a refundable federal income tax credit for low-income, working individuals and families who meet certain requirements and file a tax return. Those who qualify will owe less in taxes and may get a refund. Even a person who does not generally owe income tax may qualify for the EITC, but must file a tax return to do so. If married, you must file jointly to qualify. File Form 1040 or 1040A and attach the EITC.

You may claim a **Michigan earned income tax credit** for tax year **2017** equal to a percentage of the federal earned income tax credit for which you are eligible. Visit the website or see the MI 2016 tax booklet for details.

Program: Crisis Assistance Program
Contact: Local Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) michigan.gov/mdhhs

State Emergency Relief Program (SER): michigan.gov/mdhhs You do not have to be a DHHS client to apply for help with a past due bill, shutoff notice, or the need for deliverable fuel through the SER. This program, available Nov. 1–May 31, provides most of its utility assistance during this crisis season. However, limited assistance is available outside the crisis season. If you receive a DHHS cash grant, you may vendor part of it towards heat and electric bills. Contact your local DHHS or call the Home Heating Hotline, 855-275-6424.

Program: Low-Income Home Weatherization
Contact: Local Community Action Agency

You may be able to receive help with weatherizing your home to reduce energy use if you meet low-income eligibility guidelines (200% of poverty guidelines) and funding is available. **Weatherization** may include caulking, weatherstripping, and insulation. Contact your local Community Action Agency for details. Visit mcaaa.org to find one in your area.

Program: United Way
Contact: Call 2-1-1 or UWmich.org/2-1-1

2-1-1 is a free phone service operating 24 hours daily to provide information about help that may be available in a particular area with utilities and other needs. Learn more at UWmich.org/2-1-1.

Program: Medical Emergency Protection
Contact: Local Utility Company

You are protected from service shut-off for nonpayment of your natural gas and/or electric bill for up to 21 days, possibly extending to 63 days, if you have a proven **medical emergency**. You must provide written proof from a doctor, public health or social services official that a medical emergency exists. Contact your gas or electric utility for details.

Program: Shut-off Protection for Military Active Duty
Contact: Local Utility Company

If you or your spouse has been called into **active military duty**, you may apply for shut-off protection from your electric or natural gas service for up to 90 days. You may request extensions. You must still pay, but contact your utility company and they will help you set up a payment plan.

Program: Michigan Veterans Trust Fund Emergency Grant Program
Contact: MI Veterans Trust Fund

The Trust Fund provides temporary assistance to veterans and their families facing a financial emergency or hardship including the need for energy assistance.

Michigan Veterans Trust Fund at 517-284-5299 or michiganveterans.com

Program: MI Energy Assistance Program
Contact: Utility or 2-1-1 in late November

Agency assistance through Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP), includes services that will enable participants to become self-sufficient, including assisting participants in paying their energy bills on time, budgeting for and contributing to their ability to provide for energy expenses, and being energy efficient. Shut-off protection is provided Nov. 1–April 15 for all residential customers.

Switch Things Up With Stylish, Efficient Lighting For Your Home

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Saving energy starts with choosing the correct bulb. Efficiency standards for incandescent bulbs between 40 and 100 watts, which came into effect in 2012, led to the halogen bulb (also known as energy-efficient incandescent). These bulbs are at least 25 percent more efficient than the old incandescents. The other two common types of household bulbs, compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and light-emitting diodes (LEDs), are even more efficient.

Energystar.gov estimates that you can save \$75 a year by replacing the five most-used incandescent bulbs or light fixtures with ENERGY STAR® certified LED or CFL lighting. Of the three types, LEDs tend to save more money over the long run and LED prices have decreased in recent years. A downside of CFLs is that they contain a small amount of toxic mercury that can be released into your home if one breaks.

When you're considering which type of bulb to buy, consider both watts and lumens. Watts indicate how much energy (and therefore, money) is used to produce light. Lumens indicate how much light the bulb produces. A handy comparison is that an 800-lumen bulb is about equal to the amount of light from a traditional 60-watt incandescent bulb. Lumennow.org offers an excellent guide to understanding bulbs.

Bulbs also give off different colors of light, known as color temperature. If a bulb burns out—or in the case

of an LED, as it dims over time—it can be challenging to find a replacement that matches other lights in the room. If the contrast bothers you, you may want to purchase and install bulbs of the same brand and wattage for the entire room or area at the same time.

Installing dimmers instead of on/off light switches is a good way to save energy while giving you greater control of the amount of light in the room. Not all bulbs are dimmable, so be sure to check the label on the bulb. It's worth considering whether you have the right number and the right location for light switches. We recommend hiring a licensed electrician if you decide to install new lighting and switches.

The Lighting Research Center website (<http://www.lrc.rpi.edu/>) provides a resource page with many sample lighting layouts for every room in the home, which you can find by entering the phrase "lighting patterns for homes" in their website's search engine. Home décor sites also give excellent lighting explanations, plans and ideas.

It's always a good idea to check with your local electric co-op as they may offer energy audits or lighting product rebates.

With a little planning, you can have a well-lit, energy efficient home you'll enjoy for years to come! ■



A Tribute To Jim Hough



1932-2017

An exceptional journalist, Jim Hough was the "people's columnist" at the *Lansing State Journal* for 25 years. After retiring from the newspaper, he wrote a regular column in *Michigan Country Lines* for over two decades. His column, *Right at Home*, received rave reviews and was a favorite among our readers. With his passing in October, we pay tribute to him and his contributions to *Michigan Country Lines* magazine.

Five Ways To Save Energy At Your Holiday Party

It's the most wonderful time of the year—but also one of the most expensive. Control your energy use with these simple tips. You'll keep costs down while providing your guests with a comfortable, lovely atmosphere!

1. Switch to LED holiday lights. LED lights use up to 90 percent less electricity and last up to 10 times longer than traditional string lights. Save even more energy by putting your lights on a timer.
2. Lower your thermostat an hour before guests arrive. Additional people in your home mean extra warmth at no cost to you! Keep guests comfortable by turning the thermostat down a few degrees before your gathering begins.
3. Turn off room lights when your tree is lit. Allow guests to focus on your spectacular tree by turning off as many lights as possible. The glow of the tree lights should be bright enough to help your guests navigate around the room.
4. Bake several dishes at the same time. Make the most of the energy that goes into heating your oven by cooking multiple dishes at once. Also, preheat your oven as late in the cooking process as possible to avoid wasting energy.



5. Use candles to create an inviting glow. Save electricity and produce an enchanting ambience in your home with candlelight. Use scented candles for an extra touch of holiday cheer!

For more energy saving tips or information about incentives available from our Energy Optimization program, call 877-296-4319 or visit michigan-energy.org. ■

Save energy while entertaining!

Hosting a holiday gathering? Remember these tips to keep energy costs down and spirits up:

- Switch to LED holiday lights
- Lower the thermostat before guests arrive
- Turn off room lights when the tree is lit
- Bake several dishes at a time
- Use candles for an inviting glow

ONLINE: michigan-energy.org PHONE: 877.296.4319

*Happier
Holidays*



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.

2017 Winners Named

This month's entries close out our 2017 contest. In all, we received 154 photographs from 89 photographers—thank you ALL for being part of Snap Shots this year!

Congratulations to **Judy Reusser** of DeWitt and **Mike Veenema** of Lakeview. In this year's drawing, each wins a \$100 credit on their December electric bill (due in January 2018).



Debby Pung of Fowler sent in this trophy mailbox.



Angie Martin from Westphalia shared, "This is how we do mailboxes out on the farm! The milk can was one we had from when my husband Dan's grandpa milked his cows years ago. You can see one of the original farm buildings in the background that we now own."

Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

"Winter Sports," Deadline: **November 15**
(February 2018 issue)

"Talented Kids," Deadline: **January 15**
(March 2018 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 2018 will be entered into a drawing. *Country Lines* will choose two winners for a bill credit of \$100 each on their December electric bill, due in January 2019!

PLEASING PIES

Sweet and savory pie recipes you will love and want to share.



Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

Fresh Pear Pie

Jan Glass, Great Lakes Energy

- 5 cups fresh peeled and cored pear slices
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 tablespoons all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup sugar
- 1/2 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1/2 teaspoon nutmeg
- 1 teaspoon lemon zest
- 3 tablespoons butter, cut into bits
- 1 unbaked double pie crust, store bought or homemade

Preheat oven to 450 F. Toss sliced pears in lemon juice and set aside. Mix flour, sugar, spices and lemon zest. Add flour mixture to the pear slices. Pour the pear mixture into the unbaked bottom pie crust pressed firmly into a pie pan and dot the top of the mixture with butter. Add the top crust and cut slits for steam. Bake for 10 minutes at 450 F, then turn down oven temp to 350 F and bake for an additional 30 minutes. This pie is wonderful served with a nice vanilla bean ice cream.

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

Savory Onion Pie

Kris Hazeres, Alger Delta

- 3 cups thinly sliced Vidalia or other sweet onions
- 1 cup crushed Ritz crackers
- 1/4 cup melted margarine or butter
- 2 tablespoons margarine or butter
- 3/4 cup milk
- 2 eggs, slightly beaten
- 3/4 teaspoon salt
- dash of pepper
- 1/4 to 1/2 cup shredded sharp cheddar cheese
- paprika, optional



Preheat oven to 350 F. Sauté onions in butter until tender but not brown. In a bowl, combine crackers and melted margarine; press into an 8" pie plate. Place onions in crust. Combine remaining margarine, milk, eggs, salt and pepper. Pour gently over onions. Top with cheese (add extra if desired). Sprinkle with paprika if desired. Bake for 30 minutes. Refrigerate any leftovers.

Sour Cream Raspberry Pie

Connie Pietila, Ontonagon County REA

- ¾ cup sugar
- ¼ cup flour
- 1 cup (8-ounce) carton sour cream
- 1 egg, slightly beaten
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- ⅛ teaspoon salt
- 4 cups fresh raspberries
- 9-inch unbaked pie crust

Crumb Topping:

- ⅓ cup sugar
- ⅓ cup brown sugar
- ⅔ cup flour
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- 3–4 tablespoons butter



Preheat oven to 350 F. Mix together sugar and flour in a large bowl. In a small bowl, mix sour cream, beaten egg, vanilla and salt. Add to sugar mixture and stir well. Fold raspberries in gently. Place pie crust in a deep pie dish. Place

raspberry pie mixture in crust. Bake for 30 minutes. For crumb topping, stir together sugars, flour and cinnamon. Cut in butter until crumbly. Sprinkle over hot pie and bake another 35 minutes or until edges are golden. Let cool at least 2 hours before slicing.



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

“Flatbreads and Pizzas” due December 1

“Potatoes” due January 1

“Indulgent Desserts” due February 1

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

Featured Guest Chef

Chef Jim Wood of Sanctuary Ranch knows his way around venison. So, it's no wonder that his mouthwatering Venison Medallions with Mushroom Marsala Cream Sauce is a favorite at the lodge. Give it a try! It might just become your new venison go-to recipe as well.



Venison Medallions

- ½ pound venison loin, cut into ½ inch thick medallions, coated in flour and salted
- Butter, enough to sauté
- ½ cup mushrooms
- ½ cup Marsala wine
- ¼ cup beef stock
- ½ cup cream
- 1 teaspoon Dijon mustard
- Salt to taste

In a large skillet over medium-high heat, add butter followed by venison medallions. Sauté for 1 minute. Add mushrooms, and sauté 1 minute, then flip medallions. Add Marsala and reduce 5 seconds. Add beef stock and reduce 5 seconds. Add cream and reduce until meat begins to bleed. Next, add Dijon, salt to taste and mix thoroughly. Arrange medallions on a plate and pour sauce over the top.

Read the full story about Sanctuary Ranch on page 14, and find this recipe and others at micoopkitchen.com.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland on Sept. 25, your board of directors:

- Discussed the proposed audit engagement with Derek Flanagan, CPA, of Eide Bailly.
- Voted to move to mail balloting for director elections, beginning in 2018.
- Authorized staff to use online banking with CFC, the cooperative's lender.
- Reviewed and approved Board Policy 303 – Wage & Salary Administration, as updated.
- Adopted the 2018 annual wage and salary plan review.
- Learned there were 137 new members in June.
- Acknowledged the August safety report, listing employee and public incidents and employee training.

In a special meeting held Oct. 2, the board also authorized staff to proceed with the first phase of a fiber-to-the-home project. ■

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 Nov. 27 at Portland, and Dec. 14 at Blanchard. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

How to Apply for a Tri-County Electric People Fund Grant

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

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

Note: Applications must be received by Dec. 4 for the December board meeting, and by Jan. 15 for the January board meeting.

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

A Special Member Meeting is set for 9 a.m. November 27, at the cooperative's Portland office

The board of directors will consider changes to the cooperative's rates and tariffs at its meeting on November 27, 2017, to be held at the cooperative office at 7973 E. Grand River Ave., Portland, Mich. 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 5 minutes.

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

1. Revise the cooperative's electric rates to meet current and future financial needs.
2. Set the 2018 Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor. The Power Supply Cost Recovery Factor is applied to Tri-County Electric Cooperative's retail member-customers' monthly kilowatt-hour use. It represents the fluctuating costs of power supply, as established by the cooperative in conjunction with Wolverine Power Cooperative. The factor is established annually, and reviewed monthly.
3. Revise the cooperative's Aid-to-Construction fee schedule to reflect cost increases. If approved, these changes will affect member-customers who have electric service built to a new location, or request a change in service at their current location.
4. Revise the cooperative's miscellaneous billing fees and charges.

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.

Teachers: Apply for 2018 Grants!

Applications are due January 15 for the 2018 Touchstone Energy Classroom Technology Grant program.

Public or private school districts in our 13-county mid-Michigan service area, that serve children of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members, can receive a grant of up to \$2,000 to fund innovative programs that enrich students' education.

For examples of recent grants, here are the schools and projects which received grants in 2017:

- \$2,000 to Ashley Community Schools, to buy and mount a ceiling projector in the gym for community events;
- \$2,000 to Beal City Elementary, to upgrade classroom projectors;
- \$941.58 to Central Montcalm Elementary, to install an interactive whiteboard and purchase coding toys for preschoolers;
- \$1,953.96 to Charlotte's Parkview Elementary, to purchase engineering kits for all classrooms;
- \$1,875.12 to Farwell Elementary, to add refurbished iPads and Osmo classroom kits in each kindergarten classroom;
- \$2,000 to Fulton High School and Middle School, to update classroom projectors;
- \$2,000 to Grand Ledge Neff Elementary, to provide alternative seating options for kindergarten classrooms;
- \$1,800 to Ionia High School, to provide a power hookup to a donated industrial robotic arm;
- \$1,099 to Lakeview Elementary and Middle schools, for schoolwide bullying prevention materials;
- \$1,162.40 to Lakewood High School, to supply materials for their robotics team;
- \$2,000 to Leslie's Woodworth Elementary, to purchase Chromebooks for special needs students;
- \$1,671.24 to Reed City Area Schools, to purchase headphones, programmable robots, and 3D printers for various grades;
- \$2,000 to St. Michael School, Remus, to buy iPads and Osmo kits to start a traveling classroom cart; and
- \$2,000 to Vestaburg Community School, to upgrade the district announcement system and speakers with new safety technology.

For an application form with grant guidelines, visit homeworks.org or call Jayne Graham at 517-647-1252. ■



Grant Provides Whiteboard For Central Montcalm Elementary

From left, preschool teacher's assistant Terrie Weston, HomeWorks director Kimber Hansen, and preschool teacher Casey Ryan are surrounded by preschool students from Ms. Ryan's class at Central Montcalm Elementary. The photo was taken in front of the interactive whiteboard purchased with the grant.

SANCTUARY RANCH

Traditions, Family And Friendship

By Emily Haines Lloyd



The gathering area to share stories and admire trophies.

Photos courtesy of Sanctuary Ranch

It's daybreak at Sanctuary Ranch in Stanwood, Michigan. Ryan Bollman, general manager, takes his first sip of coffee long before the first rays of sunshine flicker in the morning sky. Walking into the woods in complete stillness, his breath caught in the cool air, he climbs into a deer stand, looks out through his "office window" and realizes he's not the average Joe or Jane pushing papers or punching a time clock.

Bollman spends his days a little differently than most desk jockeys. When running a business that is four square miles of gorgeous northern Michigan terrain and bursting with the largest, most sought-after Whitetail deer, the "daily grind" has a slightly different meaning.

Sanctuary Ranch is a one-of-a-kind, preserve trophy hunting experience that rivals any in the country.

While most nature-raised, hunted Whitetail are only one and a half to two years old, the Whitetail at Sanctuary Ranch are a mature five to six years old. These larger, majestic deer are a game hunter's dream, with Sanctuary home to some of the smartest and most elusive bucks that hunting aficionados have ever seen.

"When my dad [Pat Bollman] bought this land back in the late '70s, I don't think he could have imagined all that Sanctuary Ranch would become," said Ryan Bollman. "But his love of hunting and how much it meant to our family—that became the basis for everything we built moving forward."

Ask any of the hunters who return year after year what brings them back to Sanctuary Ranch and you don't hear about trophies. You hear words like *tradition, family and friendship*. This is what Sanctuary Ranch does that elevates the experience.



A father and daughter heading off for quality time.



Sanctuary's guides with some of the top 2016 trophies.

“The sun rose and revealed a magnificent landscape. It teemed with game to the horizon and was a grand site. Indeed, it was to be a very good day.

”
—Ernest Hemingway



A hunter reflecting on a cold, snowy and successful hunt.

Bollman and the entire staff take the time to know their clients—their likes, preferences, how they like to hunt and where. Sanctuary Ranch pairs hunters and groups with the perfect leader who takes hunters on an experience that is custom-made just for them. Then they come back to the lodge to eat great food, tell even better stories, and make new friends.

“It’s not just about pulling the trigger,” said Bollman. “Our hunters have a relationship, a connection, to the ranch. They feel like this is their hunting property, and they know we’re here to watch over it while they’re gone.”

And return they do. Year after year, with new generations joining older generations, these hunters create memories they’ll have forever, along with their majestic trophies. These experiences are why Sanctuary Ranch has built a clientele that is

practically anticipating their next trip before they’ve even left the ranch.

Bollman doesn’t get out in the woods quite as often as he used to, as his responsibilities on the property continue to grow. However, he doesn’t seem to mind entirely.

“Of course I love being out there and taking one of our hunters out for the day,” said Bollman. “But it’s not about me—it’s about creating that awesome experience for someone else. That’s what Sanctuary Ranch is all about. That’s the tradition we want to be a part of.” ■



**Please visit
sanctuary-ranch.com
for more information.**



Board Approves First Phase Of Fiber-To-The-Home

Families may want to use several internet-enabled devices at the same time, whether to check the weather, look up a recipe, stream a TV show or music, do homework, or play a video game. Most rural internet services aren't able to handle this kind of demand.

As the first step in a very long process, your board of directors has approved moving forward with a fiber-to-the-home project that is intended to benefit all HomeWorks Tri-County Electric members.

The project involves installing fiber optic cable along our electric system. This high-speed data line would serve two purposes:

1. Creating a network of system data that will help our engineers, dispatchers, and line crews maintain and strengthen our system against animals, storms, and load growth, and
2. Providing our members in rural mid-Michigan with state-of-the-art high-speed internet service.

"Most of us don't remember when co-ops were formed in the late 1930s. Farmers worked together because none of the big utilities would bring power lines to their homes and families," says general manager Mark Kappler. "But our history is being repeated now with high-speed internet access."

"Just as electricity was essential to improving lives 80 years ago, high-speed internet is needed for education, economic development, and overall quality of life here."

Kappler adds that overall success will be measured in three ways: a) every member will have access to affordable, reliable high-speed internet; b) a fiber network will not negatively affect electric or propane

reliability or service; and c) fiber-to-the-home as an internet service will break even financially.

There are currently 60 electric co-ops across the U.S. building fiber networks, and another 200 or so are looking into it as we have been doing. Our due diligence included two member surveys and two feasibility studies. We also made several visits to Midwest Energy & Communications in Cassopolis, who started their own fiber project four years ago and are now well over half-way to completing their build-out.

Because building a 3,300 mile network is a big project, even using our existing poles, this is being planned as a phased approach which will likely take six years before we've built out to every location. The board of directors will review member acceptance and other factors before deciding to move forward in each of the planned five phases.

Members will be able to get involved in planning each phase through an innovative crowd-sourcing process. We will set up a special website where interested members can vote for their area to be built out next by signing up for the service, and encourage their neighbors to sign up as well. The more people who sign up in an area, the faster they'll get service. Sign-ups will be available online or via phone to our customer service team.

These details, and more, will be determined over the next few months and details will be announced as they're available in early 2018. ■

Denise Weeks To Retire After 27 Years With HomeWorks



It's not that HomeWorks Administrative Assistant Denise Weeks has a retirement countdown going on or anything, but in a recent discussion, she just happened to be able to rattle off the exact amount of time, down to the hour, between her and endless days of Florida sunshine.

"I think it's down to 67 days and one hour," she said with a laugh.

But who's counting, right? Her Dec. 1 retirement date looms even closer now, and despite her excitement for the freedom it will bring, she knows leaving the organization she has been with for more than 27 years will be bittersweet.

"People here have become like family to me, so it's going to be tough," said Weeks. "I'll miss the people most of all."

Those warm feelings extend, she says, to HomeWorks staff, the board of directors and the cooperative's members. In her position, the friendly and engaging Weeks has interacted on a personal level with all three groups.

"Through the years, my position has grown and evolved, and there came to be two different aspects of it: working with the directors and working with the employees on the human resources side of the job," she said. "I enjoyed the personal relationships I was able to develop with the directors and the employees, and with our members. I've just enjoyed the human aspect more than anything."

Weeks won't give up that human aspect when she retires; she'll just experience it in new ways. She and her husband, Pete, who is also recently retired, plan to travel and spend more time with their children and other extended family and friends.

"We plan to spend six months of the year at Recreation Plantation RV Park in Florida, near The Villages, and five months in Ionia at Lakeside Resort," she said. "The other month, hopefully, we'll travel, which I'm really excited about. I have five sisters, and we love to take trips together."

She's most excited, she says, about the chance retirement will afford her to do what she wants to do when she wants to do it.

"Where we'll be near The Villages, there are dances every night," she said. "There is lots of recreation, and a lot of opportunities to do anything you want to do."

Don't think her retirement means you'll never see Weeks around HomeWorks functions again, though.

"I'll still attend my district meeting and retiree lunches and other events, but instead of an event planner, I'll be a guest," she said. "I'm looking forward to joining that club."

Still, it won't be the same at HomeWorks without the daily presence of the lovable Weeks.

"Denise has been the cooperative face to many of our members for the past 27 years," said HomeWorks General Manager Mark Kappler. "I know the members who have gotten to know her over the years will miss her sweet personality. Personally, I will miss Denise's positive outlook to work and life that she brought to the office every single day." ■



Taking over for Weeks as administrative assistant will be Tanya Schneider, who has served as staff assistant since 2012 and has a total of 15 years experience with HomeWorks.

"I know I'm leaving my position in the best hands ever," said Weeks. "Tanya is smart, and the board knows her and loves her. She's going to do great; and I feel the same way about Angel [McCliggott, who will take over the human resources aspect of Weeks' position.] I just feel so good about leaving my job to these two ladies."

Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger Give Back To Community

By Jack O'Malley

The fall season brings colorful leaves, crisp air, and all things orange. Fall also ushers in firearm deer season, the biggest hunting season in Michigan, which draws as many as 700,000 men and women to the woods. For the serious hunters, deer season means fresh meat on the table and a chance to give back to communities.

The Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger (MSAH) program was founded in 1991 by a group of men and women who saw a unique opportunity to provide nutritious meals for those less fortunate. Started as a nonprofit organization, MSAH connects participating licensed game processors with deer hunters looking to process and donate all or a portion of their hunt. There are two different ways a hunter can donate game at MSAH participating processors:

Give-A-Pound—Successful hunters who have their deer processed at a participating MSAH processing facility have the option to donate a pound or more of their processed deer to local food pantries.

Whole Deer Donations—Successful hunters who drop off and donate their whole deer at a participating MSAH processing facility will have the deer processed at NO COST to them. The processor turns the venison into ground burger and is reimbursed through the MSAH fund for their work in the finished product.

The processed venison is then collected by a nonprofit community food bank, pantry or shelter

working in coordination with the processor. If a specific processor needs a nonprofit community food bank, pantry or shelter to work with, locations can be provided through the MSAH. This way, deer donated and processed can help their local community.

In 2016, more than 29,000 pounds of processed venison were donated through wild game processors working with the MSAH program to 35 nonprofit organizations. That processed venison equaled over 145,000 hot and high-in-protein meals for those throughout the state of Michigan who were in dire need.

Funding for the Michigan Sportsmen Against Hunger program exists through an account created through Public Acts 116 & 117 of 2005 which states that sportsmen, sportswomen and non-hunters can voluntarily donate funds to the MSAH in different ways. Funds collected reimburse processors working with MSAH for the work they perform in the processing of the deer.

So, the next time you see a flash of blaze orange or camo, tip your hat and thank a hunter because



Jack O'Malley

good things are happening statewide thanks to their love of the sport.

To learn more about MSAH and how to donate your venison, please visit the website at sportsmenagainsthunger.org. ■



«« Where In Michigan Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo on the left by December 15 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit.

Enter your guess at 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 September 2017 issue is **Jeannine Uphouse, a Presque Isle Electric & Gas Cooperative member**, who correctly identified the photo as the Rosewood Walkway-Marquette in the Upper Peninsula.

Winners are announced in the following issues of *Country Lines*: January, March, May, July/August, September and November/December.



September Photo



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