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November/December 2017

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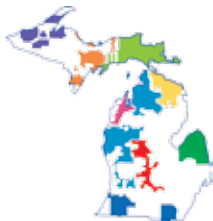
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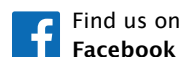
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Change of Address:

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

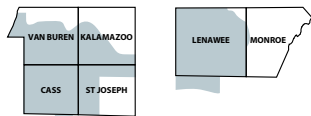
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Community Solar Coming To Decatur Road



Robert Hance
President/CEO

Have you ever had a song keep rolling through your head, despite your best efforts to change the internal channel?

For me this morning the song is "Tomorrow" from Annie.

"The sun will come out, tomorrow. Bet your bottom dollar that tomorrow, there'll be sun."

Right now I'm looking at a rendering for a one-half megawatt solar array that will go

into construction next summer on our Decatur Road property in Cassopolis. This community solar partnership between Midwest Energy & Communications and Spartan Renewable Energy will allow our members to have the benefit of solar energy without the panels on your roof or property.

Community solar programs are popping up all over the country, particularly within rural areas powered by electric cooperatives. The model is easy to understand. A panel subscription entitles you to a share of the energy produced by our Spartan Solar community array. You can lease one or more panels for a 15-year period. The energy is distributed to the power grid, and you receive a monthly credit based on your share of the overall amount of energy produced.

Renewable energy continues to be a huge interest, but unless you have a pocketful of cash for the initial investment and ongoing maintenance, and great southern exposure on your roof or property, a residential solar project isn't likely in the cards. Many also face zoning issues and homeowners' association restrictions.

Community solar gives you access to a large-scale project, allowing you to harness the natural energy from the sun. Your cost per panel is just \$600 for a 15-year lease agreement, or \$10/month paid over five years. You can subscribe to one panel or multiple, depending on your level of interest, and you can cancel your subscription at any time.

We're currently working with Spartan Solar to develop our plan, and will begin construction next summer. The array will be positioned on the southwest corner of M60 and Decatur Road, offering great southern exposure to maximize our output. We will begin selling subscriptions in January and expect the array to go live next fall.

Visit [spartansolar.com](https://www.spartansolar.com) for more information. You can sign up with an expression of interest now, and we'll follow up with you early in 2018 related to your subscription contract and activation. ■

Get Engaged As A Co-op Director



Ron Armstrong, District 3



Clarence "Topper" Barth, District 4



Arell Chapman, District 8

One of the seven guiding principles of cooperatives is democratic member control. When you receive electric service from Midwest Energy & Communications, you are more than a customer; you are an owner who has a voice, and you are encouraged to take an active role in the life of the organization.

We are governed by a nine-member board of directors and each is elected to serve a three-year term. Directors are elected by and represent you and others who live in their district. This is an important role as directors make critical decisions on behalf of all co-op members.

Three board seats are up for election next year. If you are a co-op member interested in serving, please contact us for a petition, then secure 30 or more valid signatures. Your completed petition and a biography must be returned to our Cassopolis office by 4:30 p.m. on Jan. 2, 2018, to be placed on the ballot for one of the three terms ending in April 2018. Ballots will be mailed to the district members on Jan. 22, 2018, and counted on Feb. 9, 2018. Board members must reside in the district they represent.

In 2018, Districts 3, 4 and 8 are up for election. District 3 is currently represented by **Ron Armstrong** of Lawton. The district includes Almena, Antwerp, Portage, Prairie Ronde, Oshtemo and Texas townships.

Clarence "Topper" Barth of Three Rivers is the current director of District 4, which includes Brady, Fabius, Flowerfield, Leonidas, Lockport, Mendon, Newberg, Park, Schoolcraft and Wakeshma townships.

District 8 is represented by **Arell Chapman** of Onsted. District 8 includes Adrian, Cambridge, Franklin, Raisin, Ridgeway, Rollin, Rome, Tecumseh, and Woodstock Townships, as well as northern portions of Blissfield, Deerfield, Dover, Hudson, Madison and Palmyra townships.

For more information about serving on the board of directors, please call the co-op at 800-492-5989. ■

**Cooperative offices will be closed
for the holidays on the following dates:**

Thanksgiving

Thursday, Nov. 23, and Friday, Nov. 24

Christmas

Monday, Dec. 25, and Tuesday, Dec. 26

New Year's Day

Monday, Jan. 1, 2018

From our families to yours, have a happy and blessed holiday season!



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.

Thank You!

Thank you to everyone who participated in our 2017 Photo Contest. In this final issue of 2017, we're featuring a few of our favorite winning shots from over the year.

We are discontinuing our Photo Contest beginning in 2018, and will use this page to share other great news and information. We were honored to share your best shots, from holiday fun to beautiful Michigan waters to farms and barns. You made all of us at Midwest proud of our region through your amazing pictures. Thanks for sharing!



Nichele Rohacs, Niles—1961 Cadillac DeVille



Dawn Pio, Vicksburg—Barn In The Backyard



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



Tammy West, Jones—Merry Christmas



Daniella Meyer, Dowagiac—Swan Family At Mill Pond



Steve Fischer, Lyons—Donkey Photo Bomb!

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.

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.

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*:

"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.

In Celebration Of **Our Customers**

What happens when you bring co-op
members and customers together
for fun and fellowship in the name of
heartfelt appreciation?

Memories that last a lifetime!

We brought customer appreciation events home this year, and more than 1,000 came out to join us. On Sept. 19, nearly 200 visited our Adrian office for a delicious dinner catered by Nelson's and an array of great entertainment. An 18-year old Elvis impersonator, Colin Dexter, wowed the crowd with his voice and Elvis-like moves and was met on stage by Danny D., who paid homage to Rod Stewart. Colors the Clown entertained young and old alike with face painting, magic, and a unique petting zoo, which included rabbits, a dog, goats, turtles, a ferret and more.





The fun continued later in the week as we entertained nearly 1,000 guests at our new Cassopolis headquarters. In the front lot, guests could choose from six food trucks with fare ranging from burgers and pizza to flavored ice and cupcakes. Music lovers were also treated to the sounds of Top Secret, a popular local band.



In the field, brave souls embraced their love of heights and speed on a 300-foot zip line before cruising over to the Touchstone Energy balloon for a great view of Diamond Lake and the surrounding area. The kids jumped around in three bounces houses, had their faces painted, and left with wonderful balloon animals. And people of all ages showed off their pearly whites in the photo booth.



Great prizes were given out at both events. Southeast Michigan winners included: Cliff Allred, Adrian; Lynn Heath, Adrian; and Beth Webb, Tecumseh. Southwest Michigan winners were: Dennis Daugherty, Mattawan; Robert and Judy Bundy, Dowagiac; Nicole Waugh, Edwardsburg; Janice Rooks, Marcellus; David and Debra Owens, Marcellus; Belinda Scheretie, Cassopolis; Michael Waldschmidt, Dowagiac; Terry and Velma Cousins, Constantine; Gary and Carol Manning, Vandalia; Robert and Janice Fuller, Decatur.

Thanks to everyone for spending your evenings with us!

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.**



Take Control Over Your Viewing Experience

When we launched our fiber internet project in southwest Michigan in 2015, we embarked on a quest to eliminate the digital divide that many rural Americans face with access to modern communication tools. But bringing high-speed, reliable internet into our communities has also opened doors for additional services to help you live more comfortably and efficiently. Now we can give you more control over your TV and video choices and can help you save money, too.

Introducing MEC Triple Play. Now you can bundle fiber internet, phone and video, 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.

Traditional cable and satellite TV services often provide a wide variety of channel lineups from local channels to subject-specific topics like animals. However, most of us end up watching only a few of those channels while paying for a full lineup.

We can help you cut the cord from old-school, inflexible TV providers. We've partnered with ViewLocal to bring local TV as part of our fiber internet service, and we can help you select an over-the-top or streaming option to build a truly custom viewing experience.

ViewLocal and Over-The-Top

The ViewLocal app, accessible through a number of smart TVs and streaming devices, gives you access

to all of your regular local channels without the signal issues that come with a digital antenna.

Over-The-Top (OTT) programming refers to services like Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime that offer TV and films via the internet and, like ViewLocal, are available on streaming devices and smart TVs. These services offer access to thousands of movies and shows including today's top hits and classics we all know and love. Additionally, some networks, like HBO, offer their own subscriptions so you can gain access to their full lineup without having to subscribe to a hefty cable package.

How do I get started?

For \$19.95 per month, you can subscribe to ViewLocal and get access to your region's local channels, including all the major networks plus other options like PBS and MeTV.

Current fiber customers can subscribe via the SmartHub app or by calling us at 800-492-5989. New fiber customers can select ViewLocal as an option when signing up for service via teammidwest.com. You can also call 800-492-5989 to be signed up.

Then we can help you select the OTT options that are best for you. We can even help you determine which streaming device will provide the most cost-effective solution.

Ready to explore the magical world of the MEC triple play? Visit teammidwest.com to learn more. ■



Nestled All Snug In Your Home

We all know the internet can be used for everything from paying bills to binge-watching the latest TV series everyone is talking about. However, the internet has also opened a whole new world in modern home innovation.

As part of our ongoing effort to offer first-in-class solutions to our members and customers, we have partnered with Nest, makers of the Nest Thermostat, to bring a cutting-edge approach to load management and energy efficiency.

Rush Hour Rewards

When you sign up for the Rush Hour Rewards load-management program using a Nest thermostat, you will receive two annual \$25 account credits for allowing us to control heating and/or cooling during specific Rush Hours (i.e., times when demand for energy is high).

You don't have to do anything. Your Nest thermostat will do all the work for you, adjusting heating or cooling to help save energy while still keeping you comfortable. Nest will not let it get too hot or cold, and you can change the temperature at any time, if need be.

Each energy rush hour will last up to four hours. There will be no more than one rush hour event a day, and there will never be more than three rush-hour events per week. You can participate during the summer, winter or both and must have a heat pump and/or central air as well as Wi-Fi to participate.

Get Your Next Thermostat

Purchase your Nest thermostat at teammidwest.com and receive an instant \$50 rebate. Michigan MEC electric members will also receive an instant

\$100 rebate through the Michigan EO program. Additionally, the first 100 MEC customers to sign up will receive another instant \$50 rebate. Any remaining costs will be added to your electric bill.

On top of that, you get to experience the power (pun intended) of a tool that can help you save energy. Using your home's Wi-Fi, this device learns your habits and programs the temperatures in your home for you.

Auto-Schedule: No programming necessary. Nest remembers what temperatures you like and builds a custom schedule for your home.

Remote Control: Change the temperature or adjust your schedule from your phone, tablet or laptop.

Auto-Away: Nest turns itself down when you're away, so you don't waste energy heating or cooling an empty home.

Energy History: See when your system was on every day and how much energy you use every month. ■

Already using a Nest thermostat?
Sign up for Rush Hour Rewards and earn \$50 each year.

Visit teammidwest.com or call us at 800-492-5989 to learn more.

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



WAREHOUSE CLEARANCE SALE



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A woman with blonde hair is sitting on a couch, holding a dark mug. She is looking towards the right, smiling. In the background, there is a fireplace with a fire burning. The scene is warm and cozy.

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