

January 2018

# MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

## NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Board OKs Rate Increase

Demonstrating Safety

Election Timeline Changes





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**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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Through strenuous outdoor adventures, such as white water rafting, hiking or mountain climbing, No Barriers Warriors teaches veterans how to regain their skills and confidence after a service-related injury. Read more about this inspiring, non-profit organization on page 14.

Photo courtesy of No Barriers / Samantha Hanus

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## *I Remember...*

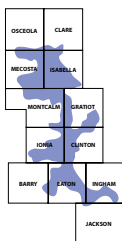
We invite members to share their fondest memories.

### Guidelines

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

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publish.





## Tri-County Electric Cooperative

Your Touchstone Energy Cooperative 

### Portland office/Mail payments to:

7973 E. Grand River Avenue  
Portland, MI 48875  
Open 8 a.m.–5 p.m. Monday–Friday

### Blanchard office:

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

Night deposit box available at both locations.

### Electric bill/account questions:

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

### Pay by phone, anytime:

1-877-999-3395

### Service questions/outages:

517-647-7554 or 1-800-848-9333  
(24 hours for emergency calls)

### Tri-County Propane:

1-877-574-2740

### High Speed Internet

1-800-668-8413

[homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org)

E-mail: [tricoenergy@homeworks.org](mailto:tricoenergy@homeworks.org)

## Board of Directors

### District 1 — John Lord

2276 Plains Rd., Leslie, MI 49251  
517-974-2518  
[jlord@homeworks.org](mailto:jlord@homeworks.org)

### District 2 — Jim Stebbins

7139 Peddler Lake Rd., Clarksville, MI 48815  
616-693-2449  
[jstebbins@homeworks.org](mailto:jstebbins@homeworks.org)

### District 3 — Luke Pohl

Chairman  
15560 W. Hanses Rd., Westphalia, MI 48894  
989-292-0427  
[lpohl@homeworks.org](mailto:lpohl@homeworks.org)

### District 4 — Kimber Hansen

Secretary-Treasurer  
6535 N. Wyman Rd., Edmore, MI 48829  
989-506-5849  
[khansen@homeworks.org](mailto:khansen@homeworks.org)

### District 5 — Corinna Batora

Vice-Chairman  
7655 N. Watson Rd., Elsie, MI 48831  
989-862-3004  
[cbatora@homeworks.org](mailto:cbatora@homeworks.org)

### District 6 — Ed Oplinger

10890 W. Weidman Road, Weidman, MI 48893  
989-644-3079  
[eoplinger@homeworks.org](mailto:eoplinger@homeworks.org)

### District 7 — Shirley Sprague

15563 45th Ave., Barryton, MI 49305  
989-382-7535  
[ssprague@homeworks.org](mailto:ssprague@homeworks.org)

Editor: Jayne Graham, CCC



## Making The Right Decision

Mark Kappler, General Manager

Right-of-way clearing is the SINGLE most important thing we can do to keep your electricity reliable. We've invested millions of dollars into keeping trees, branches, and brush away from power lines over the past 15 years, and we're seeing the difference.

We've still got a long way to go. Trees keep growing across the 2,916 miles of overhead lines that we maintain. The eight-year clearing cycle we've worked up to is much better than it used to be but needs to be better.

We contract with large companies like Asplundh or Wright Tree to do this work for us. It's hard, dangerous work, and requires a lot of training on trees and equipment to be done right. Nobody wants to do that kind of work for low pay, and with the economy improving, these crews have plenty of employment choices that are less dangerous and higher paying.

The bottom line is that the cost of accomplishing the tree-clearing for 2018 has nearly doubled. It's not going to cost less the year after, or the year after that. This is the new reality, and we hope that most of the money is going to the hard-working folks who do this job so well.

With this big increase in a major budget item, among other reasons, we needed a small rate increase to keep your Cooperative financially stable. Your board of directors approved a 4.9 percent rate increase at the November board meeting.

The monthly charge will go up by \$7 a month for most of our residential and general service member-customers. This will help cover the fixed costs for operating and maintaining the electric system, including buildings and trucks; repaying interest and debt on the capital costs of building and updating power lines with wire, poles, transformers, and meters; plus storm repairs and other maintenance.

Meanwhile, the actual cost of your energy—the kilowatt-hour charge and the Power Supply Cost Recovery factor—will go down a little bit, as power supply costs are forecast to be stable for 2018.

Read more about the board's decision on page 13 this month, and watch for more information in the months to come.



Find us on Facebook.

[facebook.com/HomeWorks.org](https://facebook.com/HomeWorks.org)

# New Board Election Dates

## Pohl, Oplinger Seek Re-Election To Co-op Board



Luke Pohl

Luke Pohl of Westphalia and Ed Oplinger of Weidman have announced they will seek re-election to HomeWorks Tri-County Electric's board of directors this year.

Pohl was elected to his first full term in May 2015. District 3 includes members in Clinton County, except for Bingham, Duplain and Greenbush townships.

Oplinger has served District 6, comprised of members in Clare and Isabella counties, since he was first elected in 2009.



Ed Oplinger

The nominating committee in each district consists of the district's officers (listed on this page), elected by members at the district meeting in May. Each committee is required by the co-op's bylaws to nominate at least one candidate on or before Feb. 5. Candidates may also be nominated with a petition signed by at least 25 members from within the district. Petitions must be turned in by Feb. 20.

Names of nominees will be posted at the Cooperative's offices by Feb. 28.

## Interested in Seeking a Board Seat?

If you're interested in running for a HomeWorks board seat, the Cooperative's bylaws state you must be an individual member of the Cooperative in good standing, at least 21 years old, residing in the district which you are to represent, and a U.S. citizen.

To become or remain a director, the bylaws continue, the candidate must have the capacity to enter into legally binding contracts; comply with standards of conduct as laid out in the bylaws; and meet all reasonable conflict of interest qualifications found in Article VII, Section 3.

Also, within the 10 years immediately prior to becoming a director, a candidate shall not have been convicted of or pled guilty to a felony or misdemeanor crime involving issues of moral character.

For a copy of the bylaws, please visit our website at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org).

If you meet these qualifications and would like to be nominated, contact your district nominating committee, listed on this page, or call HomeWorks Tri-County Electric at 517-647-1218 for a nominating petition.

Information about all candidates and district meeting dates will be published in the April issue of *Country Lines*, and members in Districts 3 and 6 will receive ballots and voting information in their mail.

## Who Makes Up District Nominating Committees?

Nominating committees are comprised of the district officers, elected by members at the previous year's district meeting.

### District 3: Clinton County, except Bingham, Duplain and Greenbush townships

Mary Jo Straub, *Chair*  
3800 Essex Center Road  
Saint Johns, MI 48879  
989-640-1504  
email: [mjstraub@hotmail.com](mailto:mjstraub@hotmail.com)

Floyd Messer (Fowler), *Vice Chair*

Helen Goodknecht (Fowler), *Secretary*

### District 6: Clare and Isabella counties

Richard Donley, *Chair*  
1037 Lincoln Drive  
Lake Isabella, MI 48893  
989-330-0284  
Email: [rcdonley@yahoo.com](mailto:rcdonley@yahoo.com)

Bob Thompson (Weidman), *Vice Chair*

Rose Nedry (Edmore), *Secretary*

## New Election Timeline

Nominating Committee submits  
candidate names to co-op . . . . . Feb. 5

Candidate credentials reviewed,  
names posted at co-op . . . . . Feb. 15

Nominations by petition  
(25 signatures) due at co-op . . . . . Feb. 20

Final candidate list posted  
at co-op . . . . . Feb. 28

Ballots mailed to members  
in election districts . . . . . April 15

Members may vote instead  
at district meeting . . . . . May



# Electricity Changes Everything

More than 1.6 billion people in the world remain without electricity. That's a pretty staggering statistic considering health, safety, education and economic growth all start with power. In modern times, no country has managed to substantially reduce poverty without access to electricity.

Electric co-ops know a thing or two about bringing electricity to people who don't have it. After all, it was the co-ops who brought electricity to rural America over 75 years ago when no one else would.

In partnership with the National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA) International Program, Michigan's electric cooperatives sent 10 linemen to Buena Vista, Guatemala, in 2015. The linemen worked side-by-side with local residents to bring electricity to the remote, mountainous village. When work was completed, the community celebrated together as electric lights came on for the very first time. This moment marked the beginning of new opportunities and a new future for the 54 families that call Buena Vista home.

NRECA International Program Manager Ingrid Hunsicker recently visited Buena Vista to see how life has changed with electricity. Hunsicker reported that lights in the schoolyard and classrooms provide the children with a safe, bright place to learn. Processing corn is now easier and more efficient with electric corn mill grinders. Residents have access to better communication with radios and televisions, she noted.

And, thanks to a new refrigerator, the local convenience store is able to offer cold drinks and meats.

This is just the beginning. The good people of Buena Vista now have the opportunity to grow and flourish in a way that was never before thought possible.

## Up Next: Bolivia

In 2018, Michigan co-ops will send 15 linemen to bring electricity to remote parts of Bolivia. The North Beni Electrification Project will electrify six communities located on the road between Riberalta and Guayaranerin in northern Bolivia. Due to the length of this project, several groups of co-op volunteers from different states will be needed to complete the entire project construction. Michigan linemen will be working to electrify the first two communities of Santa Malia and El Hondo. The climate there is hot and humid as it's one of the wettest regions in Bolivia. While planning is now underway, the construction trip will take place in the fall of 2018.

Visit [partnersforpower.org](http://partnersforpower.org) to learn more.





ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE  
**YOUTH TOUR**



# YOUTH TOUR 2018

Michigan Co-ops Inspire Tomorrow's Leaders Today  
**June 10–15, 2018**

Youth Tour teaches students of Michigan about their past—and helps equip them with the skills they need to be Michigan's next generation of energy-minded leaders. This is a once-in-a-lifetime, all-expenses-paid leadership travel opportunity for high school sophomores and juniors (going into their junior or senior year this summer) and is sponsored by Michigan's electric cooperatives. From the battlefields of Gettysburg to the halls of Congress in Washington, D.C., the program explores the leadership lessons of our nation's history and will immerse students in the cooperative spirit.

Youth Tour offers a unique opportunity to build leadership and public speaking skills, enhance students' knowledge of the cooperative form of business, and build life-long friendships with other student-leaders from across the country.

**Youth Tour applications accepted  
between now and Feb. 28.**

## Trip Highlights Include:

- Visit the Gettysburg Civil War battlefields
- See Fort McHenry, birthplace of "The Star Spangled Banner"
- Explore the Washington, D.C. monuments and memorials
- Attend a world-class theater performance
- Explore the museums of the Smithsonian Institution
- Pay respects at Arlington National Cemetery
- Meet with Michigan Senators and Congressmen
- And much, much more

Visit [CooperativeYouthTour.com](http://CooperativeYouthTour.com) to learn more  
and for an online application.

## 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](http://homeworks.org).

**Note:** Applications must be received by Jan. 15 for the January board meeting, and by Feb. 26 for the March board meeting.

# People Fund Helps Families, Food Pantries

Meeting October 4 and November 15, the Tri-County Electric People Fund made 15 grants totaling \$18,254.57. Grants were awarded to the following groups or individuals:

- \$2,000 to Community Christian Action Group, Eaton Rapids, for food pantry items;
- \$1,000 to Lakeview Ministerial Association, Lakeview, to restock their food pantry;
- \$1,000 to Tri-County Office on Aging, Lansing, to support their Meals on Wheels program;
- \$2,500 to Clinton-Gratiot Habitat for Humanity, Saint Johns, for the Critical Home Repair program;
- \$325.29 to a Clinton County family for housing expenses;
- \$300 to an Ingham County family to help with housing expenses;
- \$2,486.69 to an Ionia County family to pay medical bills;
- \$487.13 to a Mecosta County family to assist with medical bills and septic repairs;
- \$1,765 to another Mecosta County family to build an accessibility ramp;
- \$679.54 to a Montcalm County family for medical and housing expenses;
- \$1,000 to Red-Line Paraclete Ministries, Saint Johns, to purchase items for their food pantry;
- \$1,500 to the Dolly Parton Imagination Library, Ionia, for their children's book program;
- \$500 to Clinton County Senior Center to fund their nutritional bingo program;
- \$1,200 to an Ionia County family to assist with housing expenses; and
- \$1,510.92 to an Ionia County family for housing expenses.



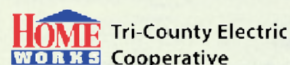
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**ONLINE:** [michigan-energy.org](http://michigan-energy.org)

**PHONE:** 877.296.4319



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





# Snap Shot

## Furry Friends

1. Joan Bull of Big Rapids shared this photo of "Grandpup having fun playing in Jason Daniel Bull's memorial garden."
2. Jon Cunningham of Grand Ledge says, "This is our furry friend, Coco Rose, an Australian Shepherd who loves to play Frisbee!"
3. Machel Rose-Evan from Stanton snapped this photo of two baby raccoons eating homemade suet.
4. Pamela Lanker of Six Lakes shared her photo of two bucks in the backyard at 8 a.m. Sept. 1. "We get a lot of animal visitors here at our remote farm; we so enjoy seeing them."
5. Susan Mills from DeWitt sent in this peek-a-boo snapshot.



### Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

"Talented Kids," Deadline: January 15 (March issue)  
"Heroes," Deadline: February 15 (April issue)

Go to [homeworks.org](http://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 "Talented Kids" 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!

Enter to win a  
**\$100**  
energy bill  
credit!





# Healthy Salads

Start the year off right with these easy-to-make healthy salads.

Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

## Quinoa Cucumber Salad (pictured)

Patricia Wyers, Cherryland Electric Cooperative

- 4 cups cooked quinoa
- 1 small cucumber, diced (local Michigan cucumber if in season, if not use English cucumber)
- 1 small red onion, diced
- 1 red bell pepper, diced
- 2 tablespoons fresh dill weed, minced
- 1 medium garlic clove, minced
- 1 tablespoon canola oil
- 2 tablespoons apple cider vinegar
- 2 tablespoons brown sugar
- ½ teaspoon salt

Prepare quinoa according to the package. Cool. Mix with the rest of the ingredients. Toss to coat evenly. Keep refrigerated and use within two to three days.



Watch a video of this recipe at  
<https://goo.gl/6aZzpb>



## Mediterranean Pesto Chickpea Salad

Ruthann Adams, Midwest Energy

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 1 15-ounce can chickpeas, drained and rinsed                  | 2 roasted red bell peppers, seeded and coarsely chopped |
| 1 15-ounce can black olives, drained and coarsely chopped     | ⅓ to ½ cup pesto  |
| 1 15-ounce can artichoke hearts, drained and coarsely chopped | • Salt and black pepper to taste                        |

Combine all ingredients. Chill and enjoy.

Note: If chickpeas are mashed, this makes a tasty sandwich filling.





## Spaghetti Salad

Jan Goodwin, Great Lakes Energy

- 1 16-ounce package whole grain spaghetti
- 1 package mini Hormel pepperoni
- 1 16-ounce Kraft Zesty Italian dressing
- Parmesan cheese
- Perfect Pinch Salad Supreme Seasoning by McCormick
- Seasonal vegetables: tomatoes, cucumbers, green pepper or any of choice

Cook spaghetti according to the package. Drain. Cut up raw vegetables. Add to spaghetti. Add mini pepperoni. Mix in an entire bottle of Italian dressing. Top with Parmesan cheese and Perfect Pinch Salad Seasoning. Refrigerate 3 hours and serve. Can make the night before. The recipe makes a large amount for a big crowd.



## Indulgent Desserts...

due February 1

## Entertaining & Potluck...

due March 1

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

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

Enter to win a  
**\$50**  
energy bill  
credit!

## Featured Guest Chef

Participants in the No Barriers Warriors program spend their days hiking, rafting, skiing and mountain climbing. When they come back to base, there's nothing like a warm fondue, enjoyed around the fire, to cap off those daily adventures. Gather round, skewer up, and dip in!



## Backcountry Fondues

Recipe Courtesy of No Barriers Warriors

### Gear Required

- Two pots (one larger than the other) that will work as a double boiler
- Pot pliers/lifter to hold pots steady while stirring
- Camp stove (we used WhisperLite)
- Fuel
- A large spoon
- Skewers

### Cheddar Cheese Fondue

- 3-4 cups Cheddar cheese
- ½ cup flour
- ½ can light beer
- Garlic (optional)

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (apples, pears, etc.), vegetables, meat (summer sausage) and bread cubes

### Swiss Cheese Fondue

- 3-4 cups Swiss and Gruyere cheeses
- ½ cup flour
- 1 cup white wine
- Garlic (optional)

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (apples, pears, etc.), vegetables (carrots, broccoli), meat (summer sausage) and bread cubes

### Chocolate Fondue

- 3-4 cups semi-sweet chocolate chips
- 1 teaspoon vanilla
- 1 cup cream

**Suggested Dippers:** fruit (bananas, strawberries) marshmallows, cubed pound cake

### Directions

It's recommended to pre-cut prior to heading to the backcountry when possible. Otherwise, add a cutting knife and cutting board to the gear list.

Place water in the larger pot and bring to boil. Place smaller pot in the larger pot and add the ingredients for whichever fondue you are making. (Note: the wine/beer helps keep the mixture smooth and prevents clumping.) Stir until ingredients are melted and smooth.

Read the full story about No Barriers Warriors on page 14, and find this recipe and others at [micoopkitchen.com](http://micoopkitchen.com).

## In Memory

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric lost two of our retirees during November.



Rita Miros, 83, died Nov. 19. She worked in our customer service department from 1976 to 1997, at both our Portland and Blanchard offices.



Maggie Trierweiler, 83, died Nov. 23. Maggie started in customer service at Portland in 1974, and retired as customer service supervisor in 2000.

# Your Board In Action

## Meeting at Portland on October 23 and November 27, your board of directors:

- Reviewed the Cooperative's cash management plan.
- Authorized staff to sign a two-year consulting contract with Pulse Broadband, LLC, in order to begin work on the fiber-to-the-home business.
- Learned about the history, purpose, costs, and need for the MISS DIG (811) service in Michigan.
- In the Special Open Member Meeting on November 27, adopted a net overall rate increase of 4.9 percent and established the Power Cost Recovery Factor at \$(0.00267).
- Adopted the 2018 Operating and Capital budgets, as presented.
- Learned about right-of-way clearing issues and costs, and the need for additional storage space at the Blanchard operations center.
- Adopted a resolution honoring administrative assistant Denise Weeks for 27 years of service to the Cooperative.
- Reviewed and approved Board Policy 113 – Member Access and Use of Cooperative Records, as updated, and Board Policy 114 – Member Attendance at Board Meetings.
- Learned there were 132 new members in September and 127 in October.
- Acknowledged the September and October safety reports, listing employee and public incidents and employee training.

## 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 Jan. 22 and Feb. 20, at Portland. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

## Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative ("HomeWorks")

### Case No. U-18280 2018-2019 Energy Waste Reduction Plan

2008 PA 295, as amended, requires all Michigan member-regulated electric cooperatives file with the Michigan Public Service Commission (the "**MPSC**") an Energy Waste Reduction ("**EWR**") Plan. Pursuant to this requirement, HomeWorks submitted its 2018–2019 EWR Plan as part of a collaborative plan with 12 other utilities in cooperation with the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association and Michigan Municipal Electric Association to continue to offer several existing energy efficiency programs (the "**Programs**") designed to help members and customers use energy more efficiently and to achieve targeted energy savings. HomeWorks proposes to implement its 2018–2019 EWR Plan and does not intend to change the existing approved surcharge for the Programs. A copy of HomeWorks' 2018–2019 EWR Plan as filed with the MPSC is available by request at any of HomeWorks' offices.



# Availability Charge Increases In February

There is a cost to having electric service available to you whenever you want to use it, whether you use it or not. Some co-ops call it a delivery charge, or a grid access charge. It's similar to the monthly fee you pay to have access to phone, cable or other utility services.

At a special open member meeting held November 27, your board of directors approved an increase to the monthly availability charge, to help cover the costs of maintaining the electric distribution system that delivers power to your home. Our last cost of service study, conducted in 2016, showed the actual costs totaling \$36.15 per month. As of February 8, residential members will pay \$24.50.

At the same meeting, the board approved a reduction in the Power Supply Cost Recovery factor going forward, to refund over collections since 2016 due to reduced power supply costs.

These changes will take effect with bills calculated in February. Changes to your individual bill will depend on your energy use and your rate class. All tariff sheets are posted at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org) for your reference (click on the Electric tab, then on Rates and Regulations.)

This chart compares the new residential rate to HomeWorks' current rate, for our system average of 825 kWh per month. We also calculated costs for the same energy use with Consumers Energy's rates, since many people like to compare.

Comparing the Costs	New rate	Current rate	Consumers Energy (Oct–May)	Consumers Energy (June–Sept)
Availability/Access	\$ 24.50	\$ 17.50	\$ 7.00	\$ 7.00
Energy Charge	101.31	101.31	121.23	128.63
Power Supply (PSCR)	(2.15)	(1.05)	(5.23)	(5.23)
Energy Optimization	1.43	1.43	2.38	2.41
Low Income Assistance	0.93	0.93	0.93	0.93
4% sales tax	5.04	4.80	5.05	5.35
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$ 131.06</b>	<b>\$ 124.92</b>	<b>\$ 131.36</b>	<b>\$ 139.09</b>
Average cost per kWh in cents	15.89¢	15.14¢	15.92¢	16.86¢

## Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

### Tariff and Fee Changes Effective January 1, 2018 and later.

The HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative board of directors, at a Special Open Meeting held November 27, 2017, took action on several matters:

1. Revised the Cooperative's Aid-to-Construction fee schedule, to take effect January 1, 2018.
2. Established the Cooperative's Power Supply Cost Recovery factor at \$(0.00261) per kWh, to take effect February 8, 2018.
3. Revised the Cooperative's rates and availability charges to take effect February 8, 2018, to meet current and future financial needs, based on an independent Cost of Service study.

For specific details on any HomeWorks tariffs or fees, please call us at 1-800-562-8232 or visit our website at [homeworks.org](http://homeworks.org).



# NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

## THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

By Emily Haines Lloyd

**W**hen an organization's mission is to "unleash the power of the human spirit," participants suspect that challenging circumstances combined with lofty goals are probably expected. And, indeed, that is exactly what No Barriers Warriors does. The organization engages disabled veterans in challenging outdoor adventures that include hiking, paddleboarding, rafting and, ultimately, mountain climbing. The purpose is to help disabled veterans regain their confidence in spite of a service-related disability.

"When you take individuals from varying backgrounds and various levels of experience in the outdoors, you're obviously teaching some basic skills—like how to pitch a tent or the fundamental techniques of camping," said John Toth, director of No Barriers Warriors. "But it's

important to note that our purpose is not necessarily to build a skill set—our goal is to build a mindset."

No Barriers Warriors was inspired by the tenth anniversary of blind adventurer Erik Weißenmayer's historic climb of Mount Everest. Weißenmayer, founder of No Barriers USA, joined his Everest teammates to lead a group of disabled soldiers to the summit of Lobuche, a 20,100-foot-peak in the Himalayas. The endeavor was captured on film and eventually became the documentary "High Ground."

In 2012, No Barriers USA officially began incorporating its programming to include injured soldiers from all branches of the military, as well as survivors of the fallen. Today they are known as No Barriers Warriors (NBW). These individuals participate in mentally, physically, and emotionally

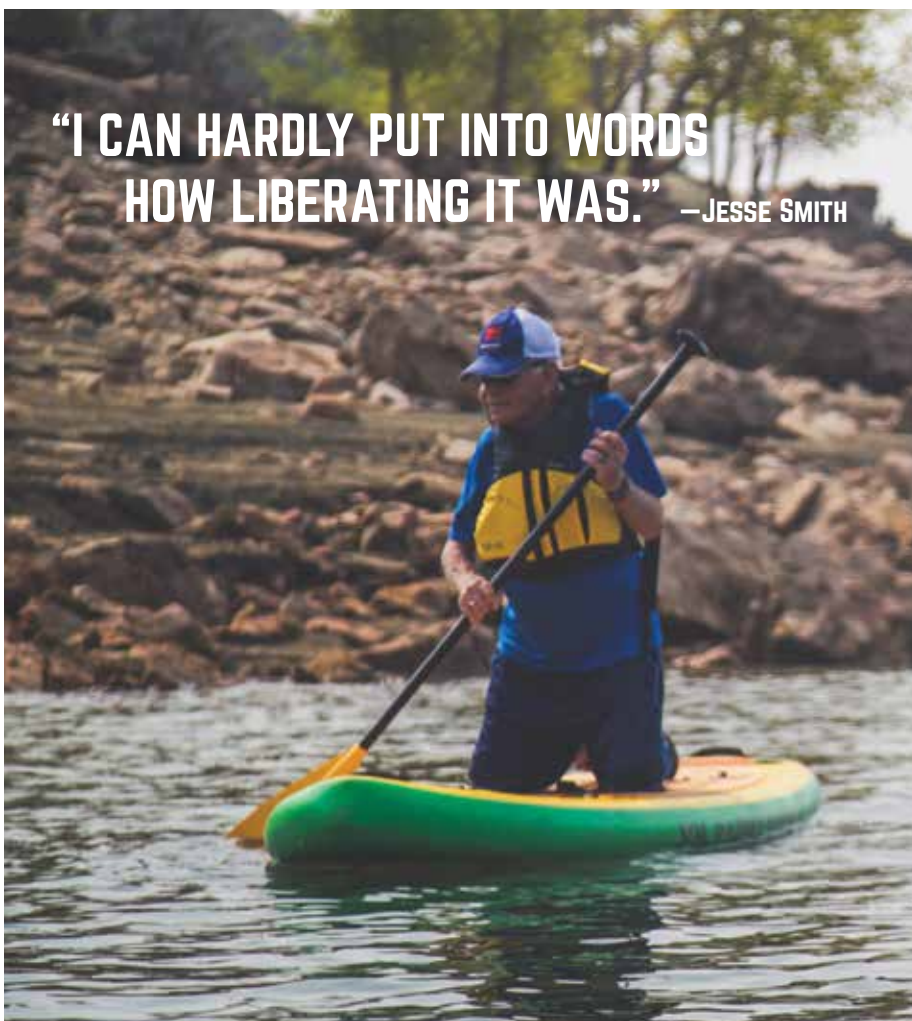
challenging activities, personal reflection, and group interactions designed to remind them that what's within them is stronger than what is in front of them.

Veterans from across the country have been helped through NBW's unique curriculum and no-pay policy, meaning all veterans who attend the program do so at absolutely no cost. This is another way that NBW wants to eliminate barriers, even when it comes to funding.

"When our veterans are given this opportunity, we see how their lives are changed—sometimes even saved," said Toth. "We set very high and lofty goals for our participants. When I see them accomplish those goals, I'm not surprised. I'm inspired."

Veterans are able to participate in the one-of-a-kind program through the





generosity of various organizations that donate to NBW. In November 2016, CoBank, a cooperative bank serving agribusinesses, rural infrastructure providers and Farm Credit Associations, announced a program that allowed its customer to nominate up to 50 rural veterans to participate in a No Barriers expedition. This corporate sponsorship allowed three Michigan co-op members and veterans to attend No Barriers Warriors adventures in 2017, Jesse Smith (Midwest Energy & Communications), Michael Valkner (Cherryland) and Christopher Irving (Great Lakes Energy). "America's rural communities are home to millions of men and women who have sacrificed for their country through military service, many of whom are facing some sort of disability," said Tom Halverson, CoBank CEO. "The No Barriers program provides these veterans with an opportunity to challenge their own limitations—both real and perceived—and to create a network of support that can last a lifetime."

Smith, a mostly-retired therapist, took the opportunity to attend a NBW adventure in Colorado in September and has already recommended the program to his friends and clients.

"I can hardly put into words how liberating it was, at nearly 80 [years old], to go and do the things I did," said Smith. "I would tell anyone who is even considering it, to not be afraid and just go for the adventure."

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**Are you a veteran interested in being nominated for the 2018 No Barriers program? If so, please go to [countrylines.com/nobarriers](http://countrylines.com/nobarriers) by Feb. 28 and complete the form to express your interest. Your co-op will follow-up with more detailed information.**

Photos courtesy of No Barriers /Samantha Hanus.

HomeWorks linemen  
Jeremy Smith and Ryan  
Smith designed and built  
the power line demo trailer



# Making The Invisible Visible

HomeWorks' new electric demonstration models teach important safety lessons

By Charly Markwart

Electricity is a potent force. It has the ability to power our daily lives, but also the potential to be harmful if encountered improperly. Since it typically cannot be seen, heard or felt, the importance of electric safety can sometimes be a difficult message to convey. That's why HomeWorks Tri-County Electric is striving to drive that critical message home in a new way, with two demonstration models that HomeWorks Safety Coordinator Chris O'Neill says are designed to help the public see between the power lines.

Starting this year, the large-scale power line demonstration trailer, designed and built by HomeWorks linemen Jeremy Smith and Ryan Smith, and the small-scale tabletop Powertown model are at the heart of our public safety campaign to teach members and the general public vital lessons about how to stay safe around electricity.

"I view it as a survival skill; I really do," says O'Neill. "It's very important to us for the folks we serve to understand the importance of electric safety, and in order for them to understand that, they need to know the dangers that could come up when electricity is treated improperly. Our power line demo trailer and smaller Powertown model let the public see that in a way they wouldn't be able to see it in their daily lives."

## Power Line Demonstration Trailer

A group of high school students from Heartlands Institute of Technology recently had the chance to experience that up-close-and-personal view of the power of electricity, when they got a sneak peek of our power line demonstration trailer at the fall open house of the Ionia County Central Dispatch facility. As they gathered around the energized trailer set up to model a live electric line, Jeremy Smith and Ryan Smith demonstrated what happens when trees, animals, objects or people come in contact with electric wires.

"Just like our real power lines, this line is energized at 7,200 volts," Ryan told the crowd.

Equipped in full safety gear, Jeremy used a long tool to lift a hot dog towards the line. As it grazed the wire, a spark of electricity surged, causing a flash of light and a buzzing sound like a bug zapper in July. The students' eyes lit up as he brought the hot dog down, showing them where it was charred and disfigured from the brief contact with the line.

"That's why you have to stay away from power lines," he told them. "Stay away; stay alive."



Heartlands Diesel Technology teacher Tom Greenfield, who watched the power line demo with several groups of youngsters at the open house, said the presentation was a great way to make electricity real to the students.

"I thought it was good for the kids to see it up close like this, not up in the overhead wires where they don't really think about it, but right here in front of them," he said. "It was very good information about the way electricity works, and it taught them to respect it. Beyond that, it gave some of the kids an idea of a new career possibility. I know they enjoyed it."

Powered by a generator, the expertly crafted trailer includes two mini poles supporting an actual power line, along with breakers, electric meters, lightbulbs that blink to demonstrate power outages, and more. It is designed to travel down the road as is, with minimal tear-down and set-up required.

"It took us three months to build, and we worked hard to get it just right," says Ryan. "We're really proud of how it turned out, and I think it's a great tool for us to have. It's teaching people about electric safety, and it's also sparking an interest in some kids about a career in line work, which is great."

### Powertown Tabletop Model

Similar to the power line demo trailer, the Powertown electric model is fully energized and designed to demonstrate what happens when contact is made with electricity. Created by Moore Syndication, the handmade display features a miniature town and its power supply. The model is easily transportable and small enough to fit on a tabletop.

"The Powertown model is great for a younger audience or an indoor presentation, and it also allows us to demonstrate actual scenarios that could occur, like someone putting a backhoe into an underground conductor, for example," says O'Neill. "When something like that is demonstrated with Powertown, electricity moves through the model backhoe and you can actually see it arcing. It turns a lightbulb on in the kids' heads to see that happening in front of them."

### Target Audiences

At HomeWorks' discretion, the power line demonstration trailer and Powertown model are available, free of charge, for presentations to various civic and community organizations throughout our service area. And the presentations aren't just for kids; they provide important information and reminders for electric consumers of all ages.



Students from the LINK homeschool support group in Lowell react excitedly to an electric arc during a recent Powertown presentation.

"Taking these demonstrations out to the people we serve is a way for us to make a connection for them about the role of their utility and how it translates to their everyday lives," says O'Neill. "Typically, the utility is in the background, just a bill you get every month. This shows people who we are and what we do, which is a great thing."

### Key Target Audiences for the Demonstrations are:

- Students
- Companies that regularly complete construction work near our lines
- Agricultural organizations
- First Responders

### Key Teaching Points of Power Line Demo Trailer and Powertown Model:

- Importance of electric safety
- Safety equipment of a lineman
- Electricity basics
- Power quality/reliability
- What causes blinks in your power?
- What causes a blown fuse?
- What happens when public contact with an electric line occurs?
- Potential of a career in line work

**To inquire about scheduling a demonstration for your group or event, please contact Chris O'Neill at 517-647-1284 or [coneill@homeworks.org](mailto:coneill@homeworks.org).**

Enter to win a  
**\$50**  
energy bill  
credit!



## Where In *Michigan* Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo above by January 15 and be entered into a drawing to win a \$50 electric bill credit. Enter your guess at [countrylines.com](http://countrylines.com) or send by mail to: *Country Lines* Mystery Photo, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933. Include the name on your account, address, phone number and the name of your co-op.

Our Mystery Photo Contest winner from the November/December 2017 issue is Christa Carbone, a HomeWorks Tri-County Cooperative member, who correctly identified the photo as Seal Choix Point Lighthouse near Manistique in Gulliver, Mich.

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



November/December Photo



## Jack's Journal: Michigan's Main Street

By Jack O'Malley

Each year motorists drive over 95 billion miles on Michigan roadways, many of them on the state's longest route-numbered highway. Its full name is Interstate 75. We locals just call it 75. It has also picked up a nickname, some calling it Michigan's Main Street. In fact, Michigan's Main Street covers 395 miles through the state's upper and lower peninsulas.

Michigan's Main Street begins in Michigan's oldest city, Sault Saint Marie. Travelers headed south will pass Castle Rock, one of the upper peninsula's most iconic tourist attractions. After climbing the 196-foot limestone stack, travelers should leave time to visit Paul Bunyan and his Blue Ox, Babe. They're always ready for a picture or two! Continuing south, I-75 crosses the mighty Mackinac Bridge to Michigan's Lower Peninsula. From there, things get really interesting!

History lovers may enjoy an afternoon touring Mackinac City's colonial Fort Michilimackinac, while travelers on the hunt for souvenirs might prefer an excursion to the legendary Sea Shell City. With the famous "man-eating clam" located at the iconic shop, it's a trip back to 1960s tourism for sure.

Continuing south, Michigan's Main Street passes through Indian River, home to the world's largest crucifix, and Houghton Lake, the state's largest inland lake. Locals love to point out the lake is "so big you can see it from space." Pinconning has the honor of being the cheese capital of Michigan, and Birch Run is home to the largest outlet mall in the Midwest.

Rolling rural hills eventually give way to the state's urban setting. Motorists maintaining a southern course will pass Comerica Park, Little Caesar's Arena and Ford Field in downtown Detroit, as well as the Marathon Petroleum Refinery with its giant butane sphere painted like a basketball. The highway's Michigan journey ends in Monroe County, hometown to General George Armstrong Custer, who was a celebrated civil war veteran.

Interstate 75 continues for another 1,390 miles, finally ending in Miami, Florida. But that's not our 75. Our 75 is just like our people—diverse, entertaining and reliable. With so much to see in our great state, where will Michigan's Main Street take you?





# SUN

It has fueled a lifetime of family getaways.  
Today, it's fueling your everyday life.



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