

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

Thumb Electric Cooperative

NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

Annual Meeting Notice

Proposed Rate Revision

Special Meeting Notice



THERE'S A TREASURE IN YOUR BACKYARD

You may not realize it, but your home is sitting on a **free and renewable** supply of energy. A WaterFurnace geothermal comfort system taps into the stored solar energy in your own backyard to provide **savings up to 70% on heating, cooling and hot water**. That's money in the bank and a smart investment in your family's comfort. Contact your local WaterFurnace dealer today to learn how to **tap into your buried treasure**.

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Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

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Publisher:
Michigan Electric
Cooperative Association

Michigan Country Lines, USPS-591-710, is published monthly, except August and December, with periodicals postage paid at Lansing, Mich., and additional offices. It is the official publication of the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association, 201 Townsend St., Suite 900, Lansing, MI 48933.

Subscriptions are authorized for members of Alger Delta, Cherryland, Great Lakes, HomeWorks Tri-County, Midwest Energy, Ontonagon, Presque Isle, and Thumb electric cooperatives by their boards of directors.

POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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

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CHANGE OF ADDRESS:

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

The appearance of advertising does not constitute an endorsement of the products or services advertised.

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January 2018 // Vol. 38, No. 1



ON THE COVER

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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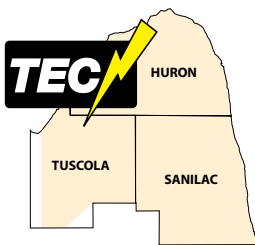
I Remember...

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 or email to cdorr@meca.coop

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will pay
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publish.



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Dallas Braun, General Manager

PAYMENT STATIONS

Huron County

Bad Axe—Northstar Bank
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Caro—Northstar Bank
Mayville—Mayville State Bank
Millington—Mayville State Bank

Sanilac County

Sandusky—Northstar Bank

Visit Thumb Electric's website
www.tecmi.coop

Thumb Electric Cooperative is an equal
opportunity provider and employer.



Proposed Rate Revision

Dallas Braun, General Manager

For several years now, one item of discussion at our member district meetings and also written about in past articles has been the need to increase the monthly service charge. This charge is supposed to represent each member's fair share of the system's fixed costs. These include the poles, wires, transformers, meters, labor, vehicles, tools, and other equipment needed to maintain a safe and reliable electrical system that is available to you 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. These costs exist even when no electricity is used.

Our past Cost of Service Study (COSS), and our most recent one completed at the end of 2017 by an independent firm, showed that the current monthly service charge is too low and should be in the \$30 range. When the monthly service charge is too low, higher energy users pay a greater share of the fixed costs than lower users. This inequality exists because part of the fixed costs is embedded in the energy usage charge.

On February 13 at the Cooperative's Uby office, your board of directors will meet at 6:30 p.m. to consider an overall revenue increase of 3.49 percent. The proposed rate adjustments will reflect an increase in the monthly service charge of up to \$5 for most rate classes. There will also be revisions in the energy costs. Some rate classes will see an increase while other classes will see a decrease. Please see the proposed rate revision summary chart on page 8 for more information.

For most members, the current \$12 monthly service charge will increase to \$17. While this still represents a monthly service charge below the level identified in the most recent COSS, it is a step in the right direction without the shock factor of a more dramatic and immediate change. It is likely that the board of directors will continue to slowly and gradually increase this monthly service charge as future rate changes are required.

This proposed increase that would go into effect in April is required to ensure the cooperative continues to meet payment of our financial debt, maintain the distribution system, and build equity. The cooperative's 2017 financials and year end margins were negatively impacted by two major storms and the associated outage restoration efforts. First, we were hit hard by the wind storm in March. In April the system was damaged by wind, heavy wet snow, and ice.

At Thumb Electric, we are continuously working to contain costs without jeopardizing the reliability of your electric service. These proposed rate revisions will help us keep that reliability and more fairly spread the fixed costs equally among all the cooperative's members.



Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 9, 2018 • Thumb Octagon Barn
Business meeting begins at 10 a.m.

Annual Meeting At Octagon Barn

This year's Annual Meeting will again be held at the Octagon Barn near Gagetown. The meeting will be held Saturday, June 9, 2018, with registration beginning at 9 a.m. and the business meeting starting at 10 a.m. You will be voting for your cooperative directors and listening to updates on cooperative improvements. As always, there will be lunch, entertainment for the kids with balloons, face painting, pony rides, and bucket truck rides.

Scam Alert

Thumb Electric reminds members to be diligent and alert when it comes to scams. From time to time we receive calls where a member was asked to make a payment on a past due account. Their diligence in asking the right questions saved them from being scammed. Know where your account stands each month; if you think you may be past due, give us a call, and we can let you know for sure. If you are past due to the point of a possible disconnection, you will receive a paper bill, and there will be a notice of intent to disconnect. This is required by state law, and even if you normally get an electronic bill, you will get a paper copy in the mail. Be proactive and call us first. In you calling us first, it helps us from calling you and then having you question if our call is legitimate.

Ubly To Kinde Transmission Rebuild Continues

Thumb Electric contractors will continue upgrading and rebuilding the 41.6 KV transmission line between Ubly and Kinde this winter with the concentration expected to be along M19 from M142 to Ubly. Transmission lines feed higher voltage power to substations where the voltage

can be reduced down for distribution to the wires and poles that go by your home. The current line has been in service since the 1950s and is starting to show its age with reliability during bad weather. The new line, where possible, will be brought up near the road right-of-way and taken out of the deep right-of-way where access can be difficult with bucket trucks and other equipment needed during restoration efforts. Once the new line is operational, the old line will be removed.

Tree Trimming Efforts Continue

Tree trimming continues at an aggressive pace as we move into 2018. In 2017, we saw a large number of trees removed. As a result, many TEC members have seen their reliability greatly improve. Removing and trimming trees make for fewer outages and shorter duration of outages that do occur because of these efforts. Priorities will continue for line sections that are historically problematic lines, followed by overgrown sections. As time allows, less severe circuits will be maintained. Members in Austin, Bingham, Minden, Argyle, Millington and Arbella townships will see crews this winter as part of regular system maintenance. Also, as part of the Ubly to Kinde transmission project tree trimming will take place in parts of Bingham and Verona townships.

Due to a disease in the Ash tree, which is a very popular species of tree in our service territory, we have had to adjust our trimming locations. It has made planning a challenge at times, but we make every effort to contact members ahead of the trimmers. We will send out a postcard to members to let them know trimmers will be in the area and, at times, we will try and call members to let them know the plan for their area. If you have an updated phone number, please call us with your new contact information.

Special Election Notice For TEC Members

In March 2018, a nominating committee of nine Thumb Electric Cooperative members will meet to select a slate of candidates for one director position in each of the three counties served by the cooperative.

Positions in District 2, currently held by Donald Wolschleger, Mike Briolat, and Jonathan Findlay, will be voted on at the 2018 Annual Meeting in June.

Any co-op member interested in running for a district director position should write a letter to the Thumb Electric

nominating committee chairperson prior to Feb. 9, 2018, indicating his or her interest in being nominated.

The committee will review the prospective nominee's qualifications to determine whether they meet bylaw requirements and whether he or she should be placed on the ballot.

If you would like more information, please contact the co-op's general manager, Dallas Braun, at 800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571.



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 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 to learn more
and for an online application.**

Thumb Electric Cooperative Proposed Rate Revision Summary

Rate Description		Existing Rate	Proposed Rate
Farm & Home (Schedule A)	Monthly Service Charge	\$12.00	\$17.00
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.12257	\$0.12120
Farm & Home Time-Of-Day (Schedule A-TOD)	Service Charge	\$25.00	\$25.00
	Energy Charge On-Peak/kwh	\$0.11820	\$0.13150
	Energy Charge Intermediate/kwh	\$0.08265	\$0.08300
	Energy Charge Off-Peak/kwh	\$0.05678	\$0.06015
Seasonal & Low Usage Farm & Home (Schedule A-S)	Service Charge	\$17.50	\$22.50
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.14404	\$0.13850
Seasonal & Low Usage General Service (Schedule SGS)	Service Charge	\$20.00	\$25.00
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.13065	\$0.13065
General Service (Schedule GS)	Service Charge	\$13.75	\$18.50
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.11653	\$0.11850
General Time-Of-Day (Schedule GS-TOD)	Service Charge	\$25.00	\$27.50
	Energy Charge On-Peak/kwh	\$0.12763	\$0.13150
	Energy Charge Intermediate/kwh	\$0.08260	\$0.08300
	Energy Charge Off-Peak/kwh	\$0.05621	\$0.06015
Large General Service (Schedule LGS)	Demand Charge/KW	\$10.00	\$10.25
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.08291	\$0.08450
Large Power Distribution Substation (Schedule LPDS)	Demand Charge/KW	\$10.00	\$10.25
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.06586	\$0.06710
Outdoor Protective Lighting (Schedule PL-40 W LED)	Per Light Fixture	\$10.52	\$10.75
Outdoor Protective Lighting (Schedule PL-100W HPS/175W MV)	Per Light Fixture	\$12.52	\$13.15
Outdoor Protective Lighting (Schedule PL-250W HPS/400W MV)	Per Light Fixture	\$19.75	\$20.50
Controlled Water Heating (Schedule CWH-option 3 – 2hr)	credit/month	-\$1.25	-\$1.25
Controlled Water Heating (Schedule CWH-option 1 – 4hr)	credit/month	-\$6.00	-\$5.25
Controlled Water Heating (Schedule CWH-option 2 – 6hr)	credit/month	-\$7.52	-\$7.00
Interruptible Heating & Cooling (Schedule IHC)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.08061	\$0.07790
Dual Fuel Heating (Schedule DF)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.07557	\$0.07790
Energy Storage (Schedule ES)	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.05984	\$0.06282
Controlled Central Air Conditioning (Schedule CAC)	credit/year	-\$19.00	-\$15.00
Transmission Standby (Schedule TSB)	Service Charge	\$200.0	\$200.0
	Demand Charge/KW	\$3.00	\$3.00
	Energy Charge/kwh	\$0.06299	\$0.06450

If You Smell Gas...

Did you know that propane gas has no odor? The “rotten egg” smell is added for your safety, to help alert you to any possible leaks. If you smell gas in the house, or if you have a gas alarm that signals the presence of gas, immediately follow these safety guidelines:

No flames or sparks!

Immediately put out all smoking materials and other open flames. Do not operate lights, appliances, telephones, or cell phones. Flames or sparks from these sources can trigger an explosion or fire.

Leave Immediately!

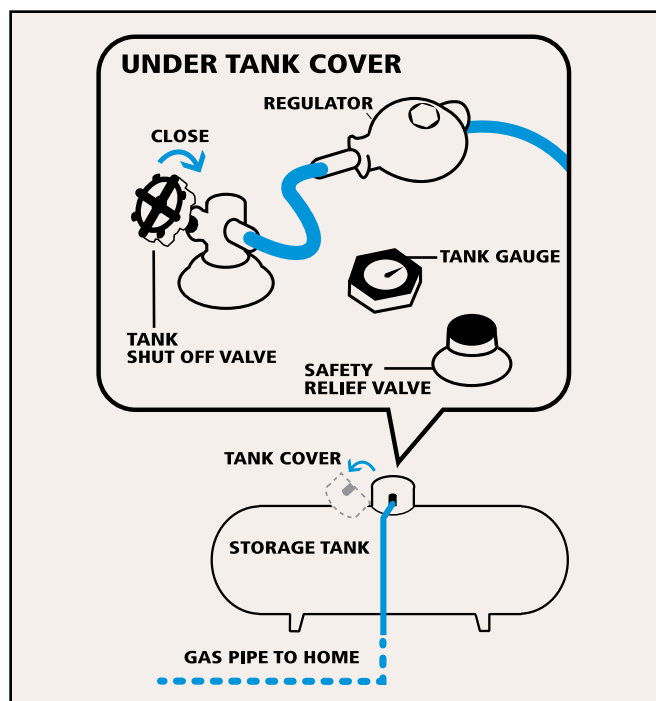
Get everyone out of the building or area of the suspected leak.

Shut off the gas.

Turn off the main gas supply valve on your propane tank if it's safe to do so. To close the valve, turn it clockwise (see diagram).

Report the leak.

From a neighbor's home, call Thumb Electric at 800-327-0166 right away. If for some reason you can't reach us, call 911 or your local fire department.



Stay away.

Do not return to the building or area until we have determined that it is safe to do so.

Notice To Members Of Thumb Electric Cooperative

Special Board Meeting—February 13, 2018

The Thumb Electric Cooperative Board of Directors will consider changes to the cooperative's rates and tariffs in accordance with P.A. 167 of 2008, beginning at 6:30 p.m. The meeting will be held at the Cooperative office at 2231 Main Street, Ubly, Mich., and is open to any Thumb Electric Cooperative member. Members will have an opportunity to address the board on the proposed changes prior to board action.

The following item will be considered:

- Revise the cooperative's rates and tariffs.

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 Thumb Electric Cooperative at 800-327-0166 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 Dallas Braun or by email at dbraun@tecmi.coop.

Notice To Members Of Thumb Electric Cooperative

Tariff Changes Effective April 1, 2018

The Thumb Electric Cooperative Board of Directors adopted the following changes to the cooperative's tariffs at a special open board meeting held November 21, 2017, in accordance with P.A. 167:

- Established the 2018 Power Supply Cost Recovery (PSCR) Factor at \$0.00000/kwh, based on annual cost forecasts, effective with bills rendered on or after April 1, 2018.
- Closed existing tariffs D-23.00 (net metering program-generators with a capacity of 20 KW and less) & D-23.10 (modified net metering program-generators with a capacity of greater than 20 KW and not more than 150 KW) to new participants.
- Established new tariffs D-23.20 (distributed renewable energy program-generators with a capacity of 20 KW and less) & D-23.30 (distributed renewable energy program-generators with a capacity greater than 20 KW and not more than 150 KW).
- Revised tariff D-17.00 (annual pole attachment fee) from \$3.74 to \$6.50 per attachment.

For specific details on any Thumb Electric Cooperative tariffs, please call 1-800-327-0166 or visit TEC's website at tecmi.coop.



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 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.

Thumb Electric

Energy Optimization Rebate Program

Energy Star Rebate	For Energy Star appliances, LED bulbs and fixtures, Energy Star TVs, and much more.
In-Home Energy Audit	Get knowledge on the energy usage of your home and some free energy saving items, as well!
HVAC Rebates	Installing a new furnace or AC system? Certain energy-efficient upgrades qualify for incentive dollars.
Appliance Recycling	Got an old refrigerator or freezer eating up your energy budget? Have it recycled and get cash back. *Window AC & dehumidifiers qualify under certain conditions.

Agribusiness and commercial programs also available.

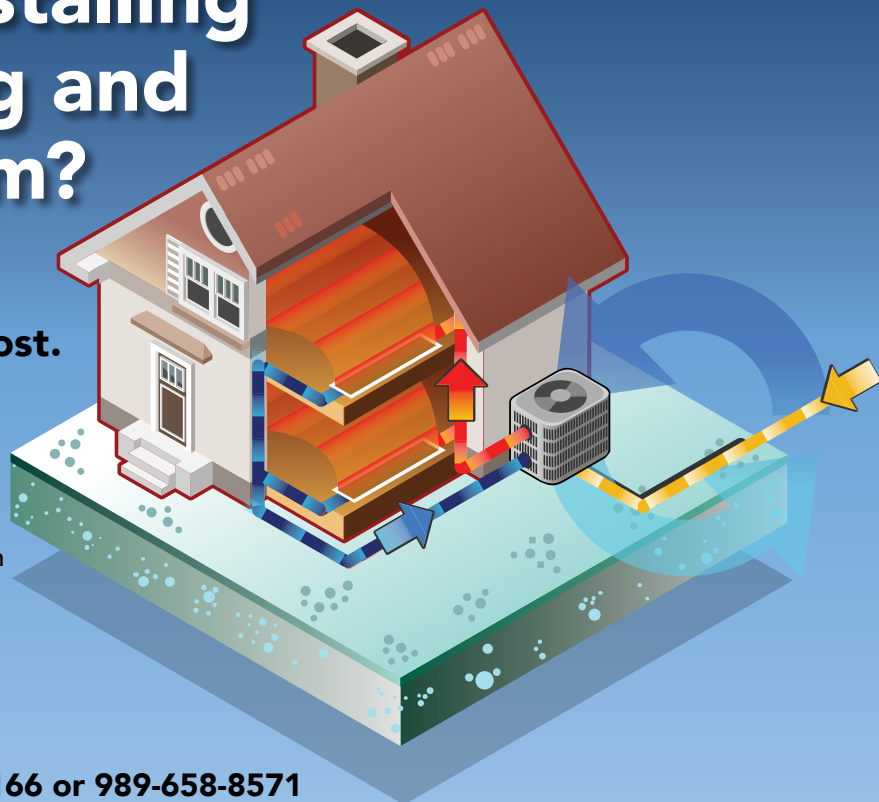
Call 989-658-8571 or 1-800-327-0166,
or visit our website tecmi.coop today to learn specific details.

Thinking of Installing a New Heating and Cooling System?

**Thumb Electric may have
a rebate to help with the cost.**

- Geothermal rebate up to \$1,200
- AC and Air Source Heat pumps up to \$450

There are many more Energy Optimization rebates available. For a full listing, please visit our website or call our office.



Call: 1-800-327-0166 or 989-658-8571
www.tecmi.coop



Photo Contest

Furry Friends

1. Lucy and Cooper on Willow Creek. By Annette Deckerline
2. My Airedale, Bentley, loves the snow! By Susie Mathewson
3. Sadie focused on ducks in the distance. By Lynn Shultz

Share Your Photos!

Thumb Electric invites members to share their photos. Selected photos will be published in *Michigan Country Lines*. Upcoming topic and deadline is: **Talented Kids due January 20 for the March/April issue.**

To submit photos, and for details and instructions, go to <http://bit.ly/countrylines>

We look forward to seeing your best photos!



Jim Philp



Deb Peruski

Employee Spotlight

Not all of the necessary jobs at Thumb Electric happen in the dark of night, somewhere on a pole during a storm outage. Some of the jobs that must be done to ensure the lights stay on involve making sure the bills are paid and the co-op's business is done affordably. As a member-owned cooperative, you are part owner and, as such, you share in the profits which get distributed in your name in the form of patronage capital. These accounts, bills, and other financial matters are handled by our accounting department which consists of two longtime employees, Jim Philp and Deb Peruski.

Jim has been with TEC for 40 years and has come up through the ranks currently serving as office services manager. Everything from budgets to

long-term financing goes through Jim and then on to the board of directors for final decisions. In his spare time, Jim likes to play golf and spend time with family which includes his wife, three children, and three grandchildren.

Deb is the company accountant and has been with TEC for over 30 years. She handles the day-to-day duties of making sure bills are paid, payroll is properly done, and any number of other activities to ensure things run smoothly from a financial perspective. Deb likes to spend time with her three children in her time away from the office.

Thumb Electric would like to thank them and all of our employees for all of their hard work and dedication.



NO BARRIERS WARRIORS

THE POWER OF THE HUMAN SPIRIT

By Emily Haines Lloyd

When 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."

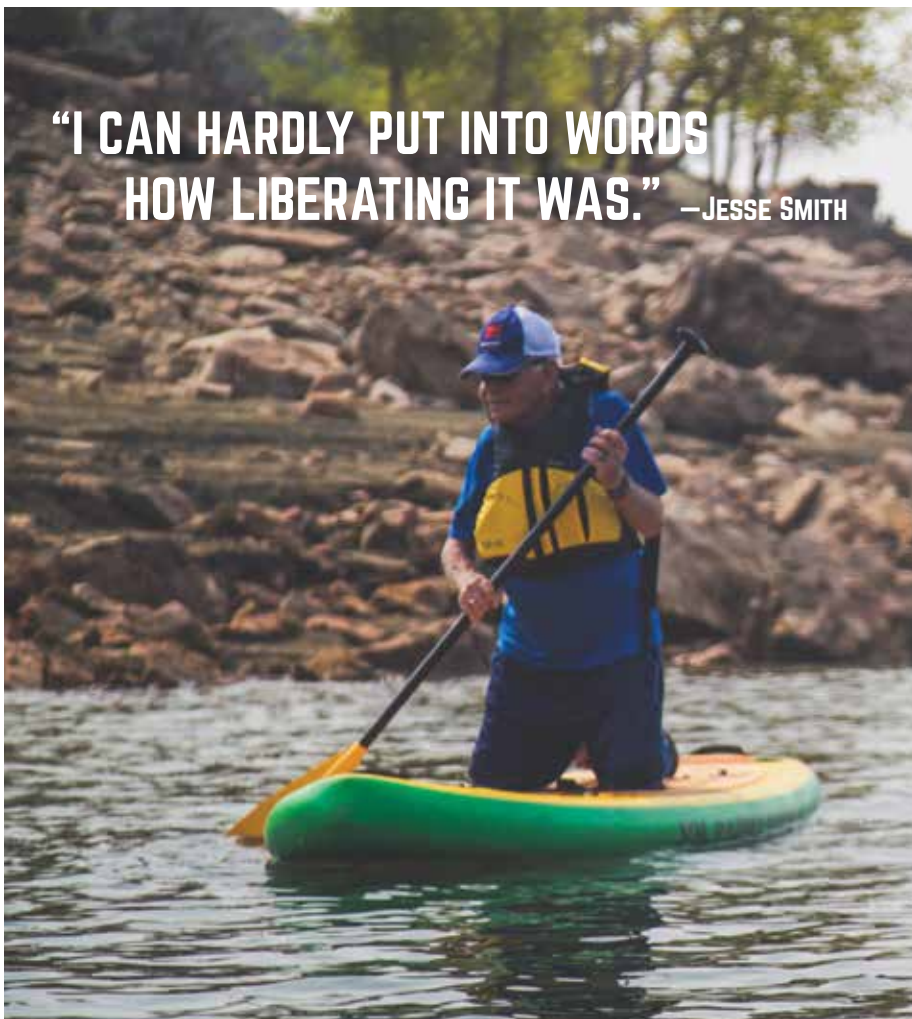
In 2012, No Barriers USA officially began incorporating its programming to include injured soldiers from all branches of the military, as well as survivors of the fallen. Today they are known as No Barriers Warriors (NBW). These individuals participate in mentally, physically, and emotionally

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."

Are you a veteran interested in being nominated for the 2018 No Barriers program? If so, please go to 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.

Wild, Wild Midwest

WARDENS



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



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

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

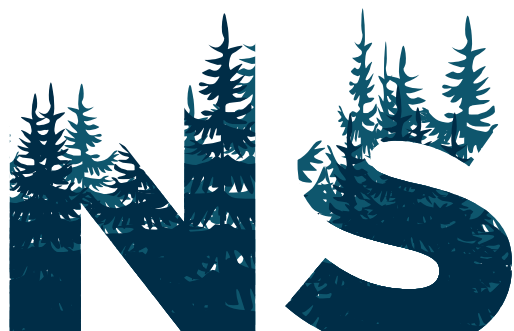
By Emily Haines Lloyd

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

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

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

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



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



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

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

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

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

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



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

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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 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.

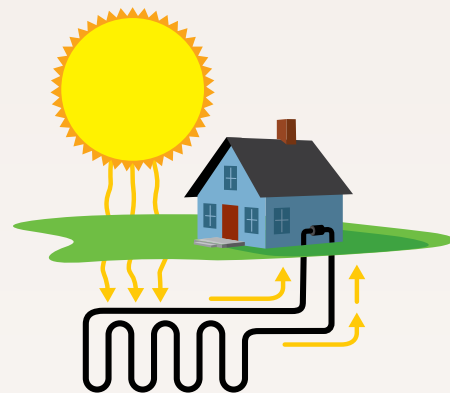
Rolling rural hills eventually give way to the state's urban setting. Motorists maintaining a southern course will pass Comerica Park, Little Caesar's Arena and Ford Field in downtown Detroit, as well as the Marathon Petroleum Refinery with its giant butane sphere painted like a basketball. The highway's 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?



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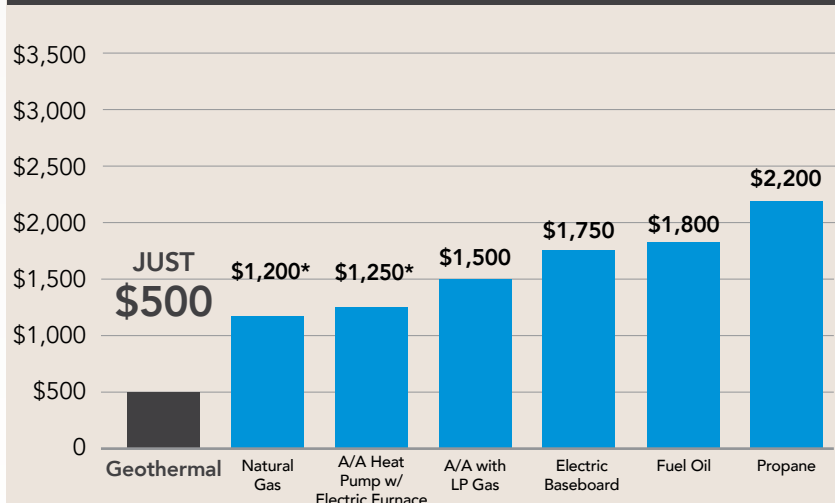
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