

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

People Fund
Annual Report
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PETOSKEY *Stands Up* FOR LITTLE BAY BOARDS

Save the Date For
District Meetings!

Plug Into Electric Cars

Erridge Earns CLCP



Both of these devices create hot air but which uses less power?



Hair Dryer
1,500 watts



**7 Series
Geothermal Heat Pump**
900 watts¹

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1. 7 Series unit uses approximately 900 watts while running in speeds 1-2.





Michigan's Electric Cooperatives
countrylines.com

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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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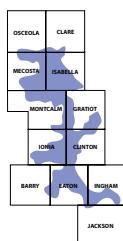
I Remember...

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

Country Lines
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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

HomeWorks Connect

1-800-668-8413

homeworks.org

E-mail: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

Board of Directors

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Celebrating 25 Years Of Service

By Tanya Schneider, People Fund Administrative Assistant



The Tri-County Electric People Fund is celebrating 25 years of service to mid-Michigan this year!

In that time, \$2.2 million has been granted to help 629 individuals or families, and 873 organizations. That's an average grant of \$1,464.47 to help with housing or medical expenses, put books on library shelves, provide radios or protective gear to ambulance and fire services, and so much more!

And it all starts with you, our member-owners, rounding up your monthly energy bills to the next dollar. The difference averages just 50 cents a month, but look at what that has added up to since 1993! Thank you to every person who has supported the People Fund with monthly round-ups, cash contributions, or even using our Amazon Smile link (<https://smile.amazon.com/ch/38-3083659>) when they shop online.

One of the best things about the Tri-County Electric People Fund is that it keeps your money close to home. Some people have confused the People Fund's Operation Round Up on their bill for the new Low Income Energy Assistance Fund (LIEAF) charge of 93 cents a month. Here are some of the differences:

- Your People Fund contribution is voluntary and tax-deductible. LIEAF is neither.
- People Fund grants are decided by local people—your neighbors—and stay here in our service area to help more neighbors. LIEAF goes directly to the state of Michigan, which then disburses it to the Department of Health and Human Services and 2-1-1 agencies, all across the state.
- People Fund grants are meant to be a one-time helping hand. LIEAF funds are a public safety net; funds may be paid out to families several times, up to a pre-determined cap, over a heating season.

I want to say a special thanks to all of our board members since the beginning: Richard Palermo, Jerry Supina, Ed Heffron, Mary Ellen Heffron, Peg Brown, Paul Main, Lisa Johnson, Jan Amsterburg, Peggy Pirhonen, Jim Mull, Dick Donley, Patti Sharp, and Jerrilynn Strong. If we added up all the hours these wonderful people have spent voluntarily reading thousands of applications, presenting checks, and talking about the People Fund, it would be another huge number!

It is a real pleasure for me to support the People Fund and its board members.
Thank you for your help in making the People Fund a success.



Erridge Earns National CLCP Designation

Jeff Erridge, center, was recognized at a recent board meeting by General Manager Mark Kappler, left, and Board Chairman Luke Pohl, for completing the NRECA's Certified Loss Control Internship program. He then completed an individual capstone project and attended a 30-hour OSHA compliance course for general industry. The four-part training, offered in cooperation with the National Utility Training and Safety Education Association, includes sessions with a safety overview and legal issues, leadership and functional skills, applying safety regulations and standards, and managing the safety function. Jeff has been part of our Customer Service team since December 2012.

Going Paperless!

HomeWorks Tri-County members are finding that using our paperless billing service, or signing up for budget billing or bank drafts, pays off in unexpected ways.

Not only are thousands of members enjoying the convenience and time saving of these no-cost programs, two more members have won iPads in a recent random drawing.

You can log in to your account on SmartHub to set most of these services up, or call us at 1-800-562-8232 and we'll help you get started.



Patricia Whitt, with Sweetie the Cat, is from Barryton. Patricia volunteers her free time to EightCap's Senior Companion Program, serving Montcalm, Ionia and Mecosta counties.



Ann Fahey of Hubbardson, left, receives her new iPad from Randi Vanas, a customer service representative for HomeWorks.



Photo courtesy of Michigan State Capitol Commission and Strategic Energy Solutions

Michigan Capitol Goes Green With Geothermal

The Michigan Capitol is going “green and clean” with a new geothermal heating and cooling system. It is projected to be the largest geothermal system at a state capitol in the country at this time.

Michigan has a long track record of geothermal system installations. The state’s climate and geology make it perfectly suited for the technology. Over the past 10 years, more than 17,000 geothermal systems have been installed in homes, businesses, and institutional facilities. Geothermal systems have become very popular in government and education sectors with many colleges upgrading their heating and cooling systems to geothermal including Lansing Community College, Saginaw Valley University, and Ferris State University. Recent studies indicate that the geothermal market is expected to grow at a rate of 8 percent per year.

“It’s impressive that state legislators recognize the benefits of the

technology and its impact on the environment,” said Art Thayer, director of energy efficiency at the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association. “Michigan’s electric co-ops have long supported geothermal systems, and it’s great to see a project with such high visibility.”

Drilling for the 500-foot-deep geothermal field is part of a larger \$70 million infrastructure upgrade already underway at the 139-year-old Capitol. While it will cost nearly \$4 million upfront, officials estimate the geothermal system will save the state \$300,000 a year on heating and cooling costs and pay for itself in roughly a decade.

With Michigan’s electric utilities investing more in renewable energy production such as solar and wind, it makes geothermal systems even more attractive. The net greenhouse gas emissions of a geothermal heating and cooling system utilizing electricity from wind, solar or a hydro-electric

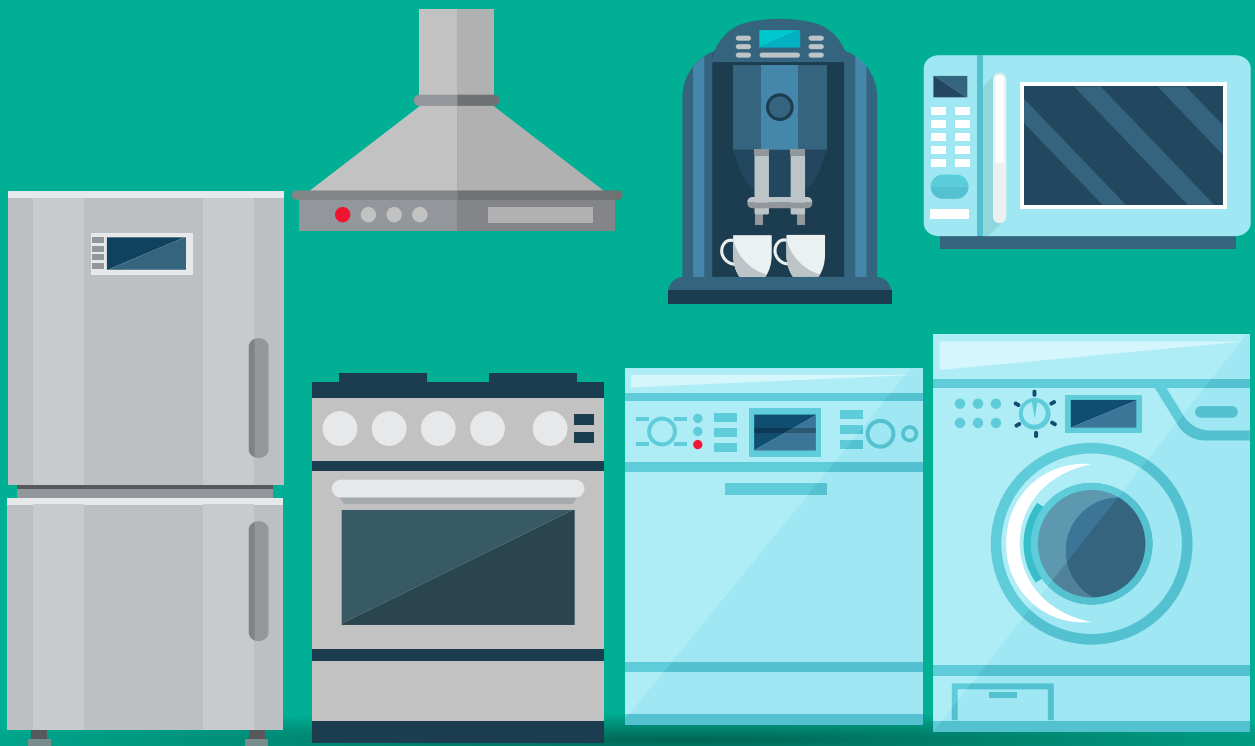
plant is zero as there is no combustion or emissions. Since there is no combustion of fossil fuels, geothermal systems can be four to six times more efficient than fossil fuel furnaces, and more than twice as efficient as a standard outdoor air conditioner.

Visit geoexchange.com to learn more about geothermal.

Thinking of installing a geothermal system at your home? You may be eligible for co-op rebates and a

▶▶▶▶▶ **30%** ▶▶▶▶▶
federal tax credit.

To learn more, consult your contractor.



How To Choose Efficient Appliances

By TJ Kirk, National Rural Electric Cooperative Association

It's never a good day when you realize you need to replace a large appliance in your home. However, when the unfortunate time comes, be sure to take a moment and consider what you will purchase—especially for appliances that haven't been replaced in a number of years, as the technology may have changed substantially. Instead of rushing out to buy the same make and model of appliance you had, consider this an opportunity to assess the market and make a smart purchase that will save you money in the long run.

According to the Department of Energy, appliances account for about 13 percent of the average household's energy use. Clothes dryers, refrigerators/freezers, computers, microwaves, dishwashers and washing machines are the appliances that tend to use the most energy in a typical American home. Every appliance you buy has an operating cost, which is the cost of the energy needed to power the appliance. To facilitate more informed comparison shopping, the federal government requires

some appliances to have an Energy Guide label stating the approximate energy consumption and operating cost of the appliance. Appliances with an ENERGY STAR label use 10 to 50 percent less energy than standard appliances and are generally more expensive than their standard counterparts. So, it's important to compare the lifetime costs of each (up-front cost plus operating costs) to ensure that purchasing the efficient appliance is the best choice.

As you begin your search for a new appliance, check with your electric cooperative to see if they offer incentives for energy efficient appliances, and remember to use the ENERGY STAR website as an additional resource.

Dramatic advancements in the efficiency of many electric appliances now can provide the same level of end-user comfort with substantially less electric input. With a little research and forethought up-front, you can save money over the life of your appliance without sacrificing any benefits. Good luck, and happy shopping!

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

NOTICE OF OPPORTUNITY TO COMMENT

On December 15, 2017, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative filed an Application for Approval of Renewable Energy Plan with the Michigan Public Service Commission (Commission) pursuant to the "Clean, Renewable and Efficient Energy Act" (2008 PA 295, MCL 460.1001, et seq.) and MPSC Order Case No. U-15800 dated December 4, 2008.

Any interested person may review the filed Renewable Energy Plan on the MPSC website under Case No. U-16598 at: www.michigan.gov/mpscdockets and at the offices of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, 7973 E Grand River Ave, Portland, MI 48875, or at the office of the Commission's Executive Secretary, 7109 West Saginaw Hwy., Lansing, Michigan 48917, between the hours of 8 a.m. and 12 p.m. and 1 p.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Written and electronic comments may be filed with the Commission and must be received no later than 5 p.m. on May 8, 2018. Written comments should be sent to the: Executive Secretary, Michigan Public Service Commission, P.O. Box 30221, Lansing, Michigan 48909, with a copy mailed to: HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative, 7973 E Grand River Ave, Portland, MI.

- Electronic comments may be e-mailed to: mpscdockets@michigan.gov. All comments should reference Case No. U-16598. Comments received in this matter becomes public information, posted on the Commission's website, and subject to disclosure. Comments must not include information you wish to remain private.

Any proposed Renewable Energy Plan Charges may not exceed \$3 per meter per month for residential customers, \$16.58 per meter per month for commercial secondary customers or \$187.50 per meter per month for commercial primary or industrial customers.



Get \$50 for your old refrigerator or freezer.

Stop wasting energy and money! Recycle old, functioning appliances and earn cash incentives:

- **Refrigerator = \$50**
- **Freezer = \$50**
- **Dehumidifier** (ride along item) = **\$15**
- **Window Air Conditioner** (ride along item) = **\$15**

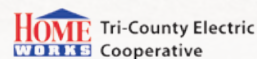
Contact the Energy Optimization team to schedule a free pickup.

Shopping for new appliances?

Receive cash incentives when you purchase ENERGY STAR® appliances. Visit the EO website for a complete list of savings opportunities.

ONLINE: 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.



Snap Shot

Talented Kids

1. William Masterson from Lake shared this photo of his granddaughter, Camille, decorating Christmas cookies for the holidays.
2. Audrey Hoppes of Lyons sent in this Snap Shot of son Xavier. At three years old, Xavier had the opportunity to participate in a kiddie tractor pull last spring at Ionia's Farm Power tractor show. He followed the directions, tried his best, got first place for his age group, and even said "good job" and cheered on the other kids. "We were proud parents of our first-time tractor puller!"
3. Elizabeth Vette of Portland sent in this photo of sons Randy (left) and Blake. "I spend most of my summer with my (twin) boys racing all over Michigan. Their talent of racing has placed them in the top five for the state. And they always seem to be finishing back to back, always trying to beat the other. They have grown to enjoy this sport and are always picking up new tips on how to improve their riding skills."
4. Raychel Smith from Portland shared a photo of Caelyn Smith, 15, practicing a gymnastics pose on a Lake Michigan beach near Silver Lake Sand Dunes.
5. Melissa Sytek of Lake Isabella took this photo of Alex Sytek, age 11. "This was taken at our friend's house on the race track. This kid LOVES to ride!"



1



2



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Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

"Show Us Your Garden," Deadline: March 15 (May issue)
"Outdoor Adventures," Deadline: April 16 (June issue)

Enter to win a
\$100
energy bill
credit!

Go to homeworks.org and select *Country Lines* under the Electric tab to submit your photos and see additional themes. It's fast and easy. To send by mail: include your name, address, phone number, photographer's name, and details about your photo. Mail to Attn: *Country Lines* Snap Shots, 7973 E. Grand River, Portland, MI 48875. Photos will not be returned. Do not send color laser prints or professional studio photos.

Submit Your "Show Us Your Garden" Photos!

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!



Potato Perfection

Nothing beats the humble potato.

Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

Baked Mustard Potato Wedges (pictured above)

Sharron Fromius, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

- 5–6 cups small new potatoes, cut into wedges
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup olive oil
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup Dijon mustard
- 2 tablespoons butter, melted
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon garlic powder
- 1 tablespoon dried oregano
- salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 3 tablespoons Parmesan cheese, more or less according to your preferences

Preheat oven to 400 F. Lightly oil or spray a rimmed baking sheet. Clean and cut potatoes into wedges. In a large bowl, or Ziploc bag (I prefer using bags), mix the olive oil, mustard, butter, garlic powder and oregano. Add potatoes to bowl or bag and mix well. Dump potatoes onto the baking sheet. Spread out in one layer as much as possible. Generously sprinkle with salt, pepper and Parmesan cheese. Bake for about 30 minutes or until they are fork tender and the desired crispiness you like.



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



Refrigerator Mashed Potatoes

Donna Miller, Cherryland

- 5 pounds potatoes
- 2 (8-ounce) packages cream cheese
- 1 (16-ounce) container sour cream
- 2 teaspoons onion salt
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{4}$ teaspoon pepper
- 1 stick butter, softened

Peel and cook the potatoes, drain well, then mash them with a mixer. Add remaining ingredients and blend well. Eat right away or put in the fridge. Potatoes will thicken up more if refrigerated; they tend to be thinner if used immediately. Keep in the fridge for up to one week.



Heather's Sweet Potatoes

Heather Vedder, HomeWorks Tri-County

- 6 sweet potatoes, peeled and cubed
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup orange juice, plus 1 teaspoon orange juice concentrate
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup brown sugar
- $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon cinnamon
- $\frac{1}{8}$ teaspoon nutmeg
 - pinch of salt
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup pecans, finely chopped
- 2 tablespoons of butter
 - half a bag of marshmallows

Preheat oven to 350 F. Boil the cubed sweet potatoes in salted water until soft. Mash the sweet potatoes (some lumps will remain). Add orange juice, orange juice concentrate, brown sugar, cinnamon, nutmeg, and salt. Spread mixture in a shallow, rectangular pan. Sprinkle with pecans; dot with butter. Bake for 34 minutes. Add marshmallows. Bake for another 10–15 minutes until marshmallows turn slightly brown.



Spice It Up ... due April 1

Eggcellent ... due May 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

Little Bay Boards owner Jason Thelen knows that snacks and drinks are a great way to kickstart the creative process. Thelen uses organic coconut oil in his all-natural board wax, so he confidently uses the same oil, a trusty cast iron pan, and a heat gun to whip up some potato chips for his friends and neighbors. He's modified the recipe for your kitchen.



Beach-Style Potato Chips

- 4 Russet potatoes
 - coconut oil (Jason warns you, coconut oil tastes like coconut. He calls these chips Hawaiian flavored.)
 - sea salt
 - garlic (optional)

Wash potatoes. Slice potatoes evenly about $\frac{1}{8}$ inch thick. This is important so that they cook evenly. Soak the slices overnight in fresh water. Using a cast iron skillet, melt about a half inch of coconut oil in the pan. Bring the pan to a temperature between 325–350 F. Higher temperatures will cause the pan to smoke. Add a little garlic (minced is fine) into the oil as it's heating up. Take potatoes and lay them out on a paper towel to dry them. Dab dry. Place sliced potatoes evenly in the hot oil. Cook to your preference. (Jason likes his a bit softer, while his wife likes them crunchy.) Remove from oil. Sprinkle with sea salt. Cool and serve.

Read the full story about Little Bay Boards on page 14, and find this recipe and others at micoopkitchen.com.

Fuel Mix Report

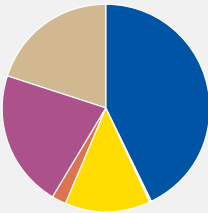
The fuel mix characteristics of HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative as required by Public Act 141 of 2000 for the 12-month period ended 12/31/17.

Comparison Of Fuel Sources Used

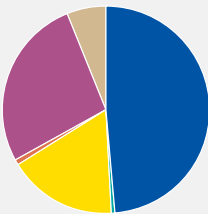
Regional average fuel mix used		
Your co-op's fuel mix		
Fuel Source		
Coal	42.8%	48.8%
Oil	0.3%	0.4%
Gas	13.5%	17.0%
Hydroelectric	2.2%	0.9%
Nuclear	21.3%	26.8%
Renewable Fuels	19.9%	6.1%
Biofuel	0.7%	0.9%
Biomass	0.4%	0.5%
Solar	0.3%	0.1%
Solid Waste Incineration	0.1%	0.1%
Wind	18.1%	4.1%
Wood	0.3%	0.4%

NOTE: Biomass above excludes wood; solid waste incineration includes landfill gas; and wind includes a long-term renewable purchase power contract in Wolverine's mix.

Your Co-op's Fuel Mix



Regional Average Fuel Mix



Emissions And Waste Comparison

Type Of Emission/Waste	lbs/MWh	
	Your Co-op	Regional Average*
Sulfur Dioxide	3.0	3.7
Carbon Dioxide	1,674	1,999
Oxides of Nitrogen	1.2	1.4
High-level Nuclear Waste	0.0066	0.0083

*Regional average information was obtained from MPSC website and is for the 12-month period ending 12/31/17. HomeWorks purchases 100% of its electricity from Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc., which provided this fuel mix and environmental data.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland on January 22, your board of directors:

- Learned about the various types of electric meters and how the Cooperative tests them for accuracy.
- Authorized opening a separate bank account for business needs of the Co-op's fiber-to-the-home subsidiary.
- Reviewed the annual director compensation and expense report, and completed individual conflict of interest statements.
- Approved a new PowerVision loan through the Cooperative Finance Corporation (CFC).
- Reviewed and approved Board Policy 119 – Rules of Procedure for Member Comments, with revisions.
- Learned there were 82 new members in December.
- Acknowledged the December safety report, 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 March 26 at Portland and April 23 at Blanchard. Members who need directions to the meeting, or wish to have items considered on the board agenda, should call 517-647-7554.

People Fund Helps Area Families And Local Food Pantry

Meeting January 24, the Tri-County Electric People Fund board made four grants totaling \$4,200. These included:

- \$500 to Mount Pleasant Discovery Museum, for their Helping Hands scholarship program;
- \$2,000 to Chippewa Lake Community Church Food Pantry, Evart, for food truck deliveries that fill pantry shelves;
- \$700 to an Isabella County family to help with housing expenses; and
- \$1,000 to a Montcalm County family, to help with housing expenses.

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

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

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

Note: Applications must be received by April 9 for the April board meeting, and by May 21 for the May board meeting.

Use SmartHub For More Than Paying Your Bill

1.

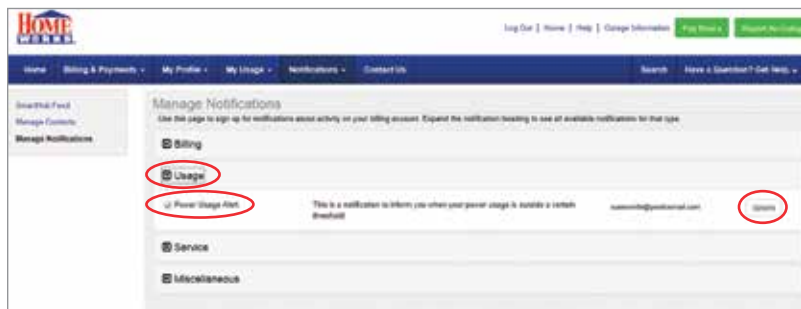


Our free SmartHub service (online or as a smart-device app) now includes a monitoring feature that will help you keep tabs on your electric use.

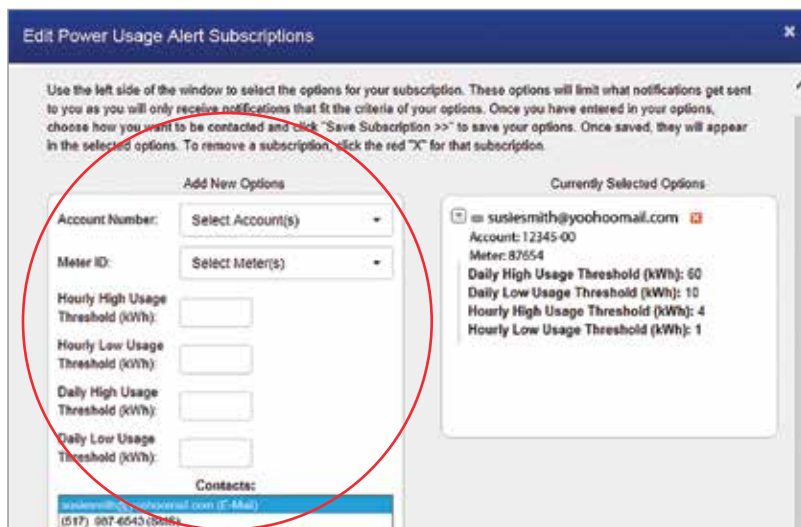
Both the SmartHub app and SmartHub at HomeWorks.org give you secure access to maintain your account information, view your bills, see payment history, make payments on one or more accounts, set up recurring payments and report outages. They also allow you to monitor and manage your usage by use of graphics and usage markers.

You can monitor your daily and hourly usage, and receive notifications if your meter records a higher or lower usage than you've set.

2.



3.

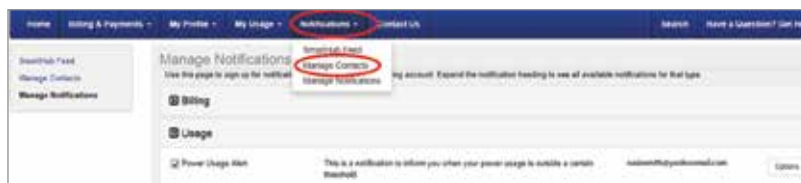


How do you sign up for notifications?

Log into SmartHub on our website, and click on Notifications (graphic 1), then select what kind of notifications you would like to receive (graphics 2 and 3). Note: set-up for this feature is available only on the website, not through the app, at this time.

Next, select your preferred notification method (Text, Mobile Push, Email or Phone) and fill out the appropriate notification information based on your selection. Click Next to continue, verify the notification parameters and confirm. (Note: If you have multiple accounts, while you are setting the notification it will prompt you to indicate which account the notification is for.) Be sure to click Save Subscription before you leave the page, or your settings won't be recorded.

4.



5.



For the final step, see graphics 4 and 5 to see how you can update your preferred contact methods or add a text option.

If you change your mind about receiving notifications, each message comes with an Unsubscribe option, or you can simply log into SmartHub to make changes.

PETOSKEY *Stands Up* FOR LITTLE BAY BOARDS

By Emily Haines Lloyd // Photos by Northern Territory Imaging and Design



If it takes a village to raise a child, then it most certainly takes one to raise a brainchild.

Little Bay Boards, the brainchild of Jason Thelen, is the well-loved Stand Up Paddleboard (SUP) darling of Petoskey. Indeed, it was the community of Petoskey that inspired Thelen to turn a dream into a successful business. Today, Thelen has carved out more than just a great company, he has created relationships with many other local business owners and friends. And that, Thelen notes, is one of his greatest successes.

Thelen, a Petoskey resident and great-great-great-grandson to Chief Petoskey—a legendary figure amongst the native Odawas and the namesake of both the town and Michigan's state stone—hadn't intended to build a thriving artisan SUP business. He, like most Michiganders, was looking for a way for his family to enjoy the nearby water and lakes.

"That's the thing about Michigan," said Thelen. "You want to get out on the water as soon as possible and stay out as long as you can."

So, Thelen, who at that time worked as a full-time carpenter, tried his hand at building his own stand-up paddleboard. After scouring the internet for how-to's and professional advice, from the likes of Paul Jensen, godfather of the hollow wood paddleboard and Jason's mentor, he opted to start with a smaller board for his then 9-year-old daughter.



Visit littlebayboards.com to learn more
or call 231-838-8451.

Visit countrylines.com to watch a video
about how Little Bay Boards are made.

"From there, things went in a way I still don't quite understand," said Thelen.

It began with strangers at the beach coming up to their vehicle, admiring the board and asking where they got it. Then people asked how he'd done it himself. Finally, Thelen's wife asked if he thought he could build another one. So, he did. Then he sold it. Then, he built another board and sold that one, too.

As with many small businesses, there was a time when Thelen had to make a decision to stay with his full-time carpentry position or take a leap into this SUP venture.

With the support of his family, Thelen jumped. Or, rather, he paddled.

With each leap of faith, another answer, another supporter, another order would arrive.

Community members, like the owner of a local boutique, Lake Affect, offered space to showcase a board. Local friends and neighbors set aside wood cut-offs and leftovers that they thought Thelen might be interested in using. A friend and owner of Northern Territory Imaging and Design offered his services to help Thelen reach and connect with more people. T-shirts and the website were all created by folks from the neighborhood. Eventually, his now-business partner took over the day-to-day details to give Thelen more time to create. His business neighbor from Mary Bea Art was a daily inspiration on his creative process. Even the Little Bay Board's landlord was a source of support as he lent his own machinery and tools to help Thelen develop his craft.

Of the nearly 6,000 residents in Petoskey, Thelen notes that some days it feels like nearly everyone in the community has, in one way or another, had a big impact on Little Bay Boards.

"Things have grown beyond my dreams. We have boards that we've shipped to Switzerland and Australia," said Thelen. "But in the end, I'm building these boards and this business with the local people I see every day at the grocery store. I feel like the [entire Petoskey] community is giving our company...this big, loving hug that helps us grow."



"I feel like the [entire Petoskey] community is giving our company...this big, loving hug that helps us grow."
— Jason Thelen



HomeWorks CEO Mark Kappler Leading The Charge Toward Electric Vehicles

By Charly Markwart

Anyone who's ever purchased a new vehicle knows there are seemingly countless factors to consider before deciding upon the model that's right for you. Should you go for space or fuel economy? Manual or automatic? What options should you add? And now, an added key question on the minds of many consumers is this: "Should I go electric?"

For HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative CEO Mark Kappler, the answer to that question, in reference to both his own personal vehicle and a new fleet vehicle for the Co-op, was a resounding "yes." Kappler purchased an all-electric Chevy Bolt for himself in the summer of 2017, and approved a purchase of the same model to replace an aging Cooperative fleet vehicle in December.

"I thought it was time to purchase an electric vehicle for the Co-op because the technology has finally matured to the point that the economics work," said Kappler. "We want to continue to reduce the Cooperative's carbon footprint, and this was a great way and a great time to do that."

When it came to buying a new personal vehicle, Kappler and his wife had to carefully consider what their primary use of the vehicle would be, among other factors, before deciding to go electric. But once they did their research and weighed the pros and cons, Kappler says all signs pointed toward the Bolt.

"As we analyzed the way we used our existing small car, for short trips to the grocery store, to work and school, to events at Michigan State, etc., we found that the Bolt's maximum mileage range of 238 miles per charge would more than meet our needs," he said. "We worked it out and realized the lower operating costs of the vehicle would result in a cost savings for us. After that, the decision was easy."

That's an analysis currently being conducted in many households across America. According to Inside EVs, a newsletter and website dedicated to publishing information about electric vehicles (EVs), U.S. sales of EVs increased by more than 25 percent last year in comparison to 2016. In total, nearly 200,000 EVs were sold

in the United States last year (about one percent of the total vehicles sold). That's an upward trend that HomeWorks Energy Advisor Brandon Trierweiler expects to continue through 2018 and the years to come.

"Going forward, electric vehicles are going to continue to play a more vital role in the auto industry," he said. "With recent news that other countries like France and China are going to stop the sale of petroleum-fueled vehicles over the next couple of decades, and with manufacturers increasing the range of electric vehicles to make it possible for the general consumer to consider electric as a viable option, I think the sales are just going to keep increasing."

EVs have a battery instead of a gas tank, and an electric motor rather than the internal combustion engine that powers traditional vehicles. Most EVs can be charged by plugging into a standard 120 V outlet, but for a faster charge, many owners opt to install a specialized 240 V charging system in their garage. While the driving range varies considerably among models, FuelEconomy.gov notes the average

midsize EV has a range of about 150 miles per charge. (The Bolt, a small hatchback with a driving range of up to 238 miles per charge, far exceeds that average.)

“Probably the biggest misconception regarding electric vehicles is the range anxiety that can come from not understanding how people use their current vehicles,” said Kappler. “Studies have shown that most people use their vehicles for shorter trips most of the time. My wife and I have a small SUV that we use for long trips and more carrying capacity, but for short trips, which make up the majority of our driving, we use our electric car exclusively.”

Potential EV consumers especially concerned about driving range might also consider a plug-in hybrid electric vehicle (PHEV). PHEVs have a battery and an electric motor, but they also have a gas tank and an internal combustion engine to provide back-up power when the battery runs low. Kappler notes that public charging stations are becoming more prevalent, especially in urban areas, making it easier to recharge away from home. (On average, a full charge of an EV with a range of 150 miles takes about six hours.) Most EVs have an app built in to locate nearby charging stations, and the app can be downloaded to smartphones, as well.

While some EVs are more efficient than others, FuelEconomy.gov notes the average midsize EV needs 28 kWh of electricity to travel 100 miles. At HomeWorks’ current electric rate, that would make the average cost of driving an EV about \$0.04 per mile, and the average cost to fully charge an EV with a 150-mile range about \$6.65. Annually, the typical midsize EV driver spends less than \$600 to charge their vehicle, compared to the approximate \$1,300 the average driver spends on gasoline in a year (based on current Michigan gas prices). In addition, electric rates are historically more stable than gas prices, meaning EV owners typically don’t have to worry about sudden spikes in their driving costs.

Another concern EV drivers don’t have to worry as much about is vehicle maintenance. EVs have no oil, transmission, spark plugs, fuel filter, or other parts known to commonly cause headaches for drivers. Generally, the only parts requiring regular maintenance are the tires and brakes. (Eventually, an EV’s battery pack does need to be replaced.)


“For my wife and I, the experience of going electric has exceeded our expectations.”

“Even the brakes last longer due to the regeneration technology built into the car,” said Kappler. “Electric vehicles are very high-tech, the performance is great, and due to the low center of gravity with the battery, they drive and ride very well. For my wife and I, the experience of going electric has exceeded our expectations.”

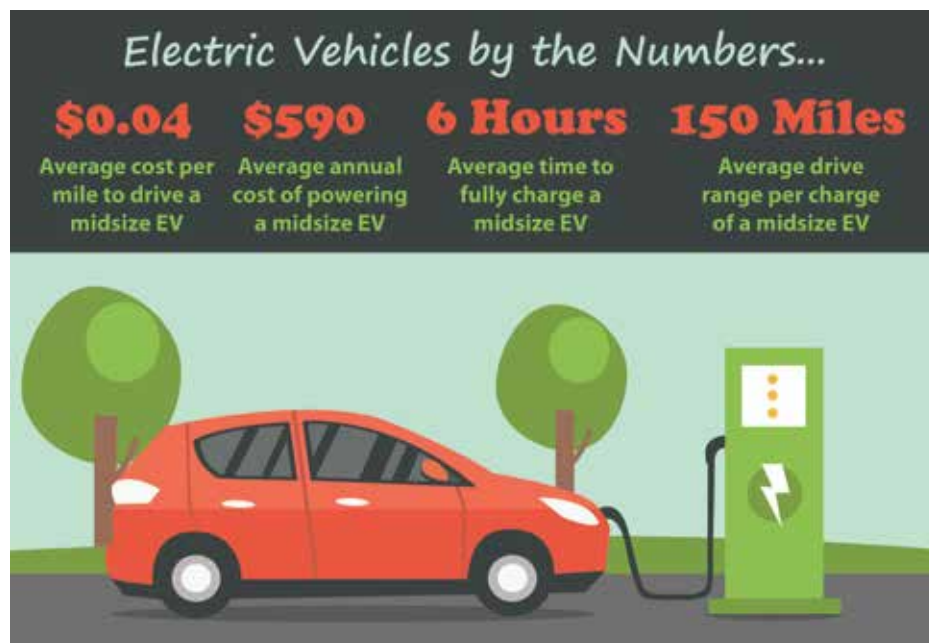
Currently, EVs run a bit more expensive than comparable petrol-fueled vehicles, but those prices are expected to even out over the next few years as EVs become more prevalent. There is incentive to get in on the technology ahead of that

curve, though. At least through 2018, new EVs and PHEVs may qualify for a federal income tax credit of up to \$7,500 (credit amount may vary based on the capacity of the battery used to power the vehicle). Additional state and local incentives may also apply.

And, of course, there are the environmental benefits of driving an EV. With no tailpipe emissions, EVs produce far less pollution than petrol-fueled vehicles. Charging the car still generates emissions, but with our electric power supply from Wolverine Power Cooperative reaching 56 percent carbon-free this year, the total greenhouse gasses emitted to power an EV remain significantly lower than petrol-fueled vehicles.

“As a new EV-owner, I would encourage any HomeWorks member purchasing a new vehicle to consider an electric vehicle,” said Kappler. “Part of the reason for us buying an electric vehicle for the Co-op was so we could speak intelligently to interested members about them and have it available for them to see. I would also be happy to speak personally with any member considering an electric vehicle.”

To reach Kappler, call 517-647-1281. You can also learn more about electric vehicles at epa.gov/greenvehicles.



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Where In *Michigan* Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo above by March 20 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 January 2018 issue is Jon Jahnke, a Thumb Electric Cooperative member, who correctly identified the photo as the Charlevoix South Pier Light Station.

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



January photo courtesy of Thomas Mann



Jack's Journal: Country Music Today

By Jack O'Malley

Several weeks ago I received an email from a listener to my radio show complaining that Country Music "isn't country anymore." It's a sentiment I've heard again and again. That's why, this month, I thought I would publish my remarks to that listener in the hopes it might help someone else. Here is my response:

I've been in country music a long time now. The loyalty to the genre is amazing. Everyone has his or her likes and dislikes. I've heard your complaint many times over the years, and I've even discussed it with artists. Here is the long and the short of it: what you like is what you like. You are not wrong.

This is the issue. Country music has always evolved—from the Hillbilly Days to the 1960s Nashville sound to the outlaws of the '70s and so on. Vince Gill had an interesting take on it when he was asked "his opinion" of current music. He said, "It isn't my cup of tea...but I know what I was playing wasn't necessarily the cup of tea of the guys who came before me."

Eddie Rabbitt once told me that when he was coming along, he knew that he was pushing the older artists off the radio. That's just the way it works. He said, "Now it's my turn to be pushed out the back door...[but] I am just gonna try and hang on to that doorknob as long as I can."

The point I'm trying to make is that country music has always evolved. From fiddles and guitars to adding drums and then electronics, the music has changed. From Ferlin Husky to Jim Reeves and Ray Price, artists have learned from the music of their era—just like young artists are doing today. Garth Brooks was disliked by traditionalists in the 1990s, 25 years ago, some might argue. Today, he is as country as anyone else.

So, yes, today's instrumentation might not be considered classic country, but it reflects the times. However, the one constant in country music is the lyrics. This is where I believe country music really lives. It's not found in a fiddle, but in the songs themselves. They still talk about real life! We aren't in coal mines and factories like the '60s. We aren't in the '70s or '80s anymore either. Today's world is cell phones and instant communication. Artists today are talking about life today, not a life of bygone years.

My friend, time marches on. WTCM FM is and always has been your Top 40 country music station from the '70s to today. We played the hits then and we play them today—with a large "tip of the hat" to our past.

Thanks for loving country music!

Readers, this will be my last *Michigan Country Lines* article as I am stepping into a new adventure...wish me luck!

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SAVE THE DATE

**For Your District
Membership Meeting**

May 14—District 5 Fulton Elementary School Gym,
Middleton
May 15—District 6 (Election). Beal City High School
(small gym)
May 16—District 2 St. Edward's Church Hall, Lake Odessa
May 17—District 4 Montabella Jr-Sr High Cafeteria,
Blanchard
May 21—District 1 St. Mary's Family Center, Charlotte
May 22—District 3 (Election) Eagle Park Hall
May 23—District 7 St. Michael School, Remus

Doors open and a light supper is served at 5:30 p.m., followed by a business meeting and operations update at 6 p.m.

Energy Optimization instant rebates will be available on LED bulbs, smart power strips, and more, plus you can recycle your old CFL bulbs at your meeting. We'll have door prizes and a gift for everyone who attends.

Watch your mailbox in late April for information, a map, and your registration card.



Like us on Facebook to keep up with these events!

