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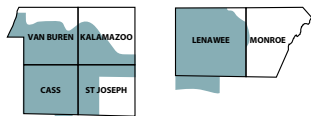
Joelle Majerowicz, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

Guess Our New Mystery Photo And Win A \$50 Bill Credit!

Country Lines, Your Communications Partner

For more than 35 years, our co-op members have received *Michigan Country Lines* because it is the most effective and economical way to share information with our members. An empowering communication tool, *Country Lines* keeps members up-to-date about everything going on within their electric co-op. Issues contain news about our services, director elections, member meetings and management decisions that members need to know about as owners of the co-op. The magazine also includes legal notices that would otherwise have to be placed in local media at a substantial cost. And, sending *Michigan Country Lines* to you helps the co-op fulfill one of its important principles—to educate and communicate openly with its members. The board of directors authorizes the co-op to subscribe to *Michigan Country Lines* on behalf of each member at an average cost of \$3.82 per year, paid as part of members' electric bill. The current magazine cost is 47 cents per copy. *Michigan Country Lines* is published for us, at cost, by the Michigan Electric Cooperative Association in Lansing. As always, we welcome and value your comments.





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Telemedicine Changing The Healthcare Landscape

Robert Hance, President/CEO

I recently experienced my first virtual doctor's appointment. Our health insurance company has a telehealth app that allowed me to connect online with a doctor, provide my insurance information, share symptoms and actually get a prescription. It was definitely more convenient and ultimately less expensive than a trip to my doctor's office, and it was conducted from the late-night comfort of my couch and pajamas.

Since that time, I've seen many additional providers and apps coming out of the woodwork. Telemedicine is growing in popularity and awareness, and it seems like one small cure for an otherwise ailing national healthcare system. Inconvenient office hours, slow and expensive urgent care centers, and crowded ERs are driving consumers to seek alternatives. Telemedicine is changing the healthcare landscape, giving consumers convenient and affordable access to quality health care through online video conversations with board-certified physicians.

Though it's just now trending in awareness and usage, telemedicine has been around for many years, used largely by rural patients to access services and support from medical specialists located in more urban settings. The technology continues to evolve and is now being used to connect people to many types of clinicians, not just specialists, who can diagnose, treat and guide patient care.

Telemedicine will also support the aging-in-place movement, a phrase used to describe a person living in their residence of choice for as long as they are able. The average life expectancy in America today is higher than in any other period in history, and many of today's seniors want and are more able to maintain their independence longer than members of previous generations.

And interestingly, a recent report from the USC School of Gerontology showed that 65 percent of American households with a member 65 years or older has a computer, and 58 percent of such households use the internet regularly. Today's senior is more tech savvy than their peers of yesteryears, and telemedicine can be one source of long-term support.

Yet a huge obstacle remains as many rural patients or would-be patients, young or old, don't have the internet service to support opportunities like telemedicine.

Online, face-to-face communication requires a robust, two-way connection that isn't widely available, and is just another reason our efforts to bridge the rural digital divide with fiber internet are so critical. In designing and building our system, we chose the most advanced communication platform available. I've often shared my philosophy that geography shouldn't define your scope of opportunity, and we're doing everything we can to make sure that residents in our rural corner of the world have the access they need: for healthcare, work, school, entertainment and the myriad of other opportunities that are increasingly available in the digital space.



MEC employees and contractors built raised flower beds for the Vandalia Community Garden as one of the projects in our 2017 Changing the Landscape Day of Service.

Changing The Landscape Day Of Service

On Friday, June 15, we're closing up shop at all of our offices for our Annual Changing the Landscape Day of Service. We're rolling up our sleeves and deploying employee teams across our service territory to help improve the lives of those around us.

If you need to make a payment or report a power outage, please use your SmartHub app or call us at 800-492-5989. Crews will be dispatched as needed for any service-related issues. Drop box payments made at any of our three district service centers will be processed on the next open business day.

Strengthening Schools Grant Applications Now Available

Today's students are tomorrow's business and community leaders, and MEC supports the important work of regional teachers and schools with our Strengthening Schools Grant Program. The program is provided in partnership with Touchstone Energy Cooperative.

Read about one of our 2018 grant recipients on page 9 of this issue.

We are now accepting applications for the 2018–19 program year. Any teacher, administrator or school official in a public elementary, middle or high school serving students in the MEC service territory may apply for a grant of up to \$2,500 to support classroom needs and special projects, technology, or academic clubs and organizations. School districts may be awarded multiple grants, not to exceed a total of \$5,000 during the annual award cycle.

Applications are due Oct. 15, 2018, and funds will be awarded in January 2019. Applications are evaluated and funding decisions made by a committee of MEC members without knowledge of the school or district. Applications and more information are available online at teammidwest.com/grants.

Offices Closed For Memorial Day

Our offices will be closed for Memorial Day on Monday, May 28. Payments made in a drop box will be posted on the next open business day.

From our family to yours, have a happy and safe holiday weekend.





To Easily Manage Your Energy Efficiency Project Contractor

By Pat Keegan and Brad Thiessen

Once you've hired a contractor for your energy efficiency renovation, you need to manage your contractor to ensure quality. Follow the steps below and you'll be on your way to celebrating a successful project in no time.

1.

Establish a single point of contact.

First, you should decide who will be the main contact with your contractor. Clear communication is critical because a renovation that includes energy efficiency improvements comes with extra challenges. A single point of contact will help avoid confusion, conflicts and cost overruns.

2.

Have a discussion about quality.

Before the work starts, have a discussion with your contractor about quality. You want the contractor to know you'll be carefully overseeing the work and that there may be others involved in this oversight, such as building inspectors, your electric cooperative or an independent energy auditor. You can discuss the standards of a professional, high-quality job. And you can agree on the points at which the contractor will pause so you or someone you designate can review the work.

3.

Put change orders in writing.

It will be tempting to add "just one more thing" along the way, and the contractor may agree a change is simple and possible within the timeframes. Contractors and customers often miscommunicate about change orders and end up disagreeing about additional costs when the project is completed. Before you make any changes, be sure to get a written cost quote. If it's significant, you can then weigh the cost against the benefit of the change.

4.

End with an inspection.

Almost all efficiency measures require some kind of final inspection. For example, infrared thermometers can show voids in blown insulation, and fiberglass batts can be visually inspected to ensure there are no air gaps and the batts are not compressed.

HVAC measures require special attention. ENERGY STAR® has a program to ensure quality HVAC installation. Forced air systems typically have poorly balanced supply and return air delivery that can often be improved. Air flow can be measured at each register, and a duct blaster test can identify and quantify duct leakage.

When you review the work, it may be helpful to take photos or to bring in an energy auditor. Be sure to have these inspections outlined in the contract and discussed beforehand, so the contractor is comfortable.

When the renovation is complete, it may be tempting to sign the check, shake hands and breathe a sigh of relief that it's all over. Depending on the size and complexity of the project, it may be worth the extra step of having a final audit by a licensed energy auditor.

Once you confirm that the work is 100 percent complete, you can write a check for the final payment, then sit back and enjoy your revitalized, more energy-efficient home!



**Know what's below.
Call before you dig.**

*Michigan's **free & easy**
utility notification system.*

**For your safety and
for the protection of
underground utility lines,
always follow these
steps before starting any
digging project:**

1.

Contact MISS DIG at
811 or missdig.org.

2.

Wait three business days
for utility owners to mark
their lines.

3.

Respect the marks.

4.

Dig with care.



**Visit missdig.org
for more information.**

Shopping for New Appliances? Look for the ENERGY STAR!

Take a look around your home—are outdated appliances wasting energy and costing you money? If so, it's time to upgrade to efficient ENERGY STAR® models!

ENERGY STAR products provide the same features you're already used to, but can use **up to 75 percent less energy** than standard models. Your purchases will be even more affordable with cash incentives from the Energy Optimization program!

What is ENERGY STAR?

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) introduced ENERGY STAR in 1992 to help consumers identify energy-efficient products. The ENERGY STAR label can now be found on major appliances, lighting, electronics, and even new homes and commercial buildings.

To earn the ENERGY STAR label, a third-party certification process verifies:

- Significant energy savings
- Features and performance consumers demand, plus greater efficiency
- Comprehensive product testing

Did you know? Since the early 1990s, ENERGY STAR has helped consumers save \$362 billion in utility costs!

View all incentives at **michigan-energy.org** or call **877.296.4319** for details.

Save now with cash back from the Energy Optimization program!

Product	Efficiency comparison (vs. a new standard model)*	Energy Optimization program incentive**
Clothes washer	Uses 35% less water and 20% less energy	\$125
Clothes dryer	Uses 20% less energy	\$125
Computer	Uses 60% less energy	\$50
Dehumidifier	Uses 15% less energy	\$75
Dishwasher	Uses 5% less energy and 15% less water	\$75
Chest Freezer	Uses at least 10% less energy	\$75
Refrigerator	Uses 20% less energy	\$200
Television	Uses at least 25% less energy	\$50-100
Room air conditioner	Use 15% less energy	\$50

*All data according to energystar.gov. **Incentive amounts are subject to change; other restrictions may apply.



SAVE BIG WITH ENERGY STAR®!

It's time to upgrade outdated, energy-wasting appliances with ENERGY STAR models. You'll use up to 75% less energy AND save upfront with cash incentives from the Energy Optimization program:

REFRIGERATOR: \$200

CLOTHES WASHER: \$125

DEHUMIDIFIER: \$75

DISHWASHER: \$75

Visit our website for a full list of incentives!

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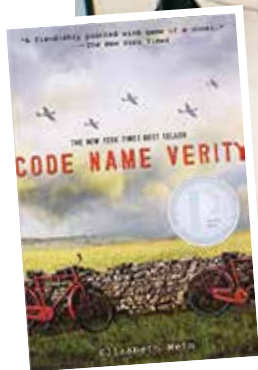


**Energy
Optimization**

MEC

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.

Portage Central Librarian Sara Brown and author Elizabeth Wein prepare to inspire teens and adults at the Portage CommuniTEEN Read event at the Air Zoo.



Building Bonds Through Books

By Amy Pales

The Portage community came together on a March evening to build a love of reading through the third annual Portage CommuniTEEN Read, a common reading program developed by Portage Central and Northern High Schools along with the Portage District Library and Bookbug Bookstore. The event was partially funded by an MEC Strengthening Schools grant.

CommuniTEEN unites the author of the year's selected book with teens and the public to bring the story to life and inspire readers. Sara Brown, Portage Central's librarian, applied for our grant to help host *Code Name Verity* author Elizabeth Wein at the Air Zoo Aerospace & Science Experience.

"We really want each book that we select for CommuniTEEN to create bonding opportunities for families. The ultimate purpose of this program is to get parents and teens reading together to open up lines of communication, not only about the books they read but also about the greater world and their own lives. The themes in this book offer a wonderful platform to do just that," said Brown.

The book also provided opportunities for cross-curricular explorations

through history, English, creative writing and art, a key element in motivating the 800-1,000 teens and adults who participated in this year's program. "We also look for authors who can serve as role models and share their processes," Brown added.

Wein, a passionate and enthusiastic speaker, knows a thing or two about dedication and focus. In fact, she worked on her first published book for 10 years and wrote her first novel in sixth grade. She also understands the value of community in both reading and writing. "You learn to make sense of literature by talking with others about it, which is why programs like this have such a lasting impact," she explained.

Code Name Verity propels readers into World War II where a young female spy named Verity is captured by the Gestapo and faces the grim choice of confession or execution. The book teaches readers the lasting value of true friendship, the groundbreaking and vital role of women in wartime and beyond and, most importantly, the importance of taking responsibility for one's own actions.

"The last one is my number one message in nearly everything I create,"

said Wein, who writes primarily for teens, "Because if you don't learn how to be accountable when you are young, it becomes much harder to do that as an adult."

Congratulations to the Portage community on embracing the cooperative way of neighbor helping neighbor. We are now accepting grant applications for the 2018-2019 school year. See page 5 for more details.



Author Elizabeth Wein shares her inspiration and passion for writing at the Air Zoo Aerospace & Science Experience in Portage, Michigan.



Potluck

Impress family and friends with these crowd-pleasing recipes.

Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

Southwest Mac And Cheese (pictured above)

Jennifer Quail, Midwest Energy & Communications

- 1 pound uncooked macaroni or shell pasta
- 2 tablespoons butter
- 1 medium onion, diced
- 1 15-ounce can packed pumpkin (not pie filling)
- 1 16-ounce package Mexican-style four cheese blend, shredded
- 4 ounces cream cheese, cut into small pieces (for a lighter option, use 4 ounces Neufchatel cheese instead)
- ¼ to ½ cup milk, almond milk, evaporated (not condensed) milk or heavy cream
- 1 10-ounce can diced tomatoes and green chilies, drained
- ¼ to 1 teaspoon dried chipotle chili powder, to taste
- salt, to taste

Preheat oven to 350 F. Prepare pasta according to the package directions, drain and return to pot. Cover.

In a heavy skillet, melt the butter and sauté the diced onion until translucent but not browned. Add the pumpkin to the skillet with the onions and stir over medium heat until warmed through. Mix in the shredded cheese and cream cheese into the pumpkin mixture and stir until melted and smooth. Use milk product to thin as needed until consistency is smooth but not runny. Do not boil. Stir in the can of drained tomatoes and green chiles into the cheese sauce. Season with chipotle powder and salt to taste.

Add the warm sauce to the reserved pasta and stir until combined. Serve immediately, or transfer to a slow cooker set on warm. If you prefer baked mac and cheese, transfer pasta to a greased 3-quart casserole dish. Top with ½ cup shredded cheese and crumbled tortilla chips. Bake for 20 minutes or until top is browned.

Experiment with spices! For a brighter gold color and more bite to the flavor, add ¼–½ teaspoon mustard powder. For a traditional chili con carne flavor, add ¼ teaspoon ground cumin. You can also vary the heat by using different strength tomatoes and chilies, or you can use salsa instead of tomatoes, at your desired heat level.



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



Cookies And Cakes: due July 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!



Buffalo Chicken Meatballs

Heather Poland, Cherryland

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1½ pound ground chicken | ½ teaspoon salt |
| ½ cup panko breadcrumbs | ¼ teaspoon black pepper |
| 1 egg, lightly beaten | ⅓ cup buffalo sauce (I used |
| 1 small carrot, finely grated | Franks, or use your favorite |
| 1 celery stalk, minced | buffalo sauce) |
| 2 green onions, minced | ⅓ cup blue cheese or mozzarella |
| 3 garlic cloves, minced | 3 teaspoons blue cheese or ranch |
| ½ teaspoon paprika | dressing, optional for garnish |

Preheat oven to 400 F. Line a baking sheet with parchment paper; set aside. In a large mixing bowl, combine the ground chicken, panko and egg. Let set for 5 minutes, so panko is soaked by the egg. Add the carrot, celery, green onion, garlic, paprika, salt and pepper. Using your hands mix together until just combined. Using a spoon or cookie scoop, shape into meatballs and place onto prepared baking sheet. Place in oven and bake for 15–20 minutes until cooked through (internal temperature of 160 F). Remove from oven, place the meatballs in a bowl, add the buffalo sauce and gently toss to combine. Drizzle with ranch dressing and blue cheese, if desired. Serve immediately.



Key West 'Shrooms

James Maxwell, Great Lakes Energy

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1 package of portobello or white button mushrooms | 1 package Swiss cheese, sliced |
| 1 package Phillips crab cakes (or similar) | 4 dashes Old Bay Spice |
| | ½ stick melted butter |

Clean mushrooms and remove stems. Place on a microwaveable plate. Dip the mushrooms in the melted butter. Drizzle remaining butter over mushroom tops. Stuff mushroom tops with crab cakes. Sprinkle mushrooms with Old Bay spice to taste. Quarter the cheese slices and place over the stuffed mushrooms. Sprinkle mushrooms with remaining Old Bay spice. Microwave mushrooms for 4 minutes. Place on a serving tray, garnish and serve.

Featured Guest Chef

Enjoy this simple, yet delicious, dish with family and friends gathered around—no matter what the season.



Cherry BBQ Potato Chip Crusted Chicken Fingers

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1 cup mayonnaise | • pinch salt |
| 1 large bag Great Lakes Michigan Cherry BBQ Chips, crushed | • non-stick oil spray |
| ¼ teaspoon ground black pepper | 2 pounds boneless skinless chicken breasts, cut into 1-inch strips |
| | ¼ cup butter, melted |

Preheat oven to 400 F. Scoop mayonnaise into a shallow bowl. Place crushed BBQ chips in another shallow bowl and combine crushed chips with black pepper and a pinch of salt. Dip chicken pieces (just 1 or 2 at a time) in mayonnaise and then coat with chip mixture. Place chicken strips onto a greased baking pan. Make sure to space chicken out a bit so the sides are not touching and can get crispy. Drizzle chicken strips with melted butter. Bake for 20 to 22 minutes until chicken is no longer pink. Remove and allow to cool for 5 to 8 minutes before serving, so chips harden back up. Serve and enjoy!

Optional: Serve with dip or sauce.

Read the full story about Great Lakes Potato Chip Co. on page 14, and find this recipe and others at micoopkitchen.com.

Let Us Be Your Tech Support Partners

Today's world of smart homes, video streaming, home automation and more offers many exciting opportunities to live a more convenient and efficient everyday life. However, getting started can feel intimidating, even a little scary, and we want to help.

Introducing Solutions Tech Support from MEC: For \$49.95/hour, we will teach you how to use a new device, set up your home network, fix issues with your current PC and install a Nest Thermostat—all from the comfort of your home. We will even help you discover the world of streaming television, so you can stop paying for channels you don't watch.

Get To Know Your New Device With One Hour Of Basic Training

We will help you learn to love your new computer or mobile device by providing lessons on navigating a Mac or Windows operating system, teaching you basic functions like manipulating a window and using common keyboard shortcuts, as well as reviewing software included with the operating system. We will also help you connect devices and show you how to use your music player, organize photos and more.

Please note: service does not include installation or setup of any devices or software.

Fix Issues With Your Current PC

Is your computer running slower than normal or exhibiting unexpected behaviors such as redirecting you to unknown websites or preventing certain programs from launching? You may have installed a virus or malware. We will assist with the removal of these issues and repair of your PC.

Set Up And Improve Your Network Connection

Let us set up your router, manage your settings and connect your devices. We will even do a speed test and offer suggestions to improve your wired and wireless connection.



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Are you ready to take advantage of the heating and cooling efficiencies provided by your Nest but not sure where to begin? We will happily install it for you and walk you through its features.

Meet Matt.
He will help you make the most of your devices and online tools from smartphones to Netflix.

Cut The Cord From Your Current Cable Or Satellite Provider

Gain control and flexibility over the TV shows and movies you watch with streaming video. We will help you get started by connecting one online streaming device such as a Roku, Apple TV, Chromecast or other device and will configure up to two online streaming services like Netflix, Hulu, Sling or whatever you choose.

We want you to feel confident that you are using today's technologies in the best ways possible, so give us a call today at 800-492-5989 to set up an appointment.

MEC propane serviceman
Jeremy Bogue prepares
his truck for the day.



Our pre-buy
rate for the new
heating season is
\$1.599

Propane Pre-Buy Offers Price And Convenience Benefits

One of the unique features of our propane service is the variety of program and payment options we offer. We want to make your service convenient and affordable and will work with you to create a plan that meets your unique needs.

Several billing options are available to tailor your experience to what best meets your own situation. Metered service allows you to pay monthly for what you use; level-pay budget spreads your costs out evenly over the year, and pre-buy affords you a special rate when you buy your gas before the start of the heating season.

Peace-of-mind pricing has always been the hallmark of our propane service. We establish a rate and cap it through the heating season with no extra fees, removing the worry of your price per gallon going up as temperatures go down. No matter what the weather does, your rate is secure. Our 2018–2019 capped rate, effective June 1, 2018–May 31, 2019, is \$1.699.

With the popular pre-buy program, you get the added benefits of paying a lower rate and avoiding the need to make monthly payments by purchasing your gas in

advance. Our pre-buy rate for the new heating season is \$1.599. If you use our metered propane service, you can deactivate the meter and eliminate the \$10 monthly fee.

Over the year, we deduct the volume used from your pre-buy account as your gas is delivered. You can easily monitor your account on SmartHub, our secure online platform, and mobile app. Sign up at teammidwest.com/propane, or download the SmartHub app from your app store.

To sign up for new propane service and take advantage of this program, click on the New Customer icon at teammidwest.com/propane and fill out our online form. On the form, indicate that you are interested in the pre-buy program and the number of gallons you require. Or give us a call at 800-492-5989 to get started.

We will email current propane customers about the pre-buy offer. If you do not have an email address, please call us, and we will mail a paper copy. You can also stop by our Cass or Paw Paw Solutions Center Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. to sign up and pay. The deadline to sign up for the pre-buy program is July 31.

CHIPPIN' AWAY

By James A. Curtis // Photos by Robert Bruce Photography and Dre Photography

With
Great Lakes
Potato Chip
Co.



Chris Girrback and Ed Girrback,
owners of Great Lakes Potato Chip Company.

“**E**ddie, what happened to my blankets?” said Ed Girrback’s mother when she noticed they were missing. Ed jokes that after he explained he’d been selling them as ponchos to his schoolmates, “mom’s reaction helped me understand at an early age about the ‘cost of goods sold.’”

Ponchos were Ed’s first foray into business, but the now co-founder of Great Lakes Potato Chip Company (GLPCC)—a member of Cherryland Electric Cooperative—would carry that entrepreneurial spirit his entire life, eventually leading him—along with his son and business partner, Chris Girrback—to open Pangea’s Pizza Pub in Traverse City. Even more, it was that same spirit that inspired a growing interest in manufacturing.

Ultimately, deciding where they would strike out next came down to a simple question: “Dad, what do you like?” asked Chris.

Ed thought for a moment and replied, “Well, aside from pizza, I like potato chips.” And the idea for GLPCC was born.

The Girrbauchs threw themselves into researching potato chips; and on May 5, 2010, they founded GLPCC with two part-time employees and one old fryer to begin manufacturing their favorite—skin-on kettle chips.

In the eight years since, the chip company has experienced tremendous growth and won numerous accolades, including being named “Number One Kettle Chip” by *The Chicago Tribune*, and “Most Investable Second-stage Food Company” at Crain’s Food Summit. They also received a “Gold” rating for kettle and tortilla chips at the Saratoga Springs Chip Festival—the birthplace of the potato chip.

“We get asked a lot why we leave the SKIN ON.”

“It’s simple. It just TASTES BETTER.”

Today, the chip company produces seven flavors of kettle chip, a tortilla chip, has 16 distributors, retails in seven states, employs 30 people, and is growing at a rate of 30 percent per year.

All this growth means more potatoes, and Michigan has no shortage—it’s the leading producer of chipping potatoes in the nation. The Girrbauchs developed a special relationship with Sackett Farms in Mecosta—a HomeWorks Tri-County Cooperative member—to supply their potatoes. Sackett Farms is a sixth-generation, family-owned farm specializing in A-grade chipping potatoes, whose crop is in high demand.

“Chris’ first trip to Sackett Farms was humorous,” said Ed. “He drove 110 miles to the farm in his pickup truck with a crate in the back and had to get in line with semi-trucks to load up the potatoes. He was the only pickup in the line, and we’re thankful they let us jump in and hold up their process.”

Chipping away at the potato chip industry, the Girrbauchs eventually sent more than a pickup truck to Sackett Farms. Now, a semi-truck delivers 120,000 pounds of potatoes a week—and they are looking for more. The chip company has invested nearly half a million dollars in automation to double its capacity to keep up with demand. With each upgrade, Ed and Chris look closely at the most energy efficient equipment as part of their commitment to sustainability, and they value their partnership with their electric cooperative.

Coincidentally, GLPCC and Sackett Farms belong to electric cooperatives that are members of Wolverine Power Cooperative. The Wolverine cooperatives lead Michigan in new renewable energy. In 2018, the co-ops reduced their carbon footprint by 25 percent—now providing members with 56 percent carbon-free energy. “Cherryland operates as a true partner, their whole mindset is how do they help us, and how do we work together to find more ways to be energy efficient,” said Ed. “We love doing business with them.”

As Great Lakes Potato Chip Company continues to grow, Ed takes great pride in his Michigan-made products, their highest-quality ingredients, and their unique process to get a crispier, crunchier, tastier chip. “We get asked a lot why we leave the skin on,” said Ed. “It’s simple. It just tastes better.”



Visit greatlakespotatochips.com to learn more about these Michigan-made chips.



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“Living in a rural location for over 20 years has been a challenge with the internet. I’ve had everything from dial-up to broadband, but I’ve either had to pay a fortune, had bad service or limitations on data. My grandchildren could not view any of their videos and it’s hard to tell a five-year old that she can’t see her movie at Gramma’s house. Now, that’s all changed.” —Jane, Marcellus

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- **How many people use the internet in your home?** Think about who is there everyday, and don’t forget the regular visitors, like grandchildren, who might be heavy internet users during their visits.
- **How do you use the internet?** Some activities, like streaming videos and gaming, require higher speeds than activities like checking email and browsing the web.

Our basic 25 Mbps plan is typically recommended if just a couple of people want to read email, check social media, video chat with loved ones or listen to music. If you want to stream movies, play online games, automate your home

with devices like smart thermostats, and work from home, you’ll likely need more speed. And if you have multiple people with multiple devices doing some or all of the activities described above, you’ll definitely need to bump up the speed to get the most out of your service.

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MEC Employees Give Back

As a co-op founded on the principles of neighbor helping neighbor, we have made a mark as a steward in the communities we serve. Eight years ago, that spirit came alive in a more personal way in the lives of our employees as they came together to form Midwest Employees Give Back (MEGB), a charitable fund governed, owned and funded entirely by MEC employees.

Employees make voluntary donations to the fund each year and work together to determine award recipients. Two-thirds of the funds received annually are donated to charities selected by the employees. Remaining funds are awarded to individuals and organizations based on applications submitted by employees and reviewed by our Employee Involvement Committee. As an employee family, we have helped provide supplies to a local therapeutic horse camp, funded a spay/neuter clinic, offered much-needed support to families experiencing critical illness or a traumatic event like a house fire, and many other worthwhile projects.

To date, MEGB has donated over \$100,000 to local charities and individuals, and we recently delivered donations to the organizations that our employees selected as the 2017 recipients: Ronald McDonald Houses in Ann Arbor, Mich. and South Bend Ind., First Church of God Compassion Cupboard in Cassopolis, Mich., and Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry in Adrian, Mich.



MEC employees Patty Clark (far left) and Pam Myers (far right) present the 2017 MEGB donation to Fishes & Loaves Food Pantry in Adrian, Mich.



MEC employee Nicole Barfell (middle) presents the 2017 MEGB donation to the Ronald McDonald House in South Bend, Ind.

Access To Rules And Rates

Please be advised that the following information is available to Midwest Energy & Communications (MEC) members:

1. Complete rate schedules;
2. Clear and concise explanation of all rates that the member may be eligible to receive;
3. Assistance from MEC in determining the most appropriate rate when the member is eligible to receive service under more than one rate;
4. Clear and concise explanation of the members' actual energy use for each billing period during the last 12 months.

The information can be obtained by contacting MEC at 800-492-5989.

Guess this
photo and enter
to win a
\$50
energy bill
credit!



Where In *Michigan* Is This?

Identify the correct location of the photo above by May 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 March 2018 issue is Ann Pihlaja, an Ontonagon County REA member, who correctly identified the photo as the Traverse City Cherry Festival Air Show.

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

March 2018



Photo courtesy of Karen Murphy

I Remember...



My grandfather, Carl (Lavy) Hagstrom, is holding me, Joelle, and my Uncle Carl is looking on.

Berry Picking

I remember going berry picking with my grandfather, Carl (Lavy) Hagstrom, in the woods around Cheboygan. My grandfather had special berry picking pails and adjustable belts. He said it was important for both hands to be free to pick the juiciest ones! But my belt was always too big, so I hung it from my neck.

I never saw anyone who could pick berries as fast as he could. It didn't matter if we were picking raspberries or huckleberries, he always filled his pail first. He would tease me because I couldn't keep up with him, but he knew I was eating two berries for every one I put into my pail. My hands were always stained with the juice.

We took the berries home for my grandmother to can and the rest she saved for us to eat on our cereal or to make a special treat. Many evenings after dinner, our family would get involved in making homemade ice cream. It was hard work turning the handle of their ice cream machine, but it was worth it, as my grandfather would add some delicious berries. I always looked forward to summers in Cheboygan with my grandparents and making berry ice cream!

Joelle Majerowicz, Presque Isle Electric & Gas Co-op

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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