

September 2018

MICHIGAN COUNTRY LINES

HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative



How To Read
Your New Bill

People Fund
Board Changes

What's New
With Fiber

BRINGING SPIRITS HOME

Iron Fish Distillery
Embraces Its Roots



Harness the power of the sun...

...by using the Earth.



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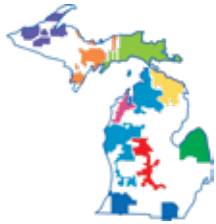
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POSTMASTER: SEND ALL UAA TO CFS.

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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Win \$150 for stories published.

Guest Column

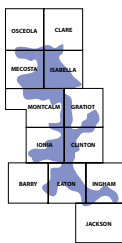
Country Lines
invites members to
submit stories.

Guidelines


1. Approximately 350 words
2. Digital photos must be at least 600 KB
3. Submit your guest column at countrylines.com under the MI Co-op Community tab

2018 International Project Postponed

The Bolivia electrification project featured in previous issues of *Michigan Country Lines* magazine has encountered an unexpected setback. Due to unforeseen in-country circumstances, the project will not be completed this year as planned. Michigan's electric co-ops are evaluating other potential international outreach opportunities.



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

Email: tricoenergy@homeworks.org

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Just What The Doctor Ordered

Mark Kappler, General Manager

Each and every month, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric looks out for its members by providing them with the most reliable electric service at the lowest possible cost. That's been the foundation of our co-op since 1937, and it's something we're very proud of.

Another way we look out for our members is by providing every household with the Co-op Connections Card. This member benefit card helps you save money on everyday expenses like groceries, clothing, and insurance at thousands of local and national retailers. Did you know you can save on your cell phone service, your next hotel stay, or tickets to see your favorite band, just for being a HomeWorks member? You can! The Co-op Connections Card can be used online to access special partner sites for additional savings on all of these items and so much more.

One of the biggest benefits of the Co-op Connections Card is the prescription discounts you can receive on your next trip to the pharmacy. That's because with your card, you'll be able to get 10 to 85 percent off your prescription drugs at over 60,000 locations including national and regional pharmacy chains. Many local independent pharmacies in our service area also accept the card. Since the Co-op Connections Card was initiated, members of our cooperative and hundreds of others using the program across the country have saved a total of over \$100 million at the pharmacy just by showing their card at the counter.

We know that many people have faced economic hardships lately, and our hope is that the Co-op Connections Card will help a bit in lessening the burden on your pocketbooks. It's just another member benefit brought to you by your electric cooperative.

Your household should have received a Co-op Connections Card in the mail as a part of your welcome packet when you became a HomeWorks Tri-County Electric member. But, if you don't have your card anymore, don't worry! Simply visit www.Connections.Coop and log into or sign up for your free member account. Once you are logged in, click on the "Healthy Savings" option and then select "Print My Card" to print out a physical copy of your card that can be presented at your pharmacy and participating local businesses. Click on the other options on the website, such as "Book a Hotel" or "Shop Online" to find great online discounts from national and regional companies.

If you have any questions about your Co-op Connections Card, feel free to call our office at 800-562-8232.



Join us on Facebook.

facebook.com/homeworks.org

How to Read Your New HomeWorks Bill

When you received your August HomeWorks electric and/or propane bill, you may have noticed some changes in the appearance of the bill. We made these formatting updates to make it easier for you to read your bill and to quickly locate important information pertaining to your account each month.

Below are some of the highlights of these changes. You should also have received an insert along with your August bill explaining the changes in greater detail. (Access inserts at: <http://bit.ly/HWelectricbill> for electric or <http://bit.ly/HWpropanebill> for propane.) If you have questions about how to read your new bill, please feel free to call our office.

Highlights of Your New Bill:

- You'll notice that all of your important account information, including your usage, current balance, and due date, are located in easy-to-read boxes on the front of your bill. These boxes are blue for electric accounts and green for propane.
- For past due accounts, an obvious red Disconnect Notice box will appear on the front of the bill.
- For electric accounts, we've added a helpful graph and chart to the back of your bill showing how your current usage compares with the previous month and the same month in the previous year.
- For propane accounts, we've added information about SmartHub, our free account management app, to the back of your bill.
- For both electric and propane accounts, we've added a box to the bottom of the back of your bill where you can easily sign up for our Operation Round Up program, or for our convenient budget billing or paperless billing options.

SAMPLE ELECTRIC BILL

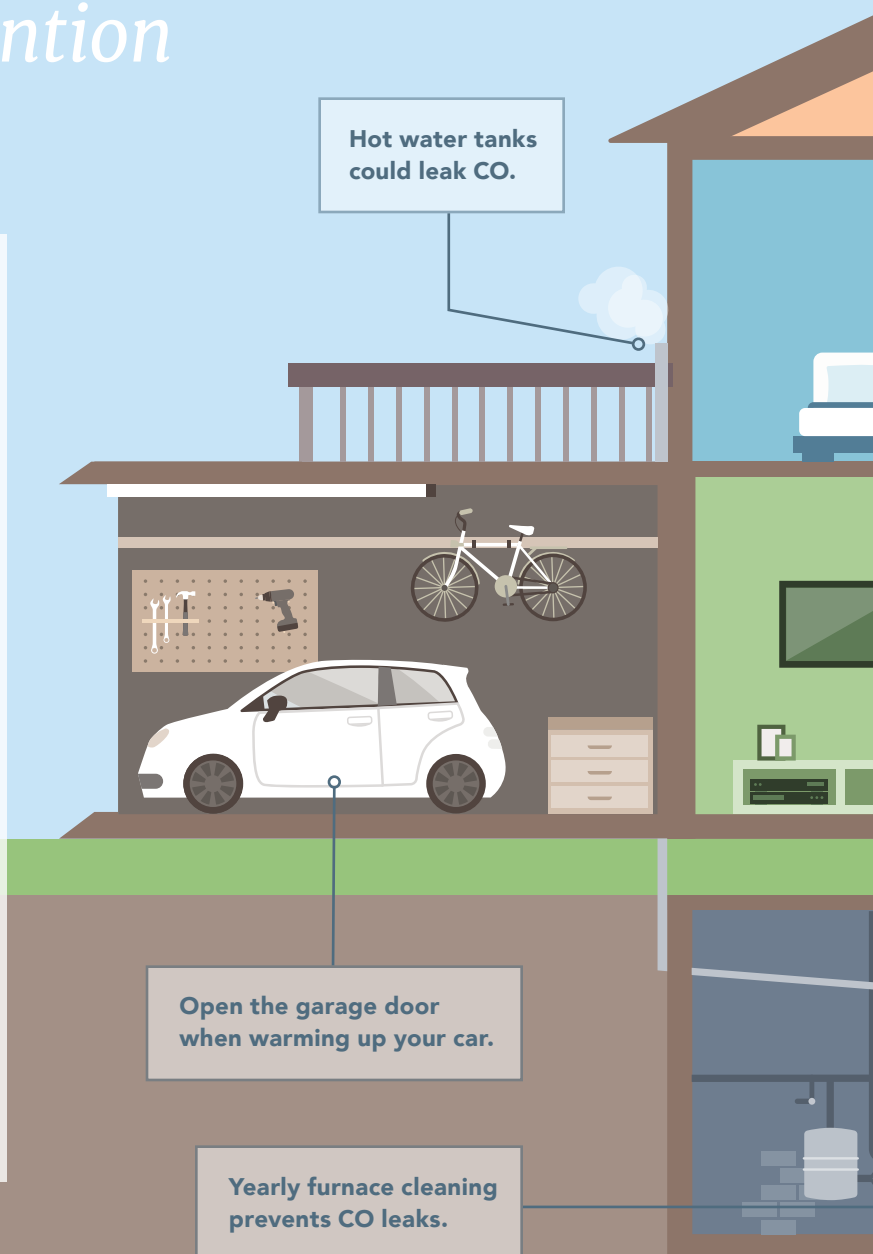
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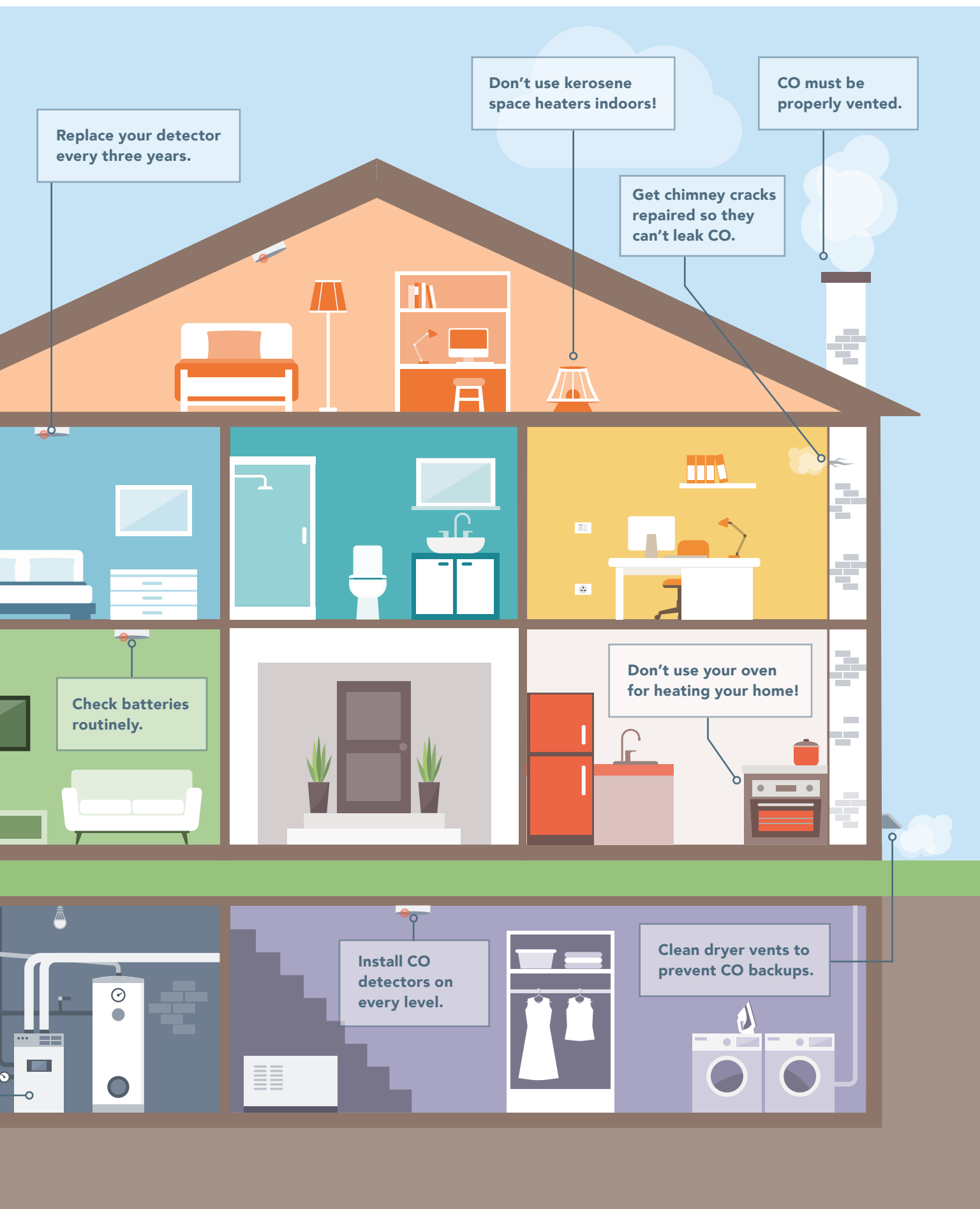
CARBON MONOXIDE

Causes and Prevention

CARBON MONOXIDE FACTS

- CO poisoning is responsible for 20,000 ER visits every year.
- ER visits for CO poisoning are highest in the midwestern states.
- CO is a colorless, odorless gas which makes it more dangerous since it is invisible to the senses.
- Symptoms of CO poisoning include: nausea, vomiting, headache, dizziness, confusion, chest pain, and decreased level of consciousness.
- Children are more vulnerable to the poisonous effects of CO.





Get Cozy And Save Energy

Cooler weather is on the way. Now is the time to take action and upgrade your outdated, inefficient furnace. Doing so will help you save energy and money for years to come, and also ensure consistent, evenly-distributed air throughout your home—improving your overall comfort.

Plus, cash incentives are now available from the Energy Optimization program!

HVAC REBATES

(visit michigan-energy.org for amounts)

New furnace with ECM blower motor

ECM blower motor replacement

Central Air-source Heat Pump

Mini/Multi-Split Air-Source Heat Pump

Ground Source Heat Pump

Wi-Fi-enabled or smart thermostat

**Combo bonus rebates available for purchasing multiple pieces of equipment.*

What is an ECM Motor?

An electronically commutated motor adjusts operating speeds, ensures optimal airflow, and uses less electricity—saving you energy and money.

If you can't afford to purchase a new furnace, replace your existing blower motor with an ECM to improve efficiency. Since the blower motor uses about 80 percent of the total electricity consumed by the furnace, switching to an energy-saving ECM can make a major impact.

Heat Pumps: Even More

Efficient heat pumps use electricity to move heat, rather than generate heat. Air-source heat pumps are the most common, and can reduce electricity use for heating by up to 50 percent. For homes without ducts, mini-split heat pumps are available.

Geothermal (ground-source) heat pumps achieve even higher efficiencies by transferring heat between your home and the ground. They can cost up to 75 percent less to operate compared to conventional heating or cooling methods. Consult your HVAC contractor for recommendations.

Buy a New Thermostat

Wi-Fi-enabled and smart thermostats help control energy costs by allowing you to program and adjust temperatures remotely, 24/7. Smart thermostats can program themselves as they "learn" your behavior patterns and desired temperatures.

Visit michigan-energy.org or call **877-296-4319** for additional energy-saving information and incentives.

SAVE ON HEATING COSTS

Want to reduce energy use, save money, and enjoy a more comfortable home? CASH INCENTIVES are available now to help you invest in equipment upgrades:

- High-efficiency furnace
- ECM blower motor
- Air-source or ground-source heat pump
- Smart thermostat
- ...and more!

VIEW ALL INCENTIVE OFFERS ONLINE!

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.

get cozy



Snap Shot

Fall Colors

1. Sara Miller of Sumner shared this Snap Shot with the note, "This beautiful tree faithfully wears her colors every year starting in mid-October. Unfortunately, it isn't our tree, but it's just down the road!"
2. Angela Marez of Nashville shared this photo of son Mateo Marez playing in a pile of leaves last fall at Putnam Park in Nashville, Mich.
3. Jeremy Kimball from Remus sent in this serene scene of Blanchard Mill Pond from the hill.
4. Karen Retter of Jerome (receiving service at Barryton) says, "Fall is one of my favorite times during the year to take photos, but it doesn't get any better than fall in Marquette."
5. Joelle Beebe from Mount Pleasant says this is a photo of "the golden hour."



Upcoming Snap Shot Contest Topics And Deadlines

"Celebrations," Deadline: Sept. 17 (November-December issue)

"Cutest Kids," Deadline: Oct. 17 (January issue)

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 Photos!

Submit Your 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!

Enter to win a
\$100
energy bill
credit!



Cocktails And Drinks

Shake things up with these easy-to-make, boozy drinks.

Photos—Robert Bruce Photography

Mexican Sangria (pictured)

Mindy Aves, HomeWorks Tri-County

- 1 cup lime juice
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 bottles White Zinfandel wine
- 2 cups fresh orange juice
- ½ cup triple sec
- ½ cup tequila
- 2 cups frozen, seedless grapes (red, green, and purple)
- 2 cups sliced oranges or nectarines
- 1 cup sliced limes

Mix lime juice and sugar. Add wine, orange juice, triple sec and tequila. Chill until cold. Add fruit (may not need as much as called for.)



Watch a video of this recipe at
micoopkitchen.com/videos



French Blonde

Jan Updike, Cherryland

- 1 cup ruby red grapefruit juice
- 1 cup Lillet Blanc (available at larger liquor or wine stores)
- ½ cup gin (or less to make it less alcoholic)
- ¼ cup St. Germain elderflower liqueur
- 4 dashes of lime or lemon bitters
- garnish with a slice of grapefruit or another citrus

Mix all ingredients in a suitably sized pitcher. Chill if needed. Serve in a martini glass. Garnish with a slice of grapefruit or another citrus. Makes approximately 3–4 drinks.

Celery Sipper

Jodi Moelker, Great Lakes Energy

- 2 cups chopped celery, including leaves
- 1½ cups sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1 tablespoon celery seeds

In a medium bowl, stir together the chopped celery, sugar, water and celery seeds. Let stand, stirring occasionally until sugar dissolves. Chill, covered, 8 hours or overnight. Strain through a fine-mesh sieve. Transfer syrup to a lidded jar or bottle and store in the refrigerator for up to two weeks.

For an alcoholic version, throw in an ounce or two of gin. For a non-alcoholic version, use celery sipper liquid to flavor soda water, adding a squeeze of lemon if desired. Serve immediately and enjoy!



Fisherman's Punch

Arline Welty, Ontonagon REA

- 1 30-ounce bottle of 100% pure peach juice (no added sugar)
- 1 bottle (750 mL) dark rum
- 1 1-pint bottle (375 mL) brandy
- 5 ounces freshly squeezed lime juice
- 5 ounces freshly squeezed lemon juice

Punch: Chill the peach juice, rum and brandy. Squeeze limes and lemons. Pour all ingredients into a large plastic or non-reactive jug. Stir well to combine. Cover and place jug in the refrigerator to chill, at least 4 hours. If serving in a punch bowl, pour into a bowl over a large block of ice. Garnish with lime or lemon slices.

Ice Block (Optional): Wash and dry a rectangular cardboard milk carton. Cut off the top to create a rectangular mold. Pour filtered water to fill to 25 percent and add thinly sliced limes on top. Let freeze, and repeat process of adding water and limes, and freezing. This creates a block of ice with limes throughout, which looks nice in the punch bowl.



Holiday Favorites: due October 1
Pasta Perfect: due November 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

Enjoy this creative cocktail from Iron Fish Distillery. Their true passion is to offer customers the craft of soil-to-spirit distilling from a family business that cares about their employees, community and the living land. Every step of the process—from growing and harvesting non-GMO grain to cultivating native yeast, milling, mashing, fermenting, distilling, aging, and bottling—is done by hand at their distillery. Cheers!



Salted Maple Old Fashioned

- **Glass:** Rocks
- ½ Bar Spoon (¼ ounce) of maple syrup
- 2-3 dashes of aromatic bitters
- 2 ounces maple bourbon
- **Garnish:** 5 salt flakes and an orange twist

Build ingredients in glass, combine with ice, and stir until chilled. This drink also tastes great with Iron Fish Experimental Barrel Finished Gin!

Bourbon Whiskey Finished In Maple Syrup Barrels

Bourbon Whiskey: Iron Fish Distillery has some delicious local maple syrup, from the Griner Family Sugar Bush, that was aged in used whiskey barrels for months. Those whiskey barrels were then filled with a high rye bourbon and left to marry, resulting in a subtly sweet and deep flavor.

Black Label Bourbon: As the leaves began to fall, and while waiting for their own Iron Fish distilled whiskey to reach its prime, distillery staff came upon this spirit—a blend of corn, rye and malted barley in fired American oak barrels. The staff fell for it and gave it a trace of maple by finishing the spirit in aged whiskey barrels steeped in maple syrup. Settle in and enjoy this unique, thoughtful and distinct Bourbon—the beauty is in the contrast.

Both the Bourbon Whiskey and the Black Label Bourbon are available for purchase at Iron Fish Distillery.

Read the full story about Iron Fish Distillery, on page 14, and find this recipe and others at micoopkitchen.com.



SUBMIT A NOMINATION TODAY!

Michigan Country Lines is on the hunt for entrepreneurial movers and shakers to showcase in our March 2019 magazine. We know co-op members are awesome and there is no shortage of pioneers, innovators and leaders in our service territory. Featured entrepreneurial endeavors can be small start-ups, large operations or anything in between.

If you know a friend, neighbor or coworker we should consider, nominate them by December 31 at countrylines.com.

Self-nominations are accepted.

Notice to Members of HomeWorks Tri-County Cooperative

Case No. U-16598 2017 Renewable Energy Plan Annual Report Summary

Michigan law requires all Michigan electric utilities to get approximately two percent of their power supply from renewable sources by 2012 and increasing to 10 percent by 2015.

Under this requirement, HomeWorks Tri-County Energy Cooperative submits an Annual Report to the MPSC regarding its Renewable Energy Plan. In 2017, HomeWorks acquired a total of 57,019 renewable energy credits and 860 incentive credits. All credit transfers were directed through HomeWorks' wholesale power supplier, Wolverine Power Supply Cooperative, Inc. Wolverine will continue to generate renewable energy and bank unused renewable energy credits for future use and compliance with statutory renewable portfolio standard requirements on behalf of all of its members.

A full copy of the cooperative's Renewable Energy Plan Annual Report that was filed with the MPSC is available on the cooperative's website at homeworks.org or by request at any of the Cooperative's offices.

Public Act 295 as amended by Public Act 342: The Clean Renewable and Efficient Energy Act

2017 Annual Energy Waste Reduction Report HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative MPSC Case Number U-18280

During 2017, HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative administered its Energy Waste Reduction (EWR) plan through the Michigan Electric Cooperative Collaborative in order to comply with PA-295. Previously, HomeWorks, through the Collaborative, submitted its EWR plan with the MPSC. This EWR plan was approved by the MPSC. The Collaborative implemented the EWR Plan during 2017.

Overall HomeWorks achieved a goal at approximately 121 percent savings. The full report can be obtained at your Cooperative's headquarters.

Board Votes on EO Rates, LIEAF Program, Renewable Energy Tariffs at Special Meeting

The HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Board of Directors held a special open member meeting June 25 to consider three items. They were as follows:

Adjustment to Energy Optimization Surcharge

The Board approved an increase to the Energy Optimization (EO) surcharge in order to help cover the costs of the programs. HomeWorks' EO programs are state-mandated offerings designed to encourage the efficient use of electricity. The programs are funded through an EO surcharge on members' monthly electric bills (as required by Michigan Public Act 295 of 2008). Since the programs began in 2008, HomeWorks has not charged members the full surcharge rates allowed by the state. Program costs continue to grow, however, and current rates won't cover future requirements, so a small increase was recommended to the Board.

The increase will take effect Oct. 9, and will raise the residential member EO surcharge rate from \$0.00173 per kWh to \$0.00325 per kWh. For residential members with average electric usage, this will increase your monthly bill by about \$1.22.

"As these EO programs continue, it's costing more to achieve the same state-mandated goals than it did in 2008 when the programs started," said HomeWorks energy advisor Brandon Trierweiler. "This small increase will help us to better cover the current costs of the programs."

The good news, he says, is that those programs are benefiting HomeWorks members. "Member participation in our EO programs is going up, and more incentives are being paid out, which is a great sign that these programs are working for our members."

Current Michigan energy legislation allows municipalities and electric cooperatives to opt out of the state-mandated EO programs in 2021, if they so choose.

State of Michigan's Low Income Energy Assistance Program

Like last year, the Board voted to opt in to the state's Low Income Energy Assistance Program for 2018-2019. Electric utilities that participate in this program collect a small state-mandated monthly charge from member-consumers (the charge will be \$0.93 again this year, meaning you will see no increase on your monthly bill), which is remitted to the state. Low-income member-consumers of that utility are then eligible for assistance from Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and the Michigan Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) via 2-1-1 agencies.

Member-consumers of utilities that opt out of the program are not eligible for assistance from DHHS or MEAP during the winter months.

"We're opting in to the program again because it gives our members in need a safety net in the cold months," said Missy Robson, HomeWorks manager of customer service. "We believe the benefits to our members far outweigh the costs."

Phase II of Renewable Energy Tariffs

Lastly, the Board approved the tariff sheets for Phase II of the distributed renewable energy programs offered by Wolverine Power Cooperative. This is a continuation of the net metering, community solar and buy-all/sell-all options HomeWorks currently offers in association with Wolverine. The only change to the programs in Phase II is that the buy-all/sell-all option is now capped at 100 KW, instead of 1 MW, and the rate for that program has decreased from \$0.10 to \$0.065 per kWh. Phase II took effect July 1.

If you have any questions about the items voted upon at the June special open member meeting, please call our office at 800-562-8232.

Notice To Members Of Homeworks Tri-County Electric Cooperative

June 25, 2018 Open Member Meeting

The HomeWorks Tri-County Electric Cooperative Board of Directors, at a Special Open Meeting held June 25, 2018, has in accordance with P.A. 167:

- Revised the Cooperative's Energy Optimization rates to meet program needs.
- In accordance with P.A. 95, elected to participate in the state of Michigan's Low Income Energy Assistance program for 2018-2019.
- Adopted tariff sheets for Phase 2 of renewable energy options—Buy All/Sell All and Distributed Renewable Energy—offered by Wolverine.

For specific details of any HomeWorks tariffs or fees, please call us at 1-800-562-8232 or visit our website at www.homeworks.org.



BRINGING SPIRITS HOME

Iron Fish Distillery Embraces Its Roots

By
Rob
Marsh

Every year Great Lakes steelhead return to their home in the Betsie River, running inland throughout northwest Michigan. Like these tenacious fish, the proprietors of Cherryland member Iron Fish Distillery in Thompsonville are returning the heritage of farm-distilled spirits back to the region.

Iron Fish is the only small-batch farm distillery in Michigan, but they are far from the first. "This area has a history of distilling small-batch spirits," said Richard Anderson, co-owner of Iron Fish. "Before Prohibition, there were plenty of people in this area distilling their own spirits on their farms."

These farms were a memory for Anderson's wife, Sarah, and her sister, Heidi, when they were young, spending their

summers visiting family in Benzonia. Heidi and her husband, David, later bought a seasonal home on the Betsie River, near the 120-acre farm that would later become the home of Iron Fish.

"It was a second-generation family farm that had been abandoned for a decade or so," said Anderson. "David and Heidi bought the land to save the farmhouse and barn and preserve the farm from being parceled up and sold."

While they enjoyed spirits, Anderson and his family didn't have plans to start a second career, let alone open a distillery on the property. It took a birthday trip to Scotland to give them the push they needed. "Touring distilleries in Islay, Scotland, we came across a farm distillery which really fed our passion for returning to northern Michigan to start our own farm distillery. That was when we began to take this idea that we could distill spirits seriously."

Within three years of returning from Scotland, Iron Fish became a reality.

From the beginning, Anderson quickly realized that they were doing something special. "Last year over Labor Day weekend, we just opened our doors. We didn't have the time to do a soft opening," said Anderson. "And within days of opening the tasting room, we sold out of our vodka!"

To date, Iron Fish has won over 10 national awards for their spirits, become the vodka provider for premium seating at Ford Field in Detroit, and started distributing their products to over 600 Michigan locations and throughout Chicago, Illinois. "It's going better than we thought," chuckled Anderson.

Iron Fish embraces their roots and takes full advantage of their farm's natural resources, using the property's grain for distilling spirits, growing their own cocktail garnishes in a bartender's garden, and supplying mash as cattle feed for local farmers. "We are a full ecosystem here. It's been our commitment to create a sustainable, working landscape."

This commitment to the land extends to their neighbors as well. In addition to hosting community and charitable events, Iron Fish partners with local farms and uses their products in Iron Fish spirits. "When someone drinks our white rum, they taste honey from Sleeping Bear Farms. And when someone drinks our gin, they taste sprigs of Concolor Fir from Antioch Tree Farm. We are perfecting the craft and art of distilling while giving back to our community."

Like the schools of steelhead working their way up the river, the people at Iron Fish Distillery are determined to continue the northwest Michigan tradition of distilling. All the while, they are supporting the land and the community who depends on it. 🐟



Iron Fish's four family partners, staff, and distribution representative gather to see their first pallet of spirits placed into statewide distribution. Iron Fish spirits can be found in over 600 Michigan locations as well as throughout Chicago, Illinois.



For more information about Iron Fish Distillery and to access a special coupon code for a tour of the facility, visit ironfishdistillery.com.

The coupon code is good for 50 percent off the cost of a tour through 2018, normally \$10. Enter CODE: **MCL2018** on the "Tour" tab of their website and complete the registration, by selecting the date, time and number of people.

Visit ironfishdistillery.com to book a tour.



Visit countrylines.com to learn more about Iron Fish Distillery and the craft beverage scene in Michigan on a special episode of the Co-op Energy Talk podcast, hosted by Cherryland Electric Cooperative.

Your Board In Action

Meeting at Portland on June 25, your board of directors:

- In a Special Open Member Meeting, authorized a small increase in the Energy Optimization surcharge; opted the cooperative into the Low Income Energy Assistance Fund; and authorized Phase 2 tariffs for Distributed Renewable Energy.
- Went over the results of the recent Rural Electric Safety Achievement Program inspection.
- Learned about progress made with the HomeWorks Connect fiber-to-the-home business, and authorized an adjustment to the capital budget to allow for the purchase of a heavy-duty material handler.
- Discussed a final report from the 2018 district membership meetings, and heard plans for the 81st Annual Meeting on August 18.
- Reviewed preliminary results from an internal controls examination performed by the auditing firm of Eide Bailly.
- Learned there were 112 new members in May.
- Acknowledged the May safety report, listing employee training and minor employee and public incidents.

Meeting at Blanchard on July 23, your board of directors:

- Toured Morbark Inc. in Winn, one of the Co-op's largest member-consumers.
- Reviewed results and positive comments from an internal controls examination performed by the auditing firm of Eide Bailly.
- Heard about progress made by the HomeWorks Connect fiber-to-the-home business.
- Discussed plans for the 81st Annual Meeting on August 18.
- Went over the schedule for a strategic planning session in late August.
- Learned there were 140 new members in June.
- Acknowledged the June safety report, listing employee training and minor employee and public incidents.

Pirhonen Retires From People Fund Board

After 23 dedicated years of volunteer service to the Tri-County Electric People Fund, District 5 Director Peggy Pirhonen has retired from the board. Pirhonen, a retired government analyst, is going to be spending more time out of the area due to expanded family responsibilities and felt the People Fund Board needed someone who could continue to participate in board meetings on a regular basis.

"The People Fund is an excellent program to be a part of, and it's hard to believe I was part of the board for 23 years," she says. "Being able to help our fellow human beings at a time when they truly need it, for so low a cost per year—that's why the People Fund is so important to mid-Michigan."

One local advocacy group she has been especially proud to support, both through the People Fund and personally, is The Voice for Clinton County's Children in Saint Johns. A grant from the People Fund helped their CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate) Program and Child Advocacy Center build a special room in their facility where abused children can tell their stories in a comfortable, safe and kid-friendly environment.

"The People Fund board members really take requests like that to heart," Pirhonen says.

She also enjoyed the opportunity to help individuals and families in need throughout the HomeWorks service area throughout her time on the board.

"It's not just that we're able to help out, but it's in those extenuating circumstances like a medical crisis," she says. "With the People Fund, they aren't judged against the numbers. If we can help them, we do."

Taking over for Pirhonen on the board will be Kevin Sopocy, of Saint Johns, who says the chance to volunteer with the People Fund came along at just the right time for him.

"I had been wanting to be able to give back to the community somehow, and I was looking for an opportunity when Corinna Batora (HomeWorks District 5 Director) asked me to consider joining the People Fund Board," he says.

Sopocy, who formerly worked in the power industry and for Greenmeadow Farms, has years of volunteer experience with the Knights of Columbus and as a 4-H leader for livestock at the Gratiot County Fair. He says he is excited to get to work helping his neighbors and area organizations in need through the People Fund.

"We can't help everybody," he says, "but we can help light the way out of the tunnel for a lot of families."



Peggy Pirhonen



Kevin Sopocy

What Does It Take To Build A Fiber System?

To help answer the question, "What's taking so long?" here's a step-by-step guide from pre-registration to being connected with HomeWorks Connect.

1. Gathering Interest - Members who are excited about HomeWorks Connect can show their interest by pre-registering at HomeWorksConnect.org! This helps us to determine which zones we should focus our construction efforts on. It's important to note that pre-registration isn't a binding contract and package options can be changed before the final customer agreement is signed.

2. Planning/Designing - Once interest in a zone is high enough, it will be added to the next construction phase. Most zones in Phase 1, which is made up of Divine, Eagle, Grand Ridge, Chief Okemos, Oneida, Orange, and Route 66, are in this step.

Before any actual building is done in a zone, we have teams of engineers determine the best way for us to run our fiber cables. Crews are then sent out to stake and build the backbone of the system. Members will be notified of the construction in their area and may see our crews at work in their zone.

3. Sign Up/Commitment - After a zone has its mainline built, it's nearly time to connect homes; but first, we need each member to sign their customer agreements! These will be made available to members as their zone reaches this step. This is also when customers can choose which package they will be paying for. Signing an agreement guarantees that HomeWorks Connect will bring fiber to their home.

4. Home Connections - When enough contracts are signed, splicers and installers are sent out to complete the three step process of staking, trenching, and connecting a home. Our crews will work with homeowners to decide on the best way to hook their homes to the fiber to ensure quality and safety.

5. In Service! - After months of hard work by our crews and members, we will be able to say that a zone is connected and the benefits of high-speed fiber internet are being enjoyed!

We thank all our members for their patience as we begin HomeWorks Connect. As much as we wish we could hook everyone up overnight, it's an impossible task. We will continue to work as quickly as we can to bring high-speed fiber internet to all!

Become A Connector Today!

Connector



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-up & down
- Unlimited Data
- 1 Year Customer Agreement
- No Pricing Games

Super-Connector



\$74.95 /mo.

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- Unlimited Data
- 1 Year Customer Agreement
- No Pricing Games

Giga-Connector



\$199.95 /mo.

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- up & down
- Unlimited Data
- 1 Year Customer Agreement
- No Pricing Games

Talk



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* Applies to calls to the U.S., Canada, and the Caribbean

Plus



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- Life-time Warranty Wifi Router
- 24/7 Customer Support



To pre-register visit HomeWorksConnect.org or call 800-668-8413!

This service is not regulated by the Michigan Public Service Commission.

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 September 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 July/August 2018 issue is Kevin Dubord, an Alger Delta Cooperative member, who correctly identified the photo as the Shrine of Bishop Frederick Baraga. He was also known as the Snowshoe Priest who became the first Bishop of the Upper Peninsula and the Apostle of the Great Lakes.

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

July/August 2018



Best Cider Mills

Between the cider, doughnuts, hayrides and corn mazes, cider mills provide a great day out for families. Enjoy a perfect fall day at one of these awesome cider mills recommended by your fellow co-op members.



1 Phillips Orchards & Cider Mill, St. Johns

Phillips Orchards & Cider Mill has the best cider, donuts, Michigan gifts and paintings. It's just about the neatest place to go. —*Marilyn Fitzpatrick, HomeWorks Tri-County*

2 VerHage Fruit Farms & Cider Mill, Kalamazoo

VerHage Fruit Farms & Cider Mill is by far THE BEST cider I have ever tasted! There are no preservatives and nothing added except real apples and sometimes other fall fruit. They also have homemade doughnuts, pick your own apples, shopping, music, hayrides, a zip line and more fun for kids at nominal prices. If you haven't been to VerHage Cider Fruit Farms & Cider Mill farm you need to go there! If you have...you already know what I'm talking about...They are open from the spring with all kinds of fruit and fresh baked goods through the holidays in December. —*Sue Gottlieb, Midwest Energy & Communications*

3 Klackle Orchards, Greenville

Klackle Orchards has something for everyone. You will not be disappointed by making a trip to Klackle! The donuts and cider are to die for. —*Shelly Dunn, Great Lakes Energy*

4 Friske Orchard & Farm Market, Ellsworth

Friskie Orchard & Farm Market is a bushel of fun! Families love the outdoor orchard playland and the animal petting zoo, self-guided nature walk, you-pick fruit and festive events—many of which include live music and wagon rides! They also have homemade doughnuts and pies, a fruit stand, Michigan products and so much more! —*Walter Dorr, Presque Isle Electric & Gas*

5 Knaebe's Mmmunchy Krunchy Apple Farm & Cider Mill, Rogers City

Knaebe's Mmmunchy Krunchy Apple Farm & Cider Mill is as unique as its name. It's a great place to indulge in all things fall! Plus, [cider mill goers can find] great wood-fired pizza and craft hard cider. —*Gerry Baller, Presque Isle Electric & Gas*



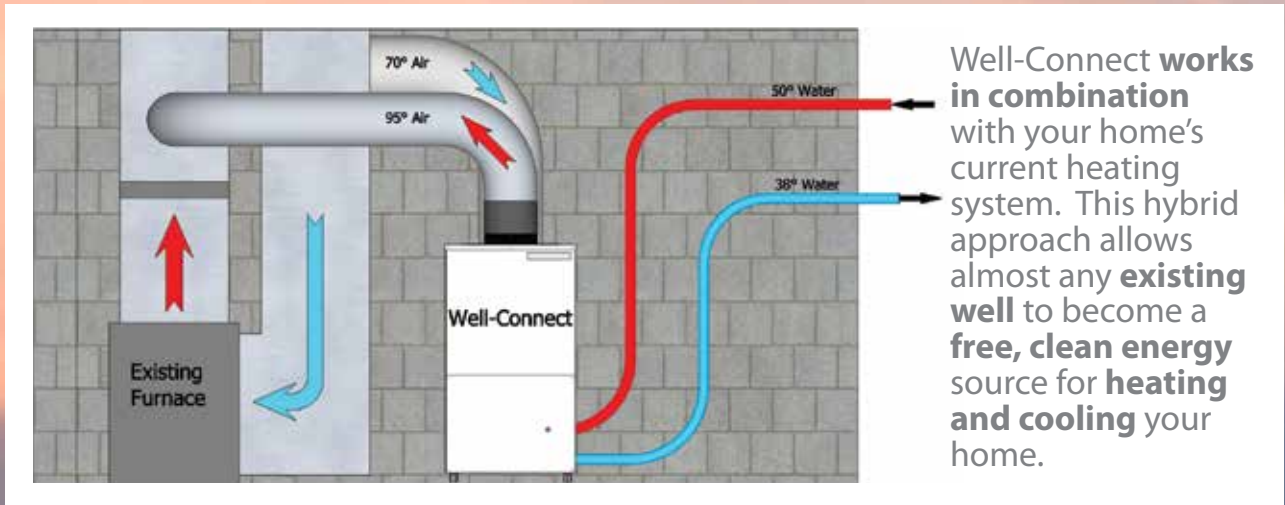
Best of Michigan

Up Next: Share your favorite Michigan snowmobile trails. Help your fellow readers explore some new places this winter. We will publish these trails in our Nov/Dec issue.

Submit your favorites at countrylines.com under the MI Co-op Community tab by October 1.

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A photograph of football players in action on a field at night. The players are wearing helmets and jerseys, and are in a three-point stance. A football is on the ground in the center of the line of scrimmage. The text "Be a part of the winning team." is overlaid on the image in a large, white, sans-serif font.

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