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Make A Resolution to Support the People Fund

Did you know that small donations of less than one dollar per month can play a big role in helping to fill the needs in your community? You can be a part of it by supporting the People Fund.

Comments from community organizations that have received People Fund grants show how much good the small contributions can do. Here are just two examples:

"Thank you so much for this generous grant. You are going to help us assist local patients in fighting a difficult and costly disease. Your grant will go to work immediately saving lives." — Christie Perdue with the Otsego Memorial Hospital Foundation's Diabetes Self-Management Program, Gaylord.

"Without grant assistance such as the People Fund, our Food 4 Kids Backpack program would not be making a difference in the lives of children in our area. The Great Lakes Energy People Fund is such a wonderful assistance to so many organizations in our area serving a variety of needs. Thank you for being there." — Kathy Hart with The Manna Food Project, Harbor Springs.

I would like to add my thanks to all the Great Lakes Energy members who participate in the billing round-up program that makes the People Fund program possible. By allowing us to round up your electric bill to the next dollar each month, your small contributions, which are less than a dollar each month, have added up to over \$2.23 million in People Fund grants that have been awarded since the program's start in 1999. The average monthly contribution in 2011 was just 39 cents.

In 2011, over \$176,000 in People Fund grants was awarded to 77 organizations. They included food pantries, senior centers, youth programs, health care services and other community causes. The complete list of recipients appears in the 2011 People Fund Annual Report attached to your January issue of *Michigan Country Lines*.

The needs of our communities are growing which means we need more members to join the People Fund. With more contributions each month, more grants can be awarded to non-profit organizations. Help the People Fund better meet your community's growing needs by joining today. Please review the annual report and note all the types of organizations that can be helped by your small contribution. The report includes a sign-up card that you can fill out and return with your next

bill payment. Or you can just give our office a call and our reps will enroll you in the People Fund. One hundred percent of the money collected is granted to non-profit organizations.

If you already participate in the billing round-up program, I again would like to thank you for your support and ask that you invite your GLE friends and neighbors to join, too.

We also hold contests each year as another way to express our appreciation to everyone who supports the People Fund. Winners receive \$100 billing credits. No billing round-up contributions are used to fund the contest. Prize costs are covered by Great Lakes Energy as part of our commitment to support local communities and say "thanks" for supporting the People Fund.

As we enter a new year, make a resolution to help your member-owned cooperative assist those in need by joining the People Fund. It's one New Year's resolution that keeps on giving.



Use your mobile phone to access an online enrollment form.

Counties Scheduled for Tree Re-Clearing

The 2012 vegetation management program begins this winter in the southern part of the Great Lakes Energy service area and will later include other counties, too, as private contractors remove trees and limbs near power lines.

Keeping trees cleared within power line rights of way (ROW) helps Great Lakes Energy maintain safe and reliable electric service.

ROW re-clearing work begins this winter in the counties below. Other counties where work is planned later this year will appear in a future issue.

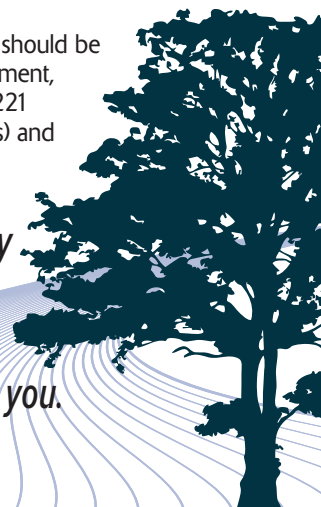
Allegan: Dorr, Leighton, Wayland;
Barry: Irving, Orangeville, Rutland, Thornapple, Yankee Springs;
Clare: Redding, Winterfield;
Lake: Cherry Valley, Lake, Pleasant Plains, Sauble, Sweetwater, Webber, Yates;
Mason: Amber, Branch, Custer, Hamlin, Pere Marquette, Victory;
Montcalm: Pierson, Reynolds;
Muskegon: Montague, Ravenna;
Newaygo: Denver, Goodwell, Lilley, Merrill, Norwich, Troy, Wilcox;
Oceana: Benona, Claybanks, Golden, Grant, Leavitt, Newfield, Shelby;
Osceola: Burdell, Hartwick, Marion, Middle Branch, Sherman, Sylvan;
Ottawa: Allendale, Polkton.

The 2012 tree trimming schedule can be viewed in the vegetation management section of our website, gtlakes.com, under the "Your Home" link.

You will be notified by post card and phone if ROW re-clearing work is planned near you. Please be sure we have your current billing address and primary phone number so we can contact you if needed.

Questions about our ROW re-clearing program should be directed to our Vegetation Management Department, 888-485-2537, extensions 8221 (central and southern counties) and 1295 (northern counties).

You will be notified by post card and phone if ROW re-clearing work is planned near you.



Programs for Youth

Please see the GLE website, gtlakes.com, or the January issue of *Michigan Country Lines* for information on youth programs in 2012 that offer both educational opportunities and fun for high school students whose parents/guardians are Great Lakes Energy members.

The issue is also available online by visiting countrylines.com.

Like Us, Follow Us, Watch Us

If you're a fan of social media, you may already know that Great Lakes Energy has a page on Facebook (facebook.com/greatlakesenergy) and a Twitter account (twitter.com/GLECooperative).

But did you know that GLE created its own YouTube channel this year? View it at youtube.com/greatlakesenergy.

Viewers can choose from among 20 videos now posted on the site, including:

- Arbor Day celebration at a school (starring vegetation management staff)
- Teen Days (now known as Youth Leadership Summit) footage
- GLE's hotline safety demo
- Lineworker training
- Information from GLE's 2011 fall Energy Seminar
- The story of GLE (as shown at new employee orientation meetings)

Besides being posted on GLE's YouTube channel, the videos appear as links in some of GLE's Facebook and Twitter postings and in e-newsletters generally sent out monthly by GLE.

Posts to GLE's Facebook and Twitter pages appear each regular workday. The posts contain energy efficiency tips and news about GLE as well as links to information on products and services offered, including Energy Optimization programs. Staff monitoring the pages respond to questions and comments during regular working hours (8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday).

Besides information, YouTube videos give members an inside, personal look at GLE's employees and the work they do while looking out for you.

Check us out today on your favorite social network channel. Like us on Facebook, follow us on Twitter, or watch us on YouTube. Join the conversation with GLE's growing social crowd!

Some Seasonal Residents to Get Refunds

Seasonal residents who are not billed in December will see their capital credit refund applied to their January bill.

Other Great Lakes Energy members entitled to a capital credit refund have already received it. The refund was applied to their December bill.

A financially-healthy electric cooperative shares its margins with members by issuing capital credit refunds to them.

Refund amounts are based on each member's individual electricity purchases in 2010 and 1986. Members who purchased more electricity in these years will receive larger refunds.

The refunds some seasonal residents will receive this month are part of a total capital credit retirement package of over \$3.92 million approved by the cooperative's board of directors in September 2011. This is the ninth consecutive year that Great Lakes Energy's board of directors has approved returning part of its profits to its members.

The co-op plans to continue issuing capital credit refunds each year provided financial conditions allow it. Future refunds would include electricity purchases made by members during other years, as well.

Since 2003, Great Lakes Energy has issued \$25.2 million in capital credit refunds to its members. That's the cooperative difference.



Seasonal Billing Rate Options

Two monthly billing plans are available to Great Lakes Energy members who are seasonal residents, including one that offers a lower rate to those who qualify.

Reduced rate plan: Seasonal residents who use over 8,000 kWh per calendar year are eligible to go on monthly billing at a lower rate of 9.653 cents per kilowatt hour (kWh).

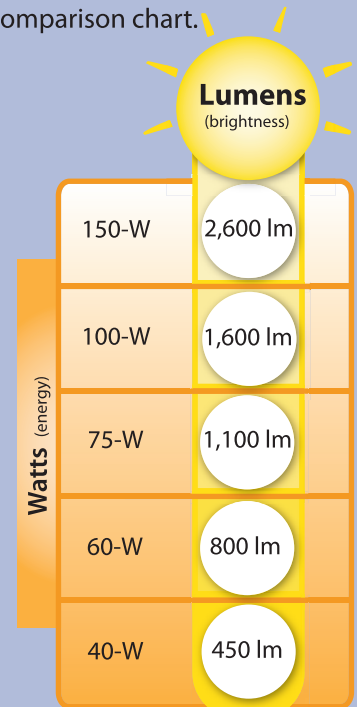
Other monthly plan: This option is available to any seasonal resident regardless of usage who would prefer to be billed monthly. There is no change in the rate, which is the seasonal residential rate of 14.629 cents/kWh.

Seasonal residents should contact Great Lakes Energy at 888-485-2537, ext. 8924, if they wish to enroll in either plan.

Please see the January issue of *Michigan Country Lines* for more information.

What to Look for When Purchasing Lightbulbs

Instead of shopping for watts, look for lumens. Here's a helpful comparison chart.



Estimates based on typical incandescent bulbs. Source: U.S. Federal Trade Commission



Looking Out for You