

# MICHIGAN

ASSETS: **\$41 BILLION**

REVENUE: **\$4.3 BILLION**

MEMBERS: **4.7 MILLION**

JOBS CREATED: **15,520**



## MICHIGAN CO-OPS AT A GLANCE

Co-ops in Michigan are working to build a better world by creating quality jobs, building community wealth, protecting the environment, reducing poverty and strengthening the local economy.

### KALAMAZOO COLLECTIVE HOUSING

Kalamazoo Collective Housing offers permanently affordable, democratically controlled rental housing in Kalamazoo's Vine Neighborhood, a core urban neighborhood adjacent to downtown Kalamazoo and WMU/K-College.

### MICHIGAN ELECTRIC CO-OP ASSOCIATION

Electric co-ops employ 770 people and serve 750,000 consumer-members and businesses in Michigan. Michigan co-ops maintain nearly 39,000 miles of line. MECA represents the legislative and regulatory interests of these co-ops.



Students created Kalamazoo Collective Housing to fill a need for affordable, sustainable rental housing in Kalamazoo.

## MICHIGAN TOP CO-OPS BY SECTOR

CREDIT UNIONS: **363**

HOUSING: **235**

CHILD CARE: **138**

FARM SUPPLY: **53**

FOOD: **24**

INSURANCE: **12**

## ABOUT CO-OPS

According to federally-supported research by the University of Wisconsin Center for Cooperatives, co-ops inject \$3 trillion into the U.S. economy every year. Located in every state and every Congressional district in the U.S., co-ops create millions of jobs and offer solutions to meet challenging public policy issues—from affordable housing to early childhood learning. They spur economic growth in underserved rural America; empower individuals, families and communities; and ensure that Americans have access to high-quality goods and services at competitive prices from businesses they trust.

## CLOSING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN RURAL MICHIGAN

Midwest Energy Cooperative is taking a page out of its historic playbook by bringing a much-needed service to its rural customers and communities. The member-owned cooperative is building a fiber optic infrastructure to deliver high-speed Internet and other communications solutions to southwest Michigan.

“Electric cooperatives were formed in the 1930s to bring power and light to the rural space. It was a grassroots effort to meet the needs of rural Americans when the larger, incumbent utilities would not,” said Bob Hance, president and CEO of Midwest Energy Cooperative.

“Fast forward nearly 80 years and we have a very similar story. Today’s inequity is high-speed internet, and once again the incumbents won’t build the infrastructure in the less populated rural areas,” Hance said. “Midwest is stepping in to bridge the digital divide on behalf of our members.”

Midwest Energy Cooperative has been serving the electric needs of rural southwest Michigan for more than 75 years. Today, the cooperative is investing in a fiber communication system across its electric distribution grid for utility benefit, and



America's electric co-ops are praising an effort by the House Rural Broadband Caucus to make rural broadband access a top economic development priority. Here, a Midwest Energy Cooperative crew pull fiber cable in Schoolcraft, Michigan. [photo: Midwest Energy Cooperative]

leveraging that investment to bring fiber Internet and other communications solutions to its members.

Hance believes this project will change the landscape across southwest Michigan. “Midwest is creating an environment in which communities can grow and thrive from an economic development perspective.”

“Rural southwest Michigan is losing population because of a lack of critical services like Internet. We’re not only encouraging people and businesses to stay, we’re actually creating a reason for people and businesses to choose this area,” he added.

Founded in 1916, the National Cooperative Business Association CLUSA International is the trade association for cooperative businesses in the U.S. and an international development organization active in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America. For 100 years, NCBA CLUSA has advanced, promoted and defended co-op enterprise, highlighting the impact that co-ops have in bettering the lives of individuals, families and communities.

**NCBA CLUSA**  
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