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Winter Heating Cheaper for Some

Local Resources Ready for Those in Need

By Michael Ayala

Winter home heating bills are expected to be lower than last winter for people using natural gas or propane, while those using electric heat or fuel oil will see small increases.

Natural gas and propane prices have fallen statewide and could translate to lower bills, said Judy Palnau of Michigan Public Service Commission.

Donald Sawruk, president of Edison Sault Electric Company, said his customers may see increases of no more than 4% from last year, owing to increased purchased power costs for the company.

Over the past year, natural gas prices have fallen by about 12%, mainly because of decreasing demand and abundant supplies because of the recession, Mrs. Palnau explained.

The cost of gas is "significantly" lower than last year's prices, said Tim Lubbers, director of Marketing and External Affairs for Semco Energy, and customers can expect lower bills if they use the same amount of gas as last year.

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Mackinaw City

Business To Add Downtown Zipline

By Michael Ayala

A Mackinaw City business wants to add an aerial cable ride, called a zip line, and reconfigure its existing store and restaurant to use additional space, but is awaiting approval to build a tower for the ride while planning commissioners decide what type of fencing such an attraction will require. The issue was discussed during a special planning commission meeting Monday, November 30.

The zip line, on which a rider glides on a pulley along an inclined cable, would extend from about 34 feet up a proposed tower and propel a rider across the Animal Tracks miniature golf course, owner Enzo Lieghio told *The St. Ignace News*. He said the amusement is being built to meet visitor

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Bridge: Insurance Savings Realized

By Mark Tower

The Mackinac Bridge Authority (MBA) canceled its insurance for liability, excess liability, contractor's equipment, boiler and machinery, employee crime, marine, and business property and, instead, will self-insure by starting a cash fund for such emergencies. The agency will keep its automotive insurance, because the savings would be minimal.

Over the last decade, the Authority's insurance provider has paid an average of \$3,600 a year in insurance claims while the MBA has paid \$453,000 annually for insurance premiums, a 0.079% return that prompted the administration to look at other solutions, including self-insurance.

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LMAS Gets Own Lawyers as County Explores Break-Up

Mackinac County Working Out Details of Split

By Michael Ayala

Legal counsel has been retained by the LMAS District Health Department as its first response to a notice that Mackinac County wants to split from the four-county agency. Meeting in Newberry Monday, December 7, the board of health hired Foster, Swift, Collins and Smith, a Michigan firm with an office in Marquette, to help it sort out the details of a break-up, but deferred the formation of a committee to take the matter any further until its new counsel has time for review.

Mackinac County notified the agency Monday after its board of com-

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Deer Season Disappointing

By Mark Tower

Hunters in the Eastern Upper Peninsula are complaining of fewer deer and poor hunting during this year's rifle season and some biolo-

gists from Michigan's Department of Natural Resources (DNR) agree, said biologist David Jentoft of the season in Chippewa and Eastern Mackinac counties.

"We did expect a lower population in the area this year," Mr. Jentoft said. "From hunters, we have heard that the deer numbers are down and they just haven't been

seeing as many deer." Two tough winters in a row haven't helped this downward trend

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Jolly Old St. Nick Visits EUP Children



Drew Sprague of Cedarville receives a small gift from Santa at the Cedar Cove Assisted Living breakfast with Santa in Cedarville Saturday, December 5. Santa Claus had a busy schedule in the EUP and was also spotted in St. Ignace and on Mackinac Island last weekend.

Cedarville Class Puts New Focus on Entrepreneurship

Teens Craft Furniture To Aid School

By Michael Ayala

Teenagers are learning about entrepreneurship by designing, building, and marketing their own furniture in a Cedarville High School woodworking class. The class has now been granted its own two-hour daily time slot at the school, with a new focus on streamlining production and selling projects to benefit the financially troubled district.

"They're working their tails off to better their community and better their school," said Gary Wellnitz, the school's industrial arts teacher and leader of the effort.

Mr. Wellnitz had to do something to keep his woodworking class alive in response to budget cuts made in the district since 2004. The class was budgeted \$5,000 in the past, but this year is down to \$1,000. Mr. Wellnitz developed the solution to sell some woodworking projects to keep the program afloat and donate the money to the school. Thick and Thin Lumber and Maples Sawmill donate materials to aid the class, and Mr. Wellnitz cuts lumber, as well.

In previous years, he would solicit orders and assign students who did not have a project idea to



Teacher Gary Wellnitz helps seniors Rebecca Dowdell (center) and Brittany Lee with a project during his morning woodworking class Friday, December 4. Some of the class projects will be sold to customers outside of Cedarville, while others have been requested by teachers at the school.

work on them. The projects would be scattered throughout the day in multiple classes, making the process cumbersome, Mr. Wellnitz said.

Now, a two-hour block in the morning is devoted specifically to design and construction of items for customers. While his idea has gen-

erated roughly \$30,000 over the past 10 years, having a specific morning slot for customer projects

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