



## New doctor in town: Her love story

By Marita Tolentino-Combs

As a child, he drove his parents crazy by crawling into anything that resembled a cave, be it tunnel or a hole in a hill. If he could squeeze into it, there Gregory Thompson would be found. This caver unawares was the first of eight children living in a small farming community in northeastern Ohio.

After receiving the certificate of insurance claims adjuster and moving to the big city of Cincinnati, he discovered to his amazement that caving “was not just organized; it was huge.”

He joined a club and it was on his first club exploration that he met Michelle, whom he would eventually marry.

“What can I say, she was wearing cool boots,” Gregory laughs.

Like him, Michelle had been caving all of her life, “Since I was a child, Dad took me and my brother on cave explorations all over Kentucky and Tennessee.”

Michelle met Gregory two weeks to the day after her acceptance into the University of Louisville School of Medicine. The pair went on several more outdoor trips, be it underground. The 100-mile distance between the two did not deter the relationship.

Gregory continued working in Cincinnati, as the insurance adjuster for Allstate Insurance while she studied medicine in Louisville, Ky.



*Dr. Michelle Thompson and her husband Gregory Thompson. The thrill of caving brought them together.*

Three years later, Gregory transferred to Louisville to be closer to Michelle.

After medical school, Michelle entered the University of Louisville’s integrated four-year residency programs in internal medicine and pediatrics. The combined program, which has been offered since 1985, trains doctors to provide outstanding clinical care to both adults and children.

Both Michelle and Gregory loved the west and from the time they were in

high school wanted to live there. So any vacation time Michelle had from her studies, they went backpacking in the west: New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado.

One of those rare vacations took them to Missoula, where they took a loop drive to Libby and Whitefish through Glacier National Park and so on down to Missoula.

The pair resolved on settling in a rural area somewhere in what Gregory calls *The Swath*: everywhere between the

Northern Rocky Mountains to the Cascade Mountains in Eastern Washington State. “Gregory called about every hospital and clinic in *The Swath*,” Michelle says. “We studied small towns.”

Gregory liked Eureka, considering it “a great place in the west to raise children.” Michelle had decided on rural medicine when she first went into medical school and her choice was validated during her residency. There was, however, no physician position in Eureka for Michelle’s combined expertise.

Nevertheless, Michelle scheduled an interview with North Valley Hospital in Whitefish. NVH maintains a facility in Eureka, the North Country Medical Clinic.

Early in 2011 the Clinic found two of its doctors moving to Spokane, Wash., to expose their children to a bigger city with its challenges before they fly away from the home nest. The search for the right doctor took all of three months with an interim.

The challenges of moving 2,300 miles behind them, Gregory and Michelle settled into a little rental with their 4-year old, Zoe, who’s excited about going to “high school.”

“We three went to the high school for the Sunburst Foundation performance of The Gothard Sisters, and she thinks the fiddling, singing and dancing is ‘high school.’”

*Continued on page 5*

# Planning for the future

Responsibility. It's something we here at Lincoln Electric Cooperative take very seriously. From the board of trustees to our outside line crews we understand what is required of us as we strive to meet the needs of our members.

We not only work at keeping the lights on today, but are constantly evaluating our operations to make sure we are headed in the right direction. To this

end our entire staff and board of trustees will be participating in a strategic planning session at the end of this month.

As one might imagine, this process requires us to understand where we are today by outlining the strengths and weaknesses of our cooperative. It then helps us to set goals both financially and operationally for the benefit of the membership. We will then develop a strategy that puts us on a path to attain those goals.

The whole purpose of such an undertaking is to try to position LEC so that we can take advantage of opportunities that arise in the future and to ensure that we remain operationally and financially sound.

To take advantage of the combined

institutional knowledge of our staff, our offices will be closed Nov. 28 and until noon on the 29th. I apologize for any inconvenience this may cause but I feel it is very important for everyone to be part of this process and that ultimately it will be immensely beneficial to LEC.

Our responsibility to you, the members, is always foremost in our minds and I can assure you that we will continue to work as hard as possible to earn and keep your trust.

Thank you for your time.



Manager's Notes  
by Ray Ellis



**Lincoln Electric Cooperative, Inc.**

## News & Views

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Lincoln Electric's board of trustees meets monthly at the Eureka office. The regular meetings are scheduled for the third Monday of each month at 7 p.m. Members with items of interest are encouraged to contact the general manager in advance of the meeting.

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## Business and Boardroom Briefs

The regular meeting of the board of trustees was conducted September 19, 2011. A quorum of trustees was present and the board took the following action:

- Appointed Mike Clark to the vacant District 1 trustee position.
- Approved going out for bids for a 5-year right of way clearing contract.
- Approved the BPA Residential Exchange Program Settlement.
- Approved Policy 304-Standard Interconnection Policy for Small Generation Facilities.

	Year to Date 8/31/11	Year to Date 8/30/10
YTD Kwh Sales	76,015,970	68,509,390
YTD Revenue	\$5,811,288	\$4,867,738
YTD Cost of Power	\$1,984,236	\$1,828,754
YTD Operating Exp	\$2,972,540	\$2,617,958
YTD Margins	\$879,385	\$446,094
# of Members	4,018	3,965
# of Meters	5,308	5,231
Miles of Line	929	920
Total Utility Plant	\$29,242,130	\$28,025,004
Member Equity	\$7,887,975	\$7,040,974
Avg Residential Usage (kWh)	802	831
Avg Residential Billing	\$73.40	\$64.73

## New doctor

Continued from page 3

Gregory progresses to establish himself as insurance claims adjuster in *The Swath* and region. Dr. Michelle Thompson is immersed in her love of rural medicine and the community.

The Office Manager of North Country Medical Clinic and LEC board chair,

Tina Taurman, says, "Her care has been far more than expected." And as nurse Kim DeLorenzo of Mountain View Manor Nursing Home asked Tina, "Can we keep her?"

(Author owns *Applied Visions Media* in Eureka. Contact her 889-3833 or Tim Engleson if you have a story that would be of interest to *Lincoln Electric* members 296-2511.)

## Attention

The Co-op office will be closed all day Monday, Nov. 28 and until noon Tuesday, Nov. 29 to allow all employees to participate in a strategic planning session. We apologize for the inconvenience.

## Board appoints new Flathead District Trustee

Mike Clark of rural Whitefish was seated at the September board meeting after being appointed by the board of trustees. Mike will be completing the unexpired term of former trustee George Elam, after trustees interviewed two candidates for the position.

Mr. Clark has been a member of Lincoln Electric since 1983.

Mike retired in 2006 from

the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) after 26 years with the Trust Land Management Division. He worked in several areas including forest and fire management, and special uses.

Mr. Clark has an Associate of Applied Science degree in Forest Technology from Flathead Valley Community College.

Mike and his wife

Kathryn, a teacher, have two grown boys living away from home. Mike reports that he is excited about his new duties as an LEC trustee. He appreciates the member-owner business model co-ops offer, and looks forward to being productive on the board.

Please welcome Mike to the co-op team, we look forward to working with him.



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# Set-top boxes are energy bandits

If you've got cable or satellite TV, odds are a set-top box came with it. But finding out how much electricity that box is using could be scarier than a horror movie.

The utility consulting firm Ecos has been crunching the numbers for a typical home. If you have two set-top boxes—one a high-definition DVR, the other a regular HD box—they're using about 450 kilowatt-hours per year (that's over \$27 of electricity at LEC's rates).

"What's notable is that that combination of set-top boxes is using more energy than a typical refrigerator. And most people don't know that—they

think devices that are smaller use less energy," said Laura Moorefield, Ecos senior manager of research and policy.

But wait, there's more.

"The typical set-top boxes in a home can use more energy than a TV, which they're intended to be a part of that system, not the main part," Moorefield said during a session at the Touchstone Energy® National Energy Efficiency Conference.

"These devices typically draw the same amount of power no matter what you're doing. If you're watching TV, if you're recording a show they're drawing an average of 30, 40 watts continuously."

And don't bother yelling at

the kids to shut off the box when they're done.

"If you punch the button to turn off the set-top box, really, in most models, the only thing that's turning off is the little LED indicator light," Moorefield said. "There's no drop in power."

But set-top boxes are only a part of what's known as "plug load"—devices that draw power even when they're off.

Moorefield said the Energy Information Administration projects plug loads to be the nation's fastest-growing section of electricity use. Ecos estimates as many as four million plug load devices are now in use nationwide.



*Which of these devices uses more electricity? You'd be amazed.*

And if that's not reason enough for co-ops to encourage members to unplug things like cell phone chargers and coffeemakers, Moorefield added one more.

"In homes, plug loads are anywhere from 10 to 15 percent of residential electricity use. They cost the homeowner more than \$100 to operate every year."

## BUNDLE UP!

### NOAA's Climate Prediction Center: La Niña is back

La Niña, which contributed to extreme weather around the globe during the first half of 2011, has re-emerged in the tropical Pacific Ocean and is forecast to gradually strengthen and continue into winter. Forecasters with NOAA's Climate Prediction Center upgraded last month's La Niña Watch to a La Niña Advisory.

NOAA will issue its official winter outlook later, but La Niña winters often see wetter than normal conditions in the Pacific Northwest and drier than normal conditions across the southern tier of the United States," said Mike Halpert, deputy director of the Climate Prediction Center. "La Niña also often brings colder winters to the Pacific Northwest and the northern Plains and warmer temperatures to the southern states."

Climate forecasts from NOAA's National Weather Service give American com-

munities advance notice of what to expect in the coming months so they can prepare for potential impacts. This service is helping the country to become a Weather Ready Nation at a time when extreme weather is on the rise.

The strong 2010-11 La Niña contributed to record winter snowfall, spring flooding and drought across the United States, as well as other extreme weather events throughout the world, such as heavy rain in Australia and an extremely dry equatorial eastern Africa.

La Niña is a naturally occurring climate phenomenon located over the tropical Pacific Ocean and results from interactions between the ocean surface and the atmosphere. During La Niña, cooler-than-average Pacific Ocean temperatures influence global weather patterns. La Niña typically occurs every three-to-five years, and back-to-back episodes occur about



50 percent of the time. Current conditions reflect a re-development of the June 2010-May 2011 La Niña episode.

NOAA's National Weather Service is the primary source of weather data, forecasts and warnings for the United

States and its territories. NOAA's National Weather Service operates the most advanced weather and flood warning and forecast system in the world, helping to protect lives and property and enhance the national economy.