

A person wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, dark pants, a white helmet, and a climbing harness is ascending a steep, layered rock face. The rock is composed of horizontal, light-colored layers with darker, more textured sections. The climber is positioned in the upper-middle part of the frame, reaching up with their right hand. A red rope is visible, extending from the climber down towards the bottom right. The overall scene is a high-angle shot of a rock climbing activity.

# Crazy About Cragging



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## For Erica Lineberry, Rock Climbing Is A Way Of Life

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By Lee Rhodes | Photos by Cyndy Gatewood

For most of us, there is no such thing as a typical weekend. But Erica Lineberry is happiest when her every weekend is the same — and usually, it is.

A passionate Charlotte-area rock climber, the 31-year-old Lineberry has a date with nature that begins every Friday afternoon. She, her husband, and 2-year-old son head out — often to the rugged rocks of Tennessee or the New River Gorge in West Virginia — and set up camp. They spend all of Friday and Saturday climbing, before returning home late Sunday night ... and then they do it all again the following weekend.

From breathtaking vistas to improved agility and strength, the payoffs from Lineberry's passion are tremendous. "A lot of life lessons can be gleaned from climbing," she says. "You have a climbing partner and you're entrusting that person with your life."

She adds, "It's a great way for our family to spend quality time together and see so many places we otherwise wouldn't."

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### Going To The Mountain

Before she was scaling mountains, Lineberry and her husband spent their time hiking and skiing. When weather issues derailed a ski trip in Montana in 2005, the couple found themselves at a climbing gym as an alternative activity. Always an avid outdoorswoman and athlete, Lineberry immediately took to the physical and mental challenges of indoor climbing. Upon their

return home, the couple found an indoor climbing gym in Charlotte and began training there several times per week, an activity they continue to this day. Then during an anniversary trip to British Columbia in 2006, the couple hired a climbing guide and tackled their first outdoor climb, an experience Lineberry describes as amazing.

From there, the mountains of the world were the couple's oyster. After loading up



[ **crag** *n.* A steep, rugged mass of rock projecting upward or outward ]

on gear, the couple started with popular, easier climbs. “We met some experienced climbers, including one who took us under his wing and exposed us to different styles of climbing,” Lineberry explains. “Now, we’ll take new people out with us. It’s a give-and-take, and you have to pay it forward.”

Part of paying it forward includes exposing her son, Canaan, to the sport. Canaan accompanies the couple on all of their trips, but Lineberry is quick to point out that she and husband Steve don’t actually climb with Canaan. They hike to the base with him in a backpack carrier, and then Canaan hangs out with members of the team while the climbers take turns doing their thing.

“He loves playing with the ropes,” Lineberry says.



### Upward And Onward

For her part, Lineberry loves being out in creation. “Being out there makes me feel closer to God,” she says. “And climbing is a good avenue to push myself physically and explore my limits.”

Add to that the difficult grades of each of the climbs, and it adds up to quite an endeavor. A grade of 5.0 is the easiest, running up to 5.15b. Lineberry hit a significant milestone in late 2011 when she broke the 5.12a barrier at nearby Crowder’s Mountain.

Lineberry points out that all of her climbing is done with ropes, an important distinction because people often have misconceptions about climbing. “I climb umpteen feet and put my equipment in a preexisting bolt or a crack in the rock to use for forward progression,”

she explains. "It's there as a backup in case I fall, but the climb is done using all of your own strength."

That protection wasn't enough recently, when Lineberry was climbing what she deems "the hardest route I've ever done." When she was one route from the top, she fell, which is not uncommon. This time,



however, her feet slammed into the rocks, and Lineberry broke her ankle.

Despite the injury, Lineberry is eager as ever to get back to climbing. While she heals — hobbling around in an ankle boot — she keeps busy with her blog, "Cragmama," which garners close to 1,000 followers. The blog's title is in deference to her son, and Lineberry recently began creating a "Crag Baby" series of posts. In addition, she is writing a guide to climbing areas in the Central Piedmont. And her climbing efforts have begun to attract national attention. The athletic apparel company Athleta selected Lineberry to be one of its sponsored athletes in 2012; her duties will include writing on the company's blog and testing gear before it is released to market. In late March, climbing gear company Trango also chose to sponsor her.

When asked about her plans for the future, Lineberry doesn't hesitate with her response. "First and foremost, the ultimate goal is to keep having fun with it," she says. [TCW]



While intrigued by the concept of rock climbing, Lee Rhodes prefers to stay on the ground, and it's from here that she works as a freelance writer.

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