

Continuum

VOL. 17, NO. 3 2003

"Those who market the substitute product [infant formula] and the equipment benefit economically from keeping breastfeeding in check."

—Gabrielle Palmer, *The Politics of Breastfeeding*

It was 1981 when this thought-provoking book was first published. We'd like to think that things have improved in the past 20+ years.

After all, the value of breastfeeding is not only recognized in developing countries, it's long been touted by the American Academy of Pediatrics too.

Year after year, study upon study, breastfeeding is heralded for the short and long term health benefits it brings to babies and mothers.

Nonetheless, Palmer's statement is as true for today's new generation of breastfeeding women—many our own daughters—as it was over two decades ago. The work of La Leche League remains vital.

The politics of breastfeeding, continued

USA's National Breastfeeding Campaign (reported in the last issue of CONTINUUM) was thrilling news indeed. But formula company clout already has taken its toll. The Federal Government and other partners have heeded the concerns raised by two formula companies. As a result, the launch date for the campaign has been moved back to the spring to allow the appropriate review process within the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to verify the science behind the ads.

The proposed Public Service Announcements for television, radio, and print are highly effective. Too effective, it appears, for formula manufacturers' comfort. (Picture a pregnant woman in-line skating; a voiceover says, "You'd never take risks while you're pregnant. Why start when the baby's born?")

While formula companies cited several criticisms (including "negative" ads), their biggest problem centered on some of the scientific research, explained Amy Spangler, Chair of the US Breastfeeding Committee Leadership Team. Carol Kolar is the Vice Chair and LLLI Representative on this committee, which is working with the Ad Council on the campaign.

A strong message is just what is necessary, says Dr. Lawrence Gartner, Chair of the Executive Committee, Section of Breastfeeding, American Academy of Pediatrics (and long-time LLLI Health Advisory Council member). And the strongest message, according to 36 focus groups that the Ad Council held around the country, is to address the risks associated with *not* breastfeeding. The focus groups showed that "while mothers are usually aware of the benefits of breastfeeding, they currently perceive no real consequence to opting

out," reports the Ad Council. The choice to breastfeed is currently often seen as one between relative equals—analogue to ordering either Coke or Pepsi.

"We don't hesitate to tell parents [how smoking harms their children.] Why shouldn't we tell people about the consequences of not breastfeeding?" says Spangler. Focus group participants agreed.

In a message to colleagues, Dr. Gartner wrote, "There is every reason to believe that [the formula companies] are pulling out all the stops to get this ad campaign buried, or, at least, modified to be less effective." In a subsequent letter to US Secretary of Health Tommy Thompson, Gartner stated, "...every word and claim made in these PSAs has been

There is every reason to believe that [formula companies] are pulling out all the stops to get this ad campaign buried...

—Lawrence M. Gartner, M.D.

reviewed by multiple scientists and validated by published research from respected medical journals."

An online interview for *womens e-news*, "Teeth Cut from Breastfeeding Campaign" by Luchina Fisher, quotes Dr. Audrey Naylor (also a member of the LLLI Health Advisory Council): "It really is not a battle of science. This is a battle of politics and money."

The Leadership Team recently met with Kevin Keane, Asst Sec for Public Affairs, DHHS, to discuss their concerns about the campaign and its delay. A few changes will be made to the ads—no mention now of childhood leukemia and diabetes or risk ratios. But the verdict could have been worse. Over 1,000 communications to the Dept. of Health and Human Services had a significant influence on the decisions made. To show your support of or reactions to the Campaign, contact Office on Women's Health at <<http://www.4woman.gov>>

US breastfeeding rates at an all-time high

First, the good news: breastfeeding rates in the United States are higher than ever before. In its continuing mail survey that tracks breastfeeding trends, Abbott Laboratories' Ross Products Division reports that 70.1 percent of mothers now initiate breastfeeding in the hospital—a marked increase over 54.2 percent a decade ago.

Rates are also up for the numbers of mothers still breastfeeding when their babies are six months old—33.2 percent, compared to 18.9 percent in 1992.

There is still room for improvement. The Healthy People 2010 goal is to have 75 percent of mothers initiating breastfeeding in the hospital and 50 percent still breastfeeding at six months. In addition, rates lagged far behind in two key areas.

Mothers who are employed full-time start out breastfeeding at a rate that is almost identical to stay-at-home mothers (69.0 percent compared to 70.1 percent). By six months, however, the breastfeeding rates of employed mothers have dropped about 25 percent below those of mothers who are not working outside the home.

Among women who participate in WIC (Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children), fewer elect to initiate breastfeeding in the hospital or to continue for six months or more. Despite the WIC breastfeeding numbers being higher than ever, there remains a lag of 20 percentage points behind non-WIC participants. This gap holds true regardless of a mother's working status, education, ethnicity, geography, or age.

Several recent research studies point to strategies that could contribute to an increase in breastfeeding rates, especially for women in WIC and/or in the workplace.

Training in breastfeeding best practices. A positive impact was made by changing practices in eight Italian hospitals. When health care workers were trained for a minimum of three days on the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding," (taken from the Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative), breastfeeding rates improved. The implementation of effective programs should include extended networks of peer counselors, integrating skilled support and follow-up.

—Cattaneo, A. and Buzzetti, R.
BMJ 2001; 323:1358-62

A more flexible workplace. Another study found that women who intend to return to employment before six weeks postpartum are less likely to initiate breastfeeding. The separation of the mother and infant, inadequate facilities on the job site, and lack of flexibility contribute to reduced choice for and duration of breastfeeding. Creation of a more flexible work environment may lessen the conflict in the choice to breastfeed while employed.

—Noble, S. and ALSPAC Study Team
Acta Paediatr 2001; 90:423-38

Government recommendations based on health cost savings. An analysis of the volume of human milk consumed by children from birth to 35.9 months in 8 Francophone countries in West Africa showed that breastfeeding mothers produce 1.1 billion liters of milk per year, for which the monetary value is about \$2 billion (US) and is equal to 6.7% of the gross national product. Commercial substitutes would cost a family \$1.13 per day in a country where the majority of families are living on less than \$1.00 per day.

—Aguayo, V.N. and Ross, J.
Food Nutrition Bulletin 2002.

A shift in cultural norms. Print media contributes to the perception that formula feeding is the norm. They also noted other indicators that undermine breastfeeding. Representations of breasts as sexual objects in the media powerfully interact with beliefs about the inappropriateness of breastfeeding in public. The opinion of the father can either support or dissuade a woman's decision to breastfeed. The grandmother can also play a key role in a mother's choice to breastfeed. To achieve the Healthy People 2010 goals, there must be a shift in cultural norms and structures at all levels to support breastfeeding for all women.

—M.E. Bentley, et. al.
J Nutrition 2003; 133:305S-9S

Prevention coverage. Lactation assistance is precisely the type of preventive activity that managed care plans might cover and promote if the economic costs and benefits were known. Few preventive health activities have the potential to yield as many short and long-term benefits for children as breastfeeding promotion, yet neither the US Government nor commercial insurers have been impelled to fund or promote lactation services.

—Bonuck, K. et al.
J Perinatol 2002; 22(1):78-81

Ed note—All of the research studies cited on this page of CONTINUUM are from *La Leche League International's "Facts about Breastfeeding 2003."* Each year, LLLI experts cull the current research and put together a summary of concise, referenced facts on all aspects of breastfeeding. You can find these compilations on the Internet at <lalecheleague.org>

Getting off the flying Dumbos

My children are no longer babies. This August marked a milestone in our lives, when all three girls bounced off to the bus stop for all-day school for the first time. Laura, at 11, is teetering on the brink of adolescence. Madeline, who is nine, chafes at rules and longs for more freedom. Julia, the youngest at 6, is mastering the challenges of the world of first grade.

This fall we took a long-anticipated family trip to Disney World. Julia had her heart set on riding the Flying Dumbo ride; she'd been talking about it for weeks. On the morning of our visit to the Magic Kingdom, we hurried straight for the Dumbos, first thing. We eagerly waited in line, and watched as the shiny gray elephant cars, decorated in bright colors, flew through the air. Finally we took our place inside one of the chubby creatures ("the pink one, Mom!") and off we flew. Julia's face shone, her blond-red hair whipping in the breeze, and she shrieked with excitement as she manipulated the joy stick to make the elephant go up and down. Too soon, the ride ended and her joy turned to sorrow. She wanted to ride again, but by now the lines had lengthened considerably and her older sisters were itching to move on. She sobbed and pleaded for just one more ride. Holding her, I tried to explain. "You had your turn, sweetie," I coaxed. "Now it's time to try something new."

By the end of the day, Julia had ridden on many new and different rides. She tried Aladdin's Magic Carpet ride, which is a lot like the Dumbos only more exciting. She rode in a race car ("Dad let me drive!"). She was even brave enough to try Peter Pan's Flight, which has some pretty intense moments for a little person. Afterwards she said, "I wouldn't have been ready for that one when I was five." We even rode the Dumbos again, right around sunset,

*I want to ride again,
just one more time,
but now my turn is over.*

*It's time to make room
for something new.*

when the crowds had thinned out. This time at the end, she didn't cry, but instead sighed, "I guess that's my last time, isn't it?"

Getting off the Dumbos was hard for Julia because it was so much fun. It was both exciting and familiar; a much anticipated joy. In the same kind of way, it's been hard for me to move on from the stages of mothering that are over for me now. The joy of mothering babies, the excitement of the toddler years, the

mommy-centered life of a young family—these are phases that I loved and I sometimes long to return to them. I want to ride again, just one more time, but now my turn is over. It's time to make room for something new.

It seems as though it's always time to move on to a new stage of mothering, as children relentlessly grow and mature and move on, leaving a mother no choice but to charge ahead with them. As I think about Julia's experience with the Dumbo ride, I realize I've learned some things. First, it's okay to be sad, to grieve a little when a really great ride comes to an end. Second, pay attention and try hard to enjoy the wonderful ride while it's happening. Take lots of pictures to help you through those times when you are feeling nostalgic. And when it's time, move along to the next ride, because it might be even more fun and exciting than you expected.

Martha Crone, Ohio USA

LLLI reaches out to the global Hispanic community

Maria del Mar Mazza, an LLLI trained Peer Counselor Administrator, is helping make LLLI more accessible to the Spanish-speaking population. She is working part-time at the LLLI office in the External Relations and Advocacy Department as Liaison/Global Hispanic Community.

Recently, Maria was interviewed by a Spanish radio program about LLL and how mothers can get support for breastfeeding. As a follow-up, she worked with Sue Ann Kendall to place a button on the LLLI Web site home-page that takes Spanish speakers directly to the Web pages in Spanish. According to Sue Ann, this section of the LLL site is

now the fifth most popular.

One area that Maria is currently pursuing is a study she presented to do a five-year project in collaboration with the Midwest Latino Health Research Center, University of Illinois at Chicago, on the prevention of obesity in Hispanic children through the promotion and support of breastfeeding. LLL is currently in discussion with the Center for this project.

Maria and her husband, Leo, are from Argentina. They are the proud parents of their six-month-old breastfed daughter, Lourdes. Maria and Lourdes are featured on the cover of the new WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING.

Fun with the Alums—and other Conference-goers too

I'll admit it upfront—I spent over a week in San Francisco and never once rode the cable cars or visited Chinatown. In fact, short of a quick foray to the Visitor's Bureau, I stayed in the hotel the entire time. But what a time! I could never re-create the grouping of women from around the world that makes the LLLI Conference one of my favorite ways to spend time.

I volunteered with the Alumnae Association, organizing the volunteers and staffing the Navigating Table (a central spot for attendees to find out just about anything having to do with the conference).

As always, Leaders, Alumnae, and friends generously volunteered their time, whether it was helping others “navigate” their way through the hotel, staffing the Alum headquarters, selling raffle tickets or goodies at the World Faire, or assisting Pam Oselka and her Alumnae Team with all the rejuvenation and special activities for which the Alums have become famous.

Although I was “working,” please know that I enjoyed it immensely (even though I didn't have a lot of time to actually attend Conference sessions)! It proved to be a wonderful way to meet new friends. Many I had “met” through e-mail before arriving in San Francisco, including Leaders from Canada, China, and towns and cities across the USA.

One of the personal goals I had for this Conference was to meet as many of “them” as possible. As is true of any voluntary organization, when one is working at the grassroots level, there always seems to be a “them” to whom actions—or inactions—get referred. Although I've met many administrators at various levels in LLLI over the years, I consciously tried to meet new women in these roles, plus reacquaint myself with others whom I met long ago or only knew through e-mail. So many of

the activities where I participated enabled me to meet Leaders and staff from the Division and even LLLI.

I highly recommend the World Assembly—it was a marvelous opportunity to share in small groups with Leaders from many different countries. Sometimes we stuck to the topic at hand, and sometimes we wandered off. But, no matter what, we all learned more about each other and how LLL works in different areas of the world.

I also attended Leader Roundtables during two early mornings. These were opportunities to dialog with LLLI administrators about LLLI's future, challenges, and our own personal ideas. These were great opportunities to actually have face-to-face communications with those “names” we often see, but seldom meet in person.

As a donor to the Mathieu Chazelle fund, I attended a gathering of the International Division Leaders. When

you meet with the ID, you begin to realize just how far LLLI has come from that first meeting of the Founders! Another highlight was the international smorgasbord of snacks, including sushi.

The Parade of Nations was great, especially because I walked in the parade with Margaret Campbell—a Leader who started in the early 1960s and hadn't been to a Conference for many years—and other members of the Alumnae Association. Margaret was in seventh heaven and I just couldn't keep my eyes off of her beaming face. During the conference, she not only caught up with old friends like Edwina Froehlich, but enjoyed the younger mothers with their babies and their stories about LLL in their parts of the world.

At the Alumnae Tea, a special feature was the honoring of those with 25 years or more service to LLL. The numbers of these Leaders in attendance at the Conference was truly astounding.

LLLI Alumnae members, wearing a fun assortment of “Lucy Logo” fabric accessories, assemble under the Alum banner for the “Parade of Nations” at the Conference's Opening Ceremony

If you added up the years of service of those just in the Tea program, it would be well over 3,000 years!

In addition to recognition at the Tea, Leaders with five or more years of service were also eligible to pick up a special pin for 5, 10, 15, 20 and 25 years of service. I have my five year one and admit it was a nice bonus for attending the Conference.

I skipped a scheduled session to attend a talk in the LLLI Renewal Initiative suite, "Recognize and Discover How You Learn—With Family, Friends, and On Your Own." Marcia Connor presented some fascinating materials that helped us to identify our individual learning styles and discover how interacting with someone who learns in different ways may mean recognizing and adapting our teaching and sharing methods.

An absolute highlight for me was attending an ad hoc session that seemed more like an LLL meeting. Hilary Flower and Peggy O'Mara gave a special talk about tandem nursing. In the room were a good number of the mothers who are quoted in Hilary's new book. We spent much of the time just introducing ourselves and sharing—just like a Group meeting! By the way, Peggy looks just as fetching in person as she does in the pictures in *Mothering* magazine.

The Lucy Shares project of the Breastfeeding Resource Marketplace was much fun! It was like a "secret pal" program that you didn't need to keep secret. Groups or LLL Leaders needing materials listed them on a form. Other individuals could read through the forms, see what was needed by the Group, shop for it at the LLLI Conference Bookstore, and then return it to the Lucy Shares table. The Lucy Shares volunteers would then make sure it was delivered. You could also donate cash to be used for additional purchases or

shipping. This is an ongoing project by the way. Check the LLLI Web site at <www.lalecheleague.org> for more information.

The World Fair was loud, overwhelming, and wonderful—a true global marketplace if I ever saw one! From beautiful table linens, to children's toys, to candles and treats from around the world, this was a United Nations mall of stores. This activity is a definite "must-do" at future Conferences.

But the World Fair was not the only place buzzing! Tickets were being sold all over the place for various quilt raffles. Besides the Alumnae donation drawing, which had an incredible selection of prizes, there were several others. I'm not sure who won them all, but I think the best surprise was that Edwina Froehlich won the quilt being offered in the Alumnae drawing. I'm not sure who was more surprised—Edwina or those pulling the numbers!

One event that I missed sounded like great fun. The night before the Conference began, the Alumnae sponsored a tour and dinner at Viansa

Alumnae Laura Probst and Pam Oselka enjoying the tour of Viansa Winery.

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Winery, complete with wine tasting and a chance to shop in their Italian marketplace. All reports were so positive—especially the lovely setting and the wonderful comraderie.

The Exhibit Hall seemed a bit smaller, although it may be that I'm beyond the personal breastfeeding years, so less interested in those exhibits. There were, however, some great breastfeeding art items for sale at a number of booths (I brought home a matted early 20th century nursing mother photograph), plus a wonderful booth selling very positive-thinking type items. Check them out at <www.anopenheart.com>

Close to the top of my "best things about the Conference" list was the talk by Dr. Suzanne Haynes about the new Ad Council campaign, which is designed to reach out to mothers who would not normally breastfeed. So, as always, coming to the end of the Conference didn't really mean an ending at all. Now I can look forward to this new breastfeeding ad campaign and reaching out to more mothers and... Planning for Washington DC in 2005!

Meg Sondey, Ohio USA

Flying high with the Founders: The role of friendships in LLL

When you first visited a La Leche League meeting, did you meet a new friend right away or did it take a few meetings to feel like you belonged? How important are group friendships to Leaders and LLL moms? Do friendships affect the length of time that a mom or Leader is involved with LLL?

Attending the LLLI Conference in San Francisco in July got me thinking about these questions, as I met old friends there and put faces to new friendships formed through LLL-related e-mail lists. I attended the Founders' session and had an opportunity to speak with some of them, which further cemented the importance of long-term LLL friendships in my mind.

As a new Leader, I got a phone call from a Leader who was moving to my town and wondering about LLL in our area. During a very comfortable conversation (we are both "talkers"), we realized that we had daughters the same ages, so my new friend drove 150 miles to attend our LLL meeting the next week. We were instant friends, as were our girls, and we remain close friends today. I know that this relationship kept my LLL interest high for the years that we were co-Leaders.

As an Area Council member, I enjoyed getting to know other Leaders who wanted to give just a bit more to LLL of Michigan. Over the years, as conference sessions became routine, I realized that I was really there to see my friends—those with whom I had worked on conferences, those for whom I was the DA, those who were just a bit ahead of me in their child-rearing.

E-mail and now our LLL Michigan Leader list certainly help to keep us all better acquainted between get-togethers. I cannot help but feel that having good friends in LLL will keep moms and Leaders involved with LLL a little bit longer. As the mother of teenagers, it is those Leaders with older

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and experience*

children whom I consult with my mothering questions now. We have a solid base of core values in common, and I trust their advice because I know it will be grounded in LLL principles and experience.

Within my own LLL Group, the mothers ebb and flow, but when there are solid friendships between Group moms, I can sense it. They freely share their feelings and suggestions because they are secure in the knowledge that their friends will support and reinforce their comments. These moms want to plan more social activities, they offer their homes, they want more enrichment when they feel a solid bond with their LLL group. As a Leader, one of my goals is to encourage friendships between group moms. I believe that LLL's Founders felt the same way.

Both *Seven Voices*, *One Dream* and *The LLLove Story* share the stories of La Leche League's seven Founders. Reading these books made me consider the friendships between these particular seven women. They have been friends for 45+ years now! Edwina was matron of honor at Betty's second wedding. Dr. Greg White was the personal physician for many of the Founders. I know that there have been disagreements, and some of their relationships are closer than others, but they have continued to attend LLLI conferences and meet to share their stories, and they care very deeply about each other to this day.

Returning from the LLLI Conference in San Francisco, I was fortunate to share my flight with Mary Ann Cahill and Edwina Froehlich. When our flight was delayed for an hour due to bad weather, I shared my concern about missing my connecting flight.

Edwina looked into my eyes and asked "Laura, what are you going to do?" Well, I could call my aunt and uncle or a friend in the Chicago area, or just spend the night at the airport.

"No," said Edwina. "If you can't make your connection, you will come home with me. My son is picking me up and you can call a taxi in the morning."

Oh my gosh. A Founder had just invited me to spend the night at her home. I couldn't decide if I wanted to make my connection or not! The only reply I could think of was "thank you."

I was seated toward the back of the plane, and when I walked into the waiting area in Chicago, there was Mary Ann Cahill, making sure that I could get my connecting flight before she and Edwina left the airport. They genuinely cared what happened to me.

It is this kind of genuine kindness, caring, and empathy that has kept women coming back to LLL all of these years. Over 100 Leaders of 25 years or more attended the conference and were honored at the tea. The Alumnae Association had expected maybe 50. Those Leaders who stay active for the long haul are the same kind of lovely, genuine, caring women as the ones who founded LLL 46 years ago.

At the Founders' session, one of the Founders wished for all of us a lifetime friend, such as those she made in LLL. I have already found several lifetime friends among LLL Leaders, and I wish the same for you. Open your heart to someone special among your LLL circle. Nurture that friendship and treasure it for a lifetime.

—Laura Probst, ACL, Michigan

Loving, Learning, Leading ~ 25 years and more

It was quite a picture: well over 100 active Leaders who have served LLL for 25 years or more, gathered at the Alumnae Tea at the LLLI International Conference. Congratulations all!

Pamela Ames, Washington USA ~ 6/1977
Janet Angerson, New York USA ~ 2/1972
Kathy Baker, Illinois USA ~ 1/1977
Mary Baker, California USA ~ 2/1978
Betty Barber, California USA ~ 1/1968
Claudia Barber, Iowa USA ~ 12/1977
Marcia Barritt, Wisconsin USA ~ 1/1972
Sharon Barsotti Illinois USA ~ 1/1978
Rosetta Bartels, Kansas USA ~ 1/1973
Lucia Barthes, New York USA ~ 5/1977
Kay Batt, Washington USA ~ 4/1967
Nancy Benware, California USA ~ 11/1974
Joyce Bernes, Indiana USA ~ 4/1966
Ronaele Berry, California USA ~ 10/1976
Marie Bevins, Nevada USA ~ 1/1978
Mary Bird, Dublin IRELAND ~ 7/1976
Charlene Burnett, Missouri USA ~ 4/1976
Ann Calandro, North Carolina USA ~ 6/1977
Judy Canahuati, Georgia USA ~ 10/1973
Elaine Caper, Illinois USA ~ 7/1974
Sue Christensen, Indiana USA ~ 9/1973
Lea Cohen, Carrieres S/S, FRANCE ~ 1/1978
Janaki Costello, California USA 11/1975
Betty Crase, Illinois USA ~ 7/1977
Joan Crothers, Rhode Island USA ~ 1/1973
Sandra Davis, Tennessee USA ~ 8/1974
Fran Dereszynski, California USA ~ 6/1977
Misty Dunn, California USA ~ 2/1971
Pamela Dunne, Virginia USA ~ 8/1975
Carol Eckelkamp, Massachusetts USA ~ 1/1972
Judith Ellison, Indiana USA ~ 11/1971
Doris Esposito, New York USA ~ 5/1978
Karen Evon, California USA ~ 3/1971
Sharon Fairborn, California USA ~ 9/1972

Nancy Franklin, Texas USA ~ 8/1977
Mona Lee Garner, Arkansas USA ~ 8/1976
Cynthia Garrison, Pennsylvania USA ~ 9/1975
Karin Gausman, Montana USA ~ 3/1975
Susan Giroux, Massachusetts USA ~ 7/1975
Brenda Glover, Illinois USA ~ 7/1977
Verna Gremaud, Missouri USA ~ 3/1965
Barbara Haase, New York USA ~ 7/1976
Michelle Hardert, Ohio USA ~ 8/1976
Cecily Harkins, Oregon USA ~ 10/1966
Eileen Harrison, Rennes, FRANCE ~ 7/1977
Trudy Hartt, Quebec CANADA ~ 4/1978
Cheryl Heymans, Texas USA ~ 12/1978
Mary Jeanne Hickey, Mass. USA ~ 8/1964
Jane Hill, Idaho USA ~ 7/1974
Welda Hoerz, Munich GERMANY ~ 12/1978
Kay Hoover, Pennsylvania USA ~ 9/1971
Judith Hulse, Washington USA ~ 12/1976
Sue Huml, Illinois USA ~ 9/1976
Carol Huotari, Illinois USA ~ 9/1970
Mary Hurt, Illinois USA ~ 11/1973
Grace Eileen Jackson, Hawaii USA ~ 3/1965
Janet Jendron, South Carolina USA ~ 6/1977
Edna Kelly, Texas USA ~ 7/1977
Phoebe Kerness, Georgia USA ~ 10/1969
Deidre Knowles, Washington USA ~ 4/1972
Carol Kolar, Indiana USA ~ 6/1968
Eileen LaChapelle, Florida USA ~ 12/1974
Evelyn Landry, Louisiana USA ~ 12/1967
Kathleen Lange, Missouri USA ~ 12/1967
Diana Lewis, Texas USA ~ 12/1974
Mary Lofton, Illinois USA ~ 2/1969
Carol Luck, Ontario CANADA ~ 1/1973
Rebecca Magalhaes, Illinois USA ~ 1/1977
Margaret Mannke, Mass. USA ~ 12/1977
Nancy March, California USA ~ 1/1976
Chele Marmet, California USA ~ 3/1975
Wendy Masters, Indiana USA ~ 1/1970
Carol Meredith, Texas USA ~ 7/1976
Joan Meyer, Arizona USA ~ 9/1964
Marie Mitchell, Massachusetts USA ~ 5/1965
Chris Mulford, Pennsylvania USA ~ 1/1970
Barbara Mullins, Arkansas USA ~ 10/1974

Sally Murphy, Illinois USA ~ 12/1973
Paula Nariss, Illinois USA ~ 9/1977
Pamela Oselka, Michigan USA ~ 11/1973
Jeanette Panchula, California USA ~ 5/1975
Linda Parry, North Carolina USA ~ 11/1978
Sandy Patton, California USA ~ 9/1973
Molly Pessl, Washington USA ~ 1/1972
Shirley Phillips, Manitoba CANADA ~ 1/1974
Patricia Purdy, California USA ~ 11/1978
Judy Ruprecht, Idaho USA ~ 2/1974
Judy Sanders, Washington USA ~ 3/1968
Anne Sanger, Arizona USA ~ 11/1970
Dottie Savoy, Missouri USA ~ 9/1973
Helene Scheff, Rhode Island USA ~ 1/1971
JoAnne Scott, Virginia USA ~ 11/1976
Mary Seagrove, Texas USA ~ 5/1977
Ellen Shell, California USA ~ 3/1975
Connie Sickafoose, California USA ~ 1/1978
Shari Silady, California USA ~ 1/1975
Evy Simon, Pennsylvania USA ~ 5/1974
Leslie Simpson, Massachusetts USA ~ 1/1978
Harriet Smiley, Connecticut USA ~ 4/1976
Linda Smith, Ohio USA ~ 5/1974
Nancy Spahr, Indiana USA ~ 6/1977
Patricia Spanjer, Georgia USA ~ 3/1977
Diane Sperling, California USA ~ 5/1976
Terry Stafford, British Columbia CANADA ~ 7/1973
Robin Stanford, Florida USA ~ 4/1974
Stephanie Stevens, California USA ~ 1/1974
Julie Stock, Illinois USA ~ 1/1975
Lynne Stone, New York USA ~ 1/1969
Susan Switzer, Georgia USA ~ 9/1976
Lynne Swoope, Florida USA ~ 1/1974
Sue Thompson, Michigan USA ~ 4/1978
Virginia Thompson, California USA ~ 4/1976
Judy Torgus, Illinois USA ~ 2/1962
Kim Williams, California USA ~ 4/1977
Elizabeth Woolf, Florida USA ~ 1/1971
Carol Wrede, Nebraska USA ~ 6/1975
Karen Zeretzke, Louisiana USA ~ 10/1977
Judie Zersen, Washington USA ~ 8/1971
Alice Ziring, Washington USA ~ 3/1975

Longtime LLL Leaders: Memories and reflections

At the LLLI Conference last summer, recognition of women who have been LLL Leaders for 25 years or more touched the hearts of so many. In the words of Alumnae Council member Nancy Franklin (Texas, USA), “the stories that were shared felt as precious as gold.” Nancy invited these Leaders to write about their memories, thoughts, and reflections on their longtime attachment to La Leche League. Here are some responses.

Sitting in that room listening to the stories of so many long time Leaders just blew me away. Putting faces to names and hearing their oral history was a highlight of the Conference.

As for me, I was a member of LLL for ten years and mother of five before becoming a Leader—and I only did it then to satisfy the requirements so I could accept the position of Area Treasurer. I was, and still am, in awe of my sponsoring Leader and then ACL, Helene Scheff (yes, Ms. Chance To Dance Pizzazz herself) and my CLA, Joan Crothers (now an elementary school principal and friend on Power Surge). I had no plans to do anything except bookkeeping and was surprised that I loved leading meetings. Eventually I enjoyed supporting fellow Leaders as ACL of Rhode Island. Transfers led me to North Carolina, where I got back into LLL as Area Treasurer, Division Finance Administrator, and DA. Today I keep my hand in as Area Conference Treasurer and LDS Treasurer, as well as moderating a chatgroup focusing on the World Walk. Four of my five children live close by and I see my four (five by the time this is printed!) grandchildren often. I volunteer for several organizations, but LLL will always be my favorite because of the focus on mothers and babies and the camaraderie of my fellow Leaders.

—Linda Parry, North Carolina USA

I may never have become a Leader if I’d stayed in the Group where I started. The Group in Maryland was large and active and the Leader, Pearl Nagel, was wonderfully warm and caring and always knew exactly the right thing to say. I had nothing to offer. I couldn’t even introduce myself at the meetings, I was so shy.

Then I moved to a remote village on the Haulapai Indian Reservation in Arizona where no one breastfed her baby. I really wanted to spread the word about the benefits of breastfeeding so I applied to become a Leader. A year later, I gave my first meeting—reading word for word from my eight pages of notes. What a disaster! Luckily, everyone there was my friend and the following month was a slight improvement.

For many years, my involvement with LLL was intense and I held many positions at the local, Area, and even International level. I led Groups in Albuquerque, New Mexico; Marquette, Michigan; Carrollton and Waxahachie, Texas; and Annapolis and Calvert County Maryland. I wasn’t involved with any other organization. I was fortunate to be home full-time for my children and had my husband’s support.

Then in the early 90s, I became single. At the age of 39, I began studying to become a nurse. It was a busy time with two of my children in college and two at home, but I stayed in LLL.

The challenge came when I remarried, though. My new husband wasn’t a “League dad.” Although supportive of breastfeeding, he didn’t particularly embrace our philosophy of parenting. By now, I was helping out at our church, working full-time, getting to know my two step-daughters, and participating in new activities with my husband. I didn’t know if LLL fit into my life anymore and I seriously considered retiring.

Then I found the Alumnae Association! And it was like rediscovering LLL all over again. Although I’m no longer leading, or even attending meetings, I feel fulfilled and useful again. There are things for women whose last baby weaned over 15 years ago to do that are as every bit as important as leading meetings and helping a mother over the phone.

What an amazing group of women we are to have made this fantastic organization that is so much to so many!
—Carol Meredith, Maryland/Texas USA

My life in LLL... Hmm. where do I begin to talk about a force that has been part of my life for 33 years? How did I get that old without looking? Where do I begin to describe what I have learned through La Leche League beyond family values and raising children? I learned skills in management, interpersonal communication, problem solving, evaluation, and prioritizing, and the list goes on. My paying job as an executive director of a statewide dance program uses all the skills I just mentioned. Added to my dance education and experience, I am able to nurture teachers, students, parents of students, administrators, musicians, and people who support our program.

Although I have learned from all the Founders, self-made women all, my mentor has been Vi. From the time we first met at an HRE session at an International Conference (more years ago than either one of us cares to remember) until today, I have a friend. She is a constant source of inspiration and I smile whenever I hear her voice on the phone. My only wish is that it wasn’t 1,000 miles between Park Ridge, Illinois and North Kingstown, Rhode Island.

—Helene Scheff, Rhode Island USA

When I became pregnant with my first child, I was living in Israel. A good friend in the U.S. sent me a copy of Karen Pryor's *Nursing Your Baby*, from which I got the LLL address. I ordered THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING (the old one, with the blue cover) and subscribed to the LLL NEWS.

David was born in August of 1973. The local mother/baby clinics weren't much help with breastfeeding, but luckily I had the LLL information and a British friend who was also nursing, and that was enough to help me get through the early days and early problems.

I mentioned to my friend that I wished there was an LLL Group available for us and that I had been wondering about starting one. She had a friend visit—a Lamaze instructor—who called and encouraged me in this idea, so I wrote to LLLI and told them that I wanted to be a Leader.

The application process seemed to take forever (a whole six months!) with long posting time for letters (no e-mail in 1974). During this period, I drove to Tel Aviv from my home in Haifa to attend my first LLL meeting, led by P'nina (Pearl) Shichor. She also did my "preview" when the time was right.

I remember a conference in Tel Aviv during my applicancy that Herbert Ratner and Elizabeth Bing attended. I became a Leader in March of 1975 and started the first LLL Group in the northern part of Israel. Sometimes I look back and wonder how I was so "gutsy," having first contact in that area with some of the official governmental mother/baby support departments. Nothing like being young, naive, and idealistic!

In 1979 we moved back to the U.S. I took over a dormant LLL Group on Mercer Island in Washington state and soon found myself DA for the District

and a member of the Area Council. We still live in the same place and I now lead with the Bellevue P.M. Group. I have transitioned through various Area positions and have also become a part of the LLLI Alumnae PR Committee.

LLL was a very good fit for my own parenting instincts. The one way in which I know that LLL impacted my parenting/breastfeeding was in length of breastfeeding. I doubt if I would have been as relaxed about long-term breastfeeding without the LLL influence.

It's rather amusing that, when I was a new mother in Israel, getting information on parenting and breastfeeding from LLL, I saw the "LLL Way" as the "American Way." It was only after I moved back to the U.S. that I realized how "radical" LLL was often seen to be in the U.S.

I've told the LLL Founders that they were my mentors when I was a young mother. It was their influence, through the WAB and other LLL publications, that helped to shape my mothering and breastfeeding experiences.

Through LLL I have found some of my closest friends. I feel lucky to be a part of an online group of long-term Leaders, which is one of my primary support networks! We communicate regularly and look forward to getting together at LLLI Conferences. We are supporting each other into an age of parental debility and death, the marriages of children, and the births of grandchildren. Coming from a common background, we started out on a whole different level of friendship than most of my non-LLL friends.

I look forward to these connections continuing for many years to come. LLL is such a part of me now that I can't imagine ever "weaning" completely!

—Alice Ziring, Washington USA

*I breastfed my first baby
in 1960*

*and not only did
my dresses zip up the back,
so did society.*

Long ago I welcomed the San Jose California LLL's first phone into my home. It soon became overwhelming, but I—and all the wonderful Leaders I referred calls to—struggled through somehow. Eventually, for my family, I had to put a recording on that phone. My name was Jody Wilsbacher then. It is now Jody Distler-Dill.

Last week in the San Jose Mercury News, there was an article on how the local theaters were having two morning movie sessions for breastfeeding mothers. (Of course it included other mothers and their young children too.) It felt so good to see this kind of acceptance. I breastfed my first baby in 1960 and not only did my dresses zip up the back, so did society. Now a newspaper article aimed at nursing mothers. Wow.

Another "Wow" story comes from my daughter in Davis, California, who has just stopped nursing her 2 1/2-year-old and is expecting my second grandchild. She says the bottle feeding mothers now hide in the restroom to feed their babies because breastfeeding is so much more acceptable.

—Jody Distler-Dill, California USA

Why I am writing a check to LLLI

*M*y youngest son is being privately tutored twice a week. My middle son is getting a full set of braces on Monday. My oldest son is about to apply to college. We are planning our spring vacation and will be taking my parents with us. Our checking account is getting a good workout! So, why am I writing a check to La Leche League?

I am writing this check to La Leche League, for my youngest son, Gavin. He has had some sort of learning difficulty in school. We have had to go through the process of having a special education evaluation. Throughout this process, I had to keep track of all the tests and procedures, make numerous phone calls, and attend several meetings with school personnel. I was able to do a better job of this because of my involvement with LLL.

When I didn't understand my rights as a parent and I needed them clarified, I called a friend who works for the state department of education. He is my former coLeader's husband – a contact I made through my involvement with LLL. He told me to keep a list of what evaluation was being done, by whom, and when. When I walked into the meeting, I had a blank chart to fill in with all this information. It was based on a chart used by Cindy Garrison, EUS Division Director for Division Council. When I decided I needed to confront the members of the Committee on Special Education for their lack of responsibility to my child, I used skills I had learned through attending Communication Skills sessions. I was able to make my point in a strong, assertive, yet not aggressive way.

I am writing this check to La Leche League for my middle son, Tristan. Last year he decided he didn't want to be in the accelerated math and science program at school. La Leche League taught me to listen to my child and that

*Our checking account
is getting a good workout!*

*So why am I
writing a check
to La Leche League?*

I know him best. I was able to realize that though he could do well in this program, it wasn't the best for him. He is happier and enjoying school more.

I am writing this check to La Leche League for my oldest son, Jeremy. I am so proud of the person he is. I have become a better parent through the information I've received from LLL.

The books in the LLLI catalogue helped me understand my children more. I've attended sessions by Mary Sheedy Kurcinka, Nancy Samalin, Eda LeShan, and many fabulous LLL Leaders at Area and International Conferences. The women I have met through La Leche League have supported me through the pre-school Bing-Bing-Bing-Ricochet-Rabbit phase, the middle school attitude phase, and the high school apathy-to-school phase.

Now that we are in the college-search phase, I find that when we attend the open houses on various campuses, I am not afraid to ask questions or make comments, no matter what size group of people I am in. That is something I learned through my involvement in La Leche League.

I am writing this check to La Leche League for my mother and father. I spent this past summer taking my mother to a variety of eye doctors and

my father to a heart doctor. I was able to ask questions and sort through information using skills I learned through La Leche League. When my father had been through a scare with his heart, and really didn't like the doctor he was seeing, I was able to help him change doctors and find one that he was comfortable with. The dialog I used with my parents was learned through dealing with mothers in La Leche League.

Last night my mother was scared about something of a medical nature. I went to my parents' house, phoned her doctor, and calmed her down. My father was thanking me and saying that I was able to do this because I had a college education. I stopped him in mid-sentence. I told them this had nothing to do with college and that I had learned all these skills they were praising from my involvement in La Leche League.

Sometimes, it seems that being an LLL Leader is an expensive proposition. Many of us pay our own Leader Dues. Many of us donate stamps, copying, and other expenses to our Group. Attending the Area Conference, Leader Development Seminar, or District Workshop costs money.

So why am I writing this check to La Leche League? As I look at the looming cost of college tuition, and compare what I learned and gained in college to what I have learned and gained in La Leche League, there is really no comparison. La Leche League has given me a wonderful education in all the things that truly matter. This education has had a positive effect on the people I love. I am writing this check for myself, and for all of them.

—Melissa Fairweather, New York USA

Ed. note—Melissa's article is also appearing in the current issue of *LEAVEN*.

A warm welcome, Hedy!

The new year brought a new Executive Director to La Leche League International. Hedy Nurial, the mother of two breastfed children, attended her first LLL meeting when in Israel as a young mother. She has been a proponent of LLL ever since and has long promoted the value of breastfeeding in her work with families.

Hedy has a Master's Degree in Social Work and is a certified social worker in Michigan. She has held senior leadership positions with several nonprofit agencies. Since 1992 she has been the Executive Director of HAVEN, a multi-service county-wide organization for victims of child abuse, sexual assault and domestic violence, in Oakland County, Michigan.

"For the past 23 years," says Hedy, "I have worked with women and children who live daily with abuse and fear and I have strongly fought for the right of all women and children to live violence-free lives. I look forward now to working to improve women's and children's lives in a nurturing and fundamental way."

Looking to the future, Hedy says "I

would love to see a way that we could reach young people, before they have children, to tell them about the benefits [of breastfeeding].

"I am also interested in working with poor women and with working women. When I worked in a shelter for battered women, we very seldom had women come who were breastfeeding. Not only was it expensive to buy formula, but the mothers would often prop the bottle up by using a towel. So, these babies were deprived of not only the benefits of mother's milk, but the warmth of the contact only a mother could give. They were torn away from their homes and all that was familiar to them. Had their mothers been breastfeeding, at least they would have been calmed by the closeness and stability that nursing provides.

"And working moms. So many women have to go back to work. I think that there are many ways we can reach out to them as well.

"I believe that every child deserves the healthy start that only breastfeeding can give. ...I also believe that the bond formed between the nursing baby and

mother will provide the support they need for future mental as well as physical well being."

Hedy shares that when she was a new mother, she "was hungry for the support of other women." As the new Executive Director of the world's foremost mother-to-mother support group, she now has an opportunity to lead our organization on a mission that she so personally understands and embraces.

A warm welcome to you, Hedy.

Ed. note—The quotes from Hedy were excerpted from an email interview for LEAVEN by Susan Deo, LLLI Board of Directors and Chair of the Executive Director Search Team

Join the Alumnae!

YES, I want to keep in touch and support LLLI. My Alumnae membership category is checked below. Enclosed is:

- \$8 for CONTINUUM (I am currently an LLL Leader or member)
- \$25 for a retired Leader/member LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)
- \$44 for CONTINUUM and an LLLI Individual Membership (includes NEW BEGINNINGS)
- \$60 for a 3-year LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)
- \$100 for a 5-year LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 State/Province: _____
 Zip/Postal Code: _____
 Country: _____
 Current LLL status: _____
 e-mail: _____

Send to: LLL International, P.O. Box 4079, Schaumburg IL 60168-4079 USA

Save the date: Savannah with the Alums

It's time for another Alumnae trip! We're heading to Savannah, Georgia November 11-14, 2004.

Come stroll with us through the Nation's largest Historic District and Georgia's oldest city, dating back to 1733. Experience the "urban garden of the South," as you explore Savannah's squares with their gardens, galleries, charming boutiques, and many restaurants featuring southern cuisine and fresh seafood. A trip to the city would not be complete without a visit to City Market or the historic cobblestone River

Walk as well as Tybee Beach.

Other events planned include a Gray Line tour of the city and the surrounding areas, visits to museums, historic homes and churches. Included among these will be a stop at the Juliette Gordon Low Home, the founder of the Girl Scouts of America.

Savannah is easy to reach by car, train or plane. Please plan on joining us. Watch for future announcements about registration and fees. For further information contact Phoebe Kerness at PJMKDD@AOL.COM.

Continuum

La Leche League International
P. O. Box 4079
Schaumburg IL 60168-4079 USA

NONPROFIT
ORGANIZATION
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
La Leche League
International

-The LLLI Alumnae Association Council

Coordinator:

Pam Oselka

9701 Kruger Rd., Union Pier
MI 49129 · 269-469-2706
At LLLI: 847-519-7730 x257
<poselka@llli.org>

Publications/Web Site:

Sue Christensen

1304 Leeper, South Bend IN
46617 · 574-288-7151
fax: 574-237-1071
<schriste@michiana.org>

Public Relations/Web Site:

Janet Jendron

112 Park Springs Road
Columbia SC 29223
803-736-1585
fax: 803-935-5342
<jjendron@usit.net>

Area Alumnae Representative
(AAR) Coordinator:

Carol Meredith

225 Autumn Lane, Centerville,
MD 21617 · 410-758-3462
<cameredith@yahoo.com>

Special Projects:

Nancy Franklin

13230 Blanco Rd. #1007
San Antonio, TX 78216
210-479-1369
fax: 210-593-4106
<NBFL77@aol.com>

Janice Horvath

4564 Winderwood Circle
Orlando, FL 32835
407-291-6100
<PackerJanice@cfl.rr.com>

LLLI Liaison:

Viola Lennon

200 South Dee, Park Ridge IL
60068 · 847-692-5228

LLLI's 19th International Conference:

Breastfeeding-- Ancient Art, Modern Miracle

July 2-5, 2005 ~ Washington, D.C.

LLLI and Alumnae news and announcements

- ❖ There is a new "unofficial" e-mail group, Living WeLLL, for Leaders who have experienced a cancer diagnosis, past or present. Please share this information with other Leaders or retired Leaders. Register at: <<http://health.groups.yahoo.com/group/LivingWeLLL>>
- ❖ The 7th revised edition of THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING is now available through the Order Department at LLLI (847-519-9585). It has been updated to reflect new information and current research on positioning, latch-on, milk production, and risks associated with not breastfeeding. Copies autographed by the Founders will be available in early April.
- ❖ Katy Lebbing, IBCLC, is the new Manager for the Center for Breastfeeding Information. She will also continue as Breastfeeding Resource Center Manager. She has worked as a Lactation Consultant in private practice and is a long-time LLL Leader. Carol Huotari will continue to work at home on a half-time basis.
- ❖ 2002-03 LLLI Annual Reports are available. Contact Pam Oselka if you would like a copy.
- ❖ Celebrations for World Breastfeeding Week will now be coordinated by LLL-USA rather than LLLI. The World Walk may be one of many activities planned.
- ❖ The LLLI Public Relations Department recently received a \$3,000 grant for a media monitoring service that sends cyber alert communications on anything with breastfeeding or LLL in the content.
- ❖ Marketing strategies evolve with the times. "Enroll in Enfamil Family Beginnings today for wonderful benefits for you and your baby," encourages the Enfamil website. "Then download the program certificate with all the information you'll need to take to your delivery hospital or baby's doctor for your free Enfamil LIPIL sample and your \$25,000 college scholarship entry form!"