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**Why We Consult in the LAD**

*International Leader Accreditation Department Council*

“The Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) is an international department that has been charged by the LLLI Board of Directors to accredit Leaders according to the LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation.”

*LAD Manual, 2018*

Appendix 18 to the *LLLI Policies and Standing Rules Notebook* describes the LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership and the LLLI Criteria for Leadership. These are universal prerequisites and criteria that apply to all entities within La Leche League International. Thus, LAD representatives are accrediting Leaders on behalf of LLLI, not a specific Area, Affiliate, or Area Network.

Consultation is an important part of LAD work. It helps to ensure that Leaders are accredited the same no matter where they live. They need to meet the same criteria and do the same application work no matter where they live. This may sometimes be challenging. For example, if a baby self-weans at 11 1/2 months and the mother does everything she can to get her baby back to the breast, does this meet the Personal Breastfeeding Prerequisite which states: “If baby has weaned, the baby was nursed for about a year”? What does “about a year” mean? Consulting with others in the LAD helps to clarify that there is agreement on whether someone meets the prerequisites.

In the LAD we have identified different interpretations of the Mothering Experience Prerequisite. In some Areas, Leaders are reluctant to recommend anyone who has returned to work in their baby’s first year of life. In other Areas Leaders recommend any working parent as long as they meet the other prerequisites. As a guideline for determining which applications to accept when there has been separation, the LAD uses two LLLI resources: Appendices 17 Concept Policy Statements and 18 Applying for Leadership.

From Appendix 17, the policy statement for the concept: “In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food.”

**Mother / Baby Relationship**

Breastfeeding meets a baby’s need for warmth, love, security, and nourishment and satisfies his intense need for his mother. The early years are commonly understood to be about the first three years of a child’s life. During this time, a child’s intense need for his mother continues, yet changes according to the individual child’s growth and development. A variety of circumstances can separate a mother from her child. These may include employment, education, and cultural traditions. When separations are unavoidable, the baby remains a priority for the mother. Considering her baby’s need for her presence as well as for her milk, the mother minimizes the amount of separation and maximizes her availability when they are together.

*February 1985, revised December 2016*

From Appendix 18, the Mothering Experience Prerequisite

Mother values nursing at her breast as the optimal way to nourish, nurture and comfort her baby. She recognizes, understands and responds to baby’s need for her presence as well as for her milk. She manages any separation from baby with sensitivity and respect for the baby’s needs.

The challenge for Leaders and LAD representatives is that neither of these resources give specific criteria with a number of hours or the baby’s age. The LLLI Board chose vague terms because they want Leaders and the LAD to look at each application individually. Leaders and LAD representatives are expected to look for ways that potential
Applicants meet the Mothering Experience Prerequisite and value the mother/baby relationship in words and actions. Consulting is one way to ensure that there is consistency in how these decisions are made in different parts of an international organisation. In particular, the LAD values consultation if early, extensive and ongoing separation is common because this is the situation where inconsistency could occur more easily.

During LAD orientation we discuss many topics with the new LAD representative. These include:

- Personal preferences/biases.
- Universal accreditation criteria; representing LLL as mandated by the LLLI Board.
- Consultative relationship, ongoing learning, review.

All LAD representatives are expected to become familiar with the LAD Manual. In this resource, which guides how the department function, it states: “The new ACLA and her support person build a consultative relationship that continues past orientation. Part of this relationship is the willingness and ability to listen to the other person. It’s important to respect your orientation partner’s experience and ideas as well as your own.” (p. 10)

The LAD has an incredible support network which is built on the consultative relationship established during orientation to the department. ACLAs* (Area Coordinators of Leader Accreditation) can consult with the Area CLA (Coordinator of Leader Accreditation). The CLA has support from the R/ALA (Regional/Administrator of Leader Accreditation). And internationally there is support from the DLAD (Director of Leader Accreditation Department), members of the LAD Council (ALAs from all LLL entities) and the LAD liaison to the LLLI Board of Directors.

* Please note that in New Zealand the ACLA is called a CLA (Coordinator of Leader Accreditation) and the CLA is called an ACLA (Area Coordinator of Leader Accreditation.)

The CLA (or ACLA in New Zealand) is the LAD administrator for the Area. The role of this LAD position is described on page 42 of the LAD Manual: “The CLA is responsible for Leader accreditation in the Area. As a representative of an LLLI Department, the CLA is accountable for implementation of LLLI Prerequisites to Applying for Leadership and LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation in the Area.” To do this the CLA needs to regularly consult with the ACLAs in the Area and with the R/ALA in the Region, Area Network or Affiliate. On this same page CLA responsibilities are listed. The second one - “Keeping up-to-date with and implementing LAD procedures” is a reminder that it is the CLA who is responsible for communicating and implementing changes in LAD procedures to the ACLAs and Area Team.

Regular communication and consultation is an important part of how the LAD functions. Please remember that when you consult, you help your LAD support person maintain consistency and achieve the universal accreditation criteria.

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**Recruiting Leaders to the LAD**

Linda Wieser, Nova Scotia, Canada

Many of us in the LAD love this position in La Leche League so much, we can’t understand why Leaders aren’t knocking at our door saying, “How can I join the LAD?”

Perhaps they don’t understand what LAD representatives do or think it’s too much work. They may have heard other Leaders talking about the LAD and doubt that it would be a good fit for them. Or they may be fairly new Leaders and think they need more experience before joining the LAD. Sometimes a Leader approaches the LAD directly saying: “I’d like to learn more about the department” or “I want to become an ACLA.” However, in most cases, we need to reach out to Leaders, just as we reach out to potential Applicants about becoming Leaders.

Create opportunities for Leaders to meet you and learn about the LAD.

- Attend Leader Days, Area Workshops and conferences. Introduce yourself as the CLA or ACLA for the Area. Let Leaders get to know you personally. Ask about their interest in doing LLL work beyond the Group.
• Offer a LAD session. This could be a formal presentation on a specific topic such as pre-application dialogues, completing the Checklist, working on the Preview. Or it could be an informal discussion on topics such as: “Finding time for application work,” “Questions for the LAD” or “How to stay motivated.” You may want to consider separate sessions for Leaders and Applicants. For ideas, session outlines, or PowerPoint presentations, go to https://www.dropbox.com/sh/a72eciy8tqmhfjg/AADpw-dFJGL7sgM5DYmlodxWa?dl=0.

• Share written information about LAD work, such as LAD Work: Is It For You?, available on the LLL Alliance website at http://www.lllalliance.org/top-lad-page/lad-representative-resources/. The case-sensitive password is 4LADreps; or you could share the ACLA job description.

Help Leaders envision themselves in the role of LAD representative

• If supporting Leaders seem especially excited about working with Applicants, talk with them about LAD work. You may notice that a Leader writes a particularly thorough recommendation and Preview evaluation.

• If Applicants have a good understanding about LLL philosophy and enjoy writing, suggest that they consider joining the LAD in the future.

• Share what you like about LAD work. Let others know about how much you enjoy corresponding with enthusiastic Applicants and discussing LLL philosophy. Share how rewarding it is to mentor Applicants and help them reach their goal of becoming an accredited LLL Leader.

• Be realistic when talking with Leaders about LAD work and share how you fit LAD work in with your other commitments. Let them know the expectations for responding; reassure them that they can decide how many Applicants they are comfortable working with at a time. Stress the flexibility of the position, i.e., being able to respond when you have time.

• Describe the orientation period. Knowing that LAD orientation gives one the opportunity to work on a practice file first, can be reassuring.

• Discuss the value of being part of an international department with an incredible support network.

Ask Leaders for help with LAD work

• Consider recruiting Leaders to work as supporting Leaders for isolated Applicants in another part of the Area. This may get them interested in learning more about the LAD.

• Recruit a Leader to be LAD Secretary. In this position, the Leader supports the CLA by:
  • Responding to questions about new applications and prerequisites.
  • Receiving new applications and Leader recommendations.
  • Reviewing each application for completeness.
  • Consulting the CLA if there are any issues or concerns.
  • Assigning applications to available ACLAs.
  • Keeping accurate records of applications initiated, withdrawals and accreditations.

Consult with the Area Team

• Team members may have suggestions for future LAD members.

• Some Areas maintain a list of Leaders interested in working at the Area level.

• An “Interest in Area work” sign-in at Area Leaders’ events can help identify possible candidates for the LAD. On the sheet ask: “If you were to work at the Area level, which department would you be interested in joining—Leader Accreditation, Leader, Professional Liaison, Communication Skills, etc. and when would you be ready to join—now, in six months, in a year?”

Publicize the need for more LAD members

• Use the Area email list to let Leaders know that more LAD representatives are needed.
• Put an ad in an Area Leaders’ Letter or other Leader publication.

• Send out a search letter for a specific LAD position.

Making LAD work visible in your Area may help spark a Leader’s interest in exploring new ways of working within La Leche League. As members of the LAD, our job is to be vigilant for any spark of interest and help that spark grow by sharing our experience of LAD work, by discussing the job realistically with Leaders and by helping them see how their skills and interests fit with this Area position.

Linda Wieser lives in Mahone Bay, Nova Scotia, Canada, where she and her husband, Jim, have a large garden and several boats for playing around on the water. They have two grown daughters and three grandchildren. Linda has been a Leader since 1984. For many years she worked in the Professional Liaison Department as Area Professional Liaison for Michigan, USA, and then Atlantic Canada. In 2008, she became a member of the LAD and is currently the Administrator of Leader Accreditation for LLL Canada. She is also the Contributing Editor of the LAD Column “Preparing for Leadership” in Leader Today.

Compilation Article

Meeting Applicants Where They Are—Online, on Skype, on Facebook, on WhatsApp…

We are constantly seeking new and more effective ways to work with Leader Applicants, especially those who are isolated and we are fortunate that technology provides us with so many opportunities for innovative approaches to our LAD work.

Benaifer Bhandari in Great Britain shares the following about her work with Skype:

Like many LAD representatives I work predominantly via email. However, I have found Skype exceptionally valuable in three circumstances:

1. **When the Applicant has stalled and wants to get started and isn't sure how:** We go over how much she has already done. She relaxes and shares perhaps some of the concepts that are easier for her and I type it up for her.

2. **If the Applicant or supporting Leader has said something that has me wondering about what is going on for the Applicant:** A Skype session has always reassured me that leadership is still her goal.

3. **If she is near the end and has sent me things in a bit of a muddle and I can't quite be sure she has met the criteria for accreditation:** Then chatting to make sure everything is covered is a quick and efficient way to reassure myself. This is the most common reason because often supporting Leaders work very hard with the Applicant and between them they forget to keep me in the picture.

Eugenia Ramirez of LLL Medellin in Colombia writes:

English translation follows

Cuando una aspirante aislada requiere apoyo para acreditarse como líder, me llena de ilusión saber que la semilla de LLL pueda florecer en otro lugar del mundo donde no estamos presentes.
Gracias a todas las herramientas que los nuevos desarrollos de la tecnología de las comunicaciones nos brindan actualmente, tuve la linda experiencia de acompañar una aspirante de Venezuela. Debido a la difícil situación por la que atraviesa su país, encontramos que el WhatsApp era casi el único medio eficaz para comunicarnos. Por medio de mensajes de voz hicimos el diálogo pre aplicación y durante varios meses nos comunicamos por WhatsApp para conocernos un poco más. Luego por mail ella envió su historia de lactancia y maternidad y yo le envíe el manual de líder digital y toda la información adicional que se requería para su proceso.

Aprovechando la visita del pediatra español Carlos Gonzalez a Colombia, la aspirante viajó con su hijo, para tener la oportunidad de escucharlo. Durante su viaje a Colombia logró asistir a un grupo de apoyo, participar en un taller de habilidades de la comunicación, adquirir una copia de la última edición del *AFA* y adicional, pudimos conocernos personalmente.

El diálogo continuó por WhatsApp y correo electrónico y finalmente realizamos la sesión de evaluación por Skype con la participación de otra líder de Colombia. Considero que los más importantes para que el proceso avanzara y culminara exitosamente, fue la motivación y compromiso permanente de la aspirante.

Espero esta experiencia pueda ser un ejemplo de cómo podemos llegar a más madres a través de los nuevos canales de comunicación que los nuevos tiempos nos brindan.

Alejandra terminó su proceso de acreditación exitosamente y ahora representa a la organización en Venezuela.

When there is an isolated Applicant who requires support to be accredited as a Leader, I am delighted to know that the seed of LLL can flourish in another part of the world where we are not yet present.

Thanks to all the tools that the new developments in communications technology currently offer us, I had the pleasant experience of working with a Leader Applicant from Venezuela. Due to the difficult situation that the country is going through, we found that WhatsApp was almost the only effective way to communicate. We did the pre-application dialogue through voice messages and for several months we communicated by WhatsApp to get to know each other a little more. Then she sent her personal history of breastfeeding and mothering by mail and I sent her the digital version of the *Leader's Handbook* and all the additional information that was required for her application.

Taking advantage of the visit of the Spanish pediatrician Carlos Gonzalez to Colombia, the Applicant traveled with her son, to have the opportunity to listen to him. During her trip to Colombia, she was able to attend a Group, participate in a communication skills workshop, acquire a copy of the latest edition of *The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding* and in addition, we could meet personally.

We continued our dialogue by WhatsApp and email and finally we conducted the Preview by Skype with the participation of another Leader from Colombia. I believe that the most important factor for the process to progress and be completed successfully, was the motivation and permanent commitment of the Applicant.

I hope this experience can be an example of how we can reach more mothers through the new communication channels that these times offer us.

Alejandra has been accredited as a Leader and is now representing LLL in Venezuela.

Lesley Robinson of LLL Canada works with isolated Applicants both in Canada and in Future Areas. She shares the following:

Meeting Applicants where they are is essential in encouraging them to design their own applications. I remember when we first began to use email as a way to correspond with Applicants, some LAD representatives worried that Applicants would write less
detail in their personal histories. In practice, email became merely a fast and inexpensive way of corresponding. It is a means of communication, just a way of conveying the content of the message, it is not the message itself. In fact, the conversational nature of online communication has enhanced our ability to clarify, to ask questions and to expand the discussion without waiting weeks for a response, so that the discussion of the personal history becomes a real conversation.

We now have a host of options for fast and easy correspondence. Asking Applicants how they prefer to correspond gives them the opportunity to take control of their own applications and approach them with creativity as well as user-friendliness. Ask Applicants to make their own suggestions beyond those you have used in the past. The Apps you are accustomed to using may not be available in all parts of the world. Be open to new ways of working. It is particularly helpful for isolated Applicants to have regular and personal contact with LAD representatives. Through social media, you can quite literally become the face of LLL for them. This personal contact will be valuable and enriching for you too.
Semi-Annual Report: Compilation  
April 2018  
LAD Council

The information from the previous SAR is indicated in parentheses. Italics include/indicate estimated figures. “Length of applications” shows the median length in months.

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Semi-Annual Report
April 2018

Comparison of Four Reporting Periods
LAD Council

- Affiliates: Canada English, Canada French, Great Britain, New Zealand
- Non-USA ANs: European AN (Area Network), International AN
- USA ANs: Alliance AN, Garden State AN, Mosaic AN, Southern California/Nevada AN, Texas AN, US West AN
- The numbers with an asterisk (*) have been corrected from the original
- Italicics include/indicate estimated figures

### Leaders

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### Applicants

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### New Applications

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### Discontinued Applications

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### Accreditations

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Here is an extract from a Leader Applicant who had a traumatic birth experience. There is no single right answer. Sharing possible approaches can help us consider how we might choose to respond.

Dear Caroline CLA,

Thank you so much for the information you sent about the application. I have been working on my personal history, and I am running into some issues. The birth of my baby was very traumatic, and whenever I try to write about it, I get very upset. I’m not sure that I will be able to finish my writing because of this, and don’t know what to do. Does this mean I can’t become a Leader?

Thanks,
Amelia Applicant

Dear Amelia,

Thank you for writing about a difficult topic with such honesty. Your feelings about this are really important. The goal of the personal history is to reflect on how your experiences relate to LLL philosophy, which in turn helps to “empty your cup” and focus on supporting other parents. That being said, your own well-being is paramount, and there are other ways to explore the topic of childbirth.

What is it like for you to hear or read about other people’s birth stories? This is a key question to ponder during leadership preparation, and some work around how to respond and discuss birth is important for all Applicants. How would you feel about reading a few birth stories and writing out an empathetic reaction, as if you were talking to each mother face-to-face?

Think it over and let me know if this exercise feels like something you could do. If so, I could send you some links to some birth stories. Take the time you need. Talk to your supporting Leader if you’re comfortable. I know how much you want to become a Leader, and you have my full support on this!

Warmly,
Caroline CLA  
Sarah Quigley, USA

Dear Amelia Applicant,

It can very difficult to relive a traumatic experience of any kind. I can imagine that having a birth so far from what you had planned and expected may take more time and some distance to be able to write about. There are many ways to work on the various parts of an application. I’d like to offer some options for your consideration. Perhaps it would help to break up the birth experience into smaller parts so that you only have to discuss one part at a time. For example, you can discuss your preparations for the birth - just that much. Our discussion may help you become more comfortable with next parts, which again can be just small portions of the bigger picture - describing your birth plan, for example, and perhaps even just small pieces of that at a time - until you feel ready to write about the most traumatic parts.

Another option might be to start at the end and share happier moments: when you knew you and your baby were both healthy, when you held your baby in your arms the first time, when your baby latched for the first time. Focusing on the happy ending of your story - whenever you felt that was - can make it easier to write about the parts of your birth experience that were not so happy with a more positive perspective.

Amelia, perhaps it would be easier to discuss this with your sponsoring Leader and let her take notes and write a summary of the discussion to send for you. Or, if you feel it would be easier to discuss this with someone more neutral, set up a time when we can Skype or use FaceTime and I could take notes and summarize the discussion. It may also help you to remember that, as a Leader, you do not use your own experience as an example. The phrase "many mothers have found" can help deflect any need to directly refer to or share your own birth or breastfeeding experience during a meeting discussion.

You are not alone in finding it hard to relive a traumatic experience, Amelia. Working together, I am sure we can find a way for you to meet this aspect of your application in a non-threatening way.

Warmly,
Caroline CLA  
Cindy Garrison, USA

Amelia,

It’s so good to hear from you. Writing one’s personal history is a time to reflect on one’s birthing, breastfeeding and parenting experiences. Thinking about these experiences often triggers strong emotional feelings - anger, sadness, joy, fear, exhilaration. Each person’s experience is unique. Some Applicants find it helpful to write about these events even when they are traumatic. Others, like you, hit a brick wall and can’t move forward. Having a traumatic birth can take years to process. This is very normal, so I’m not surprised that you’re having a hard time writing about it.

Let me reassure you that we’ll be able to figure out a way for you to meet the personal history requirement and go on to become an LLL Leader. There are many ways to tell your personal history. First of all, you don’t have to write about the ten concepts in order. Pick the ones that are easiest for you and start there. Save the one about childbirth until the end. If writing is still too difficult, consider using photos, drawings or just words to share your birth experience. A few years ago another Leader shared a lovely PowerPoint presentation from an Applicant with lots of photos, short stories and music. We could also chat via Skype. You may feel more comfortable talking rather than writing about your baby’s birth.

Think about what I’ve written and let me know what you’d like to do.

Warmly,
Caroline  
Linda Wieser, Nova Scotia, Canada
Dear Alice ACLA,

Thank you so much for working with me on my application. I have a question for you. Janet, my supporting Leader, told me that she took two years to do her application, and that when she was accredited, she felt very prepared to be a Leader because of all of the time she took. As you know, it’s now been three months, and I’ve already completed my personal history, work with the Breastfeeding Resource Guide (BRG), going over the Checklist, and all of my reading. Do you think that I should slow down my progress and wait to do the Preview to make sure that I am well-prepared like Janet was? She hasn’t said anything to make me feel like I should, however I don’t want to miss anything I may need to know to be a good Leader.

Thank you so much for your input,

Aurora Applicant

How would you respond? Send your ideas for a reply or an extract you would like to share with other LAD representatives to Contributing Editor for this column, Karin Ali, at karinali0407@gmail.com.
Christophe and I have three children (25, 23, and 21 years old). Two of them are still living at home while studying. I've been a Leader for 23 years and I began LAD work in 2000. After working as an ACLA for five years I became the ALA for three years, then left LAD work after that. I came back as ACLA last fall when I was asked for support in our LAD. Who would have thought I'd be back in LAD one day? Definitely not me, but life has a way of sending us nice surprises. This is one of them and I am grateful for it.

Things have changed somewhat since I worked in the LAD earlier, as new technology has set in (and I am not computer savvy by far.) I am hoping to catch up on that kind of stuff while supporting the LAD representatives in my Affiliate. It's a pleasure for me to continue my work with Leader Applicants as I get to meet wonderful future Leaders.

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Ciao a tutte, care colleghe de La Leche League!

Mi chiamo Michela Brustenga e dal 2003 sono Consulente de La Leche League Italia. Sono nata e cresciuta a Perugia (ehm...48 anni fa!), una cittadina dell’Umbria, regione del centro Italia, denominata “cuore verde d’Italia”; sono laureata in filosofia, e, fino alla nascita della mia prima bimba, ho lavorato nel campo del sociale.

Sono sposata da ventidue anni con Nicola e abbiamo tre figlie: Layla, di diciotto anni, appena tornata a casa dopo un anno trascorso in Francia: devo dire che è diventata una donna molto in gamba! Marialuna, di dodici anni, che io chiamo “la mia nuvola d’oro”, avendo i capelli “gialli gialli”, come diceva lei da piccola; e Geneviève, di quasi sei anni, che, come potrete ben immaginare, è la cucciolina preziosa di casa!

L’incontro con LLL, poco dopo la nascita di Layla, ha rappresentato per me una sorta di…”rivoluzione copernicana”! Non solo ha facilitato il nostro allattamento, ma, in più, mi ha permesso di “decodificare”, per così dire, i segnali e i messaggi delle mie bambine, e quindi di comportarmi, da madre, in sintonia con loro (salvo
difficoltà inevitabili). Quando ho intravisto la possibilità di diventare Consulente, beh, quasi non ci credevo, tanto era bello! Eppure, eccomi qui, dall’estate del 2003, a far parte di questa meravigliosa associazione! E non solo! Dal 2008 sono entrata a far parte del LAD, prima come A/CLA e tuttora (da più di due anni) come co-CLA. La formazione è sempre stata una passione per me, ma questi anni nel LAD sono stati uno più sorprendente dell’altro: mi ha donato la grande e preziosa opportunità di poter contribuire alla “nascita” di tante mamme come Consulenti, di conoscere la loro storia la loro determinazione, il loro coraggio, a volte anche il loro dolore…e sempre il loro grande amore per i propri bambini! Sono molto grata, per questo, a LLL e al LAD in particolare, che, tra l’altro, qualche anno fa, ha rappresentato per me una vera e propria ancora di salvezza in un momento davvero brutto della mia vita: se non ci fosse stato il LAD forse non sarei più una Consulente…

Vi abbraccio tutte con molto affetto…quando sarete in Italia, nel suo meraviglioso “cuore verde”, la mia casa sarà sempre aperta per voi!

Greetings to all my fellow La Leche League Leaders!

My name is Michela Brustenga, and since 2003 I have been a Leader of La Leche League Italy. I was born (48 years ago!) and raised in Perugia, a small city in Umbria, an Italian region nicknamed “Italy’s green heart”. I have a PhD in philosophy, and since my first daughter’s birth I have been involved in social work. I have been married for 22 years to my husband Nicola and we have three daughters together: Layla, eighteen years old, who just came back home from a year abroad which she spent in France (I will say that she came back a grown woman), Marialuna, 12 years old, whom I call “my golden cloud” since she has really blond hair (as she used to say when she was little), and Geneviève, almost six years old, who, as you can imagine, is the family’s precious little pet!

My first encounter with LLL, a little while after Layla’s birth, was my personal “Copernican Revolution!” Not only did it make breastfeeding a lot easier, but it also allowed me to interpret my daughters’ signals and messages and to get along better with them as a mother (except for some inevitable difficulties.) When I first heard about the possibility of becoming a Leader, I almost didn’t believe it: it was too good to be true! Nonetheless, here I am, since summer 2003, a member of this wonderful association! And that’s not all. Since 2008, I have been a member of the LAD, at first as A/CLA and now (since 2016) as co-CLA.

Training has always been a passion of mine, but these years as a member of LAD have been astonishingly good: they have given me the great and precious opportunity of helping a lot of mothers to become Leaders, of getting to know their stories, their resilience, their courage, sometimes their pain… and most of all their immense love for their children. I am very grateful for all of this, to LLL and to the LAD in particular: in fact, last year it was a saving grace for me in a really difficult moment of my life. If it hadn’t been for the LAD, I probably wouldn’t be a Leader anymore…

I send my love to all of you, and if you ever come to Italy’s green heart, my house will be open for you!

Lee Shields
USA
Hello from Virginia, USA! My name is Lee, and I’m the new RALA for the Mountain East Region of LLL Alliance. I also serve as CLA for the Common Wealth Area. Thank you for the opportunity to introduce myself and share a little bit about how I found my way to LLL and the LAD.

When my first son was born, I found in the struggle of learning to breastfeed, a deep passion for the unique connection and intimacy that breastfeeding creates between mother and child. I loved breastfeeding and hoped for a natural weaning for him. When he was approximately nine months old, I developed severe symptoms of hyperthyroidism, and was soon thereafter diagnosed with an autoimmune thyroid disorder. My doctor put me on anti-thyroid medication, but it turns out that I am highly allergic to this type of medication. My doctor instructed me to wean immediately so that I could undergo a radioactive iodine ablation treatment. This was my only option, he said. With fear and sadness, I started researching how to gently, but quickly wean my boy, and I found very little that appealed. A friend recommended that I reach out to LLL for help and gave me the name and number of a local Leader. I called her and asked if we could meet. This kind, empathetic Leader who I didn’t even know cried with me over the potential loss of something I held so dear as we watched my baby crawl around the bookstore where we met, followed closely by my watchful husband. Then she gave me another wonderful gift for which I am grateful to this day. She asked me if I had done any research into alternative treatments, and asked if I’d considered a second opinion. She told me it was ok not to settle. That in asking another doctor or doing some research, I would be advocating for myself and my health and my baby. She gave me information about weaning, but she also empowered me not to stop there if I wasn’t confident in the treatment plan given me by my current doctor.

A second opinion was something that hadn’t even occurred to me, much less the idea of researching alternative treatments. I left that meeting feeling empowered and in charge of my own health. At home, I learned that some patients who did not want radioactive iodine treatment were able to undergo surgery to remove their thyroid. I asked my doctor, who was adamant that “no surgeon would touch” me and who asked if my motive was my desire to continue breastfeeding. He said; “your son would rather have you alive as his mother than have been breastfed.” And instead of feeling trapped and bullied, I knew then that I could and should find another doctor. And I did! The next doctor I saw said that I should not wean; that I was an ideal candidate for surgery, and that she rarely recommends radioactive iodine treatment to young women, because of the constraints it creates for them in family life. And just two weeks before my son’s first birthday, my thyroid was removed. I was separated from him for a mere five hours for the surgery, and he continued to breastfeed until he was about two and a half years old, during my pregnancy with his little brother.

That’s a long story, but it is the story of how I found LLL. It’s also the story of how I learned to trust my instincts and advocate for my own health with medical providers. Shortly after my surgery, we moved to Virginia. Not knowing anyone in my new community, I decided that I would find an LLL meeting nearby so that I could make some like-minded friends. I attended meetings regularly and grew to love the organization. I wanted to support and empower others as that LLL Leader had supported and empowered me. I was Accredited a Leader in September of 2013.

I joined the LAD as CLA of Common Wealth in November of 2015. Helping Applicants navigate the work of Accreditation is greatly rewarding. It’s also such a pleasure just getting to know Applicants from many towns and cities across my Area. I’m excited to learn and grow and get to know the CLAs of the Mountain East Region as I settle into my new role as RALA.
If you keep all LAD files electronically, you might want to consider using 4 x 6 in (10 X 15 cm) index cards for easy reference. One glance at the card will tell you when you last heard from the Applicant.

- Keep all the cards together with a large clip or rubber band.
- Use one card for each Applicant.
- Include Applicant’s name, Area, Group, Supporting Leader, membership information and children’s names and birth dates.
- Briefly record all correspondence.

Here’s an example card:

| Applicant, Alice | Membership paid 2017 Nov 14 |
| Area | Group | Omar - Oct 2014 |
| SL: Lucy Leader | Lola - March 2017 |

Initiated: 12 Jan 2018
13 Jan  About You  Responded and sent LARK
19 Feb  Personal History
23 Feb  LAD response to PH
25 Feb  Response to LAD questions
26 Feb  LAD reply
  1 Mar  Responses to more questions; LAD reply and summary of what’s left
  14 Mar  Comments on WAB; LAD reply
24 Mar  Sent Chrysalis and Butterfly newsletters
14 Apr  Childbirth requirement; LAD reply
  6 Jun  LAD check-in
17 Jun  Comments of Leader’s Handbook
18 Jun  LAD reply

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**Congratulations on your appointment!**

Dara Connolly       CLA, MA/RI/VT

Tiziana De Meo      co-ALA, LLL Europe
Kacie Thompson Fuller    ACLA, Utah/Idaho, USA

Linda King Gaboriaud    ALA, Ligue La Leche (French Canada)

Sandrine Jeanjean    ACLA, Ligue La Leche (French Canada)

**Photo Letters**
from LAD representatives

**Being Creative**
Rachel and son Bradley (3 1/2)

I express my creativity through crocheting and quilting. They allow me to connect to others and show my love by gifting my creations to friends and family.

Rachel Concitis, CLA for LLL, Ohio, USA
Η ACLA μου η Ελισάβετ, η βοηθός μας στο LAD Βίκι (αυτή στη μοβ καρδούλα) κι εγώ, 20 Υποψήφιες, 5 Ενδιαφερόμενες και ένας Υπολογιστής. Όλοι μαζί συντονίσμενοι στο Zoom μελετάμε, ονειρεύομαστε μοιραζόμαστε. Σαν ένα δέντρο με γερές ρίζες την κοινή φιλοσοφία της LLL, κορμό τη δημιουργική συνεργασία και κλαδιά τις νεές Συμβουλές κι εμάς ενδυναμωμένες την ελπίδα που ρέει.

Elisabeth, an ACLA in orientation, our LAD helper Vicky (the one in the purple heart on the computer screen,) me, 20 Applicants, five interested mothers all over Greece and internet—all together every day via “Zoom meetings”—studying, sharing, dreaming. Like a tree having the same roots: LLL’s philosophy. The main stem is our creative inclusiveness; the branches, the future new Leaders and us renewed. As a mother’s milk flows, so does our hope flow for a better world in the future.

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LAD Council members

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