LLL Philosophy in Our Hearts
LAD Council

“When we look carefully at the details of mothers’ experiences, we realize that no two are alike. Identifying LLL philosophy in varied experiences can open leadership to mothers who have found many ways to use our philosophy. When mothers new to LLL see Leaders from a wide range of backgrounds and life experiences, LLL is able to appeal to and help more women.”

Karin Gausman, LAD Council Member-at-Large, LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education Leaven, July-August-September 2006, “The Prerequisite Puzzle”
http://www.llli.org/llleaderweb/LV/LVJulAugSep06p61.html

As LAD representatives we have the privilege of sharing a reflective discussion with Applicants about their experience and how it encompasses LLL philosophy, a core tool for leadership. Our purpose is to affirm Applicants’ deeper understanding of their experience and ways to articulate for others our concepts on mothering through breastfeeding. Our dialogue is focused on helping Applicants to pass on LLL philosophy when they become Leaders, enabling mothers to embrace what is in their hearts at their own pace and from unique starting points as their relationships of mothering through breastfeeding develop.

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In this publication, we offer two enrichment approaches for readers. Please take what is helpful and leave the rest. The first part is a selection of LAD responses to Applicants’ writing on the concepts. The second part describes an LLL philosophy session in which the Founders’ comments reveal how they discovered what worked in practical family life and how what was in their hearts came to be articulated in LLL concept statements.
**Sample Responses to Applicants**

Superior Infant Food

* Breast milk is the superior infant food.

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* English translation follows

Ce concept insiste sur la valeur du lait de la mère. Quand une maman évoque les raisons pour lesquelles elle a choisi d’allaiter, il est courant qu’elle commence par dire que c’est parce que c’est le meilleur pour le bébé, en termes de santé. Aujourd’hui, même ceux qui ne soutiennent pas particulièrement l’allaitement sont d’accord pour dire que le lait maternel est ce qu’il y a de mieux. Le bébé a besoin du lait de sa mère au moins pendant deux ans nous rappelle régulièrement l’OMS. Le stade “biberon” n’est pas obligatoire et ne fait aucunement partie du développement normal de l’enfant. L’AAM regorge d’études sur les avantages de l’allaitement et il ne faut pas hésiter à lire et à relire ces pages avant et pendant les réunions (surtout la réunion 1 portant sur les avantages de l’allaitement). Les mamans perdues dans leur allaitement ont besoin de savoir que ce qu’elles donnent à leur enfant a vraiment une valeur inestimable!

This concept emphasizes the value of mother’s milk. When a mother talks about her reasons for breastfeeding, she’ll often begin by saying that it’s best for the baby in terms of health. These days, even those who don’t particularly support breastfeeding agree that human milk is best. The World Health Organization (WHO) is always reminding us that a baby needs his mother’s milk for at least the first two years. The bottle is not necessary and has no role to play in normal child development. The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding is bursting with references to studies on the benefits of breastfeeding, and there’s every reason to read and re-read these pages, both before and during meetings (especially Meeting 1 on the advantages of breastfeeding). Mothers who are wrapped up in their breastfeeding experience need to know that what they are giving to their children is truly priceless!

As you wrote, breast milk is unique and can’t be duplicated. Breast milk is what babies need for optimal growth and development. Without breast milk, babies are at increased risk for infections, illnesses, obesity, etc. I try to emphasize to parents that breastfeeding is the way human babies were meant to be fed. A baby needs her mother’s milk. I like to talk about breast milk as both food and vaccine.

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How wonderful that your mother breastfed both you and your sister. It not only benefitted you, but also your children as you follow in your mother’s footsteps. You clearly recognize that human milk provides both food and protection for our babies. I find it amazing that the main ingredients of human milk—fats, proteins, and carbohydrates—all serve two functions: a nutritional and an immunological function. A few years ago I read the book Immunobiology of Human Milk: How Breastfeeding Protects Babies by Lars Hanson. You may enjoy it if this topic interests you. As you wrote, breast milk is valuable for many reasons: It is adaptable, perfectly suited to your babies’ needs, and full of antibodies and other immunological factors. What more could we ask for?

You selected some important points about the superiority of breast milk. Comments such as “breastfeeding made our lives much easier for its portability” make good discussion, and it would be easy to take the personal reference out with a few word changes (Leaders usually use personal experiences sparingly). You’ve found that breastfeeding has also helped with natural child spacing! When a Series Meeting focuses on breast milk’s superiority, it can be tricky to keep the discussion on the advantages of breast milk without “bottle bashing.” By focusing on the positive aspects of breast milk as you did in your comments, instead of the negative aspects of formula, Leaders show respect for all mothers including those who have bottle fed in the past.

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* English translation follows

<Some sample questions>

* Ich glaube, den meisten Eltern ist heute bewusst, dass die Muttermilch das Beste ist. Es wird heute auch so in der Werbung vermittelt. Wie geht es dir, wenn du solche Werbung siehst?

* Wie begegnest du Frauen, die schon ganz kleine Babys nicht stillen, nicht stillen können, wie sie vielleicht sagen?

* I believe that most parents today are aware that mother’s milk is the best. It is even being represented in that way in advertising material. How do you feel when you see these advertiseements?

* How do you approach mothers who are already not breastfeeding very small babies and who might say that they cannot breastfeed?
Solids

For the healthy, full-term baby, breast milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.

Yes, isn’t it amazing how a baby can grow with breastfeeding? Many mothers are proud and amazed by all the milk they are producing. Breastfeeding is very empowering for a mother. When your daughter reached the sixth month, you were eager to give her “cereal.” However, because you were in tune with her signals, it soon became obvious that she wasn’t interested at all. So you waited until she was ready. I would be interested to know more about when and how she started solids. Did you start with cereal as originally planned?

Your experience starting solids with your daughter is common. Many of us feel pressured to start offering other foods at a specific age rather than watching our babies for signs of readiness. With the support of LLL you were able to not get stressed out by her lack of interest and to patiently wait until she was finally ready at 15 months. For many mothers, it can be difficult and stressful to wait that long. On the other hand, one can’t force a child to eat; one can only offer. It is interesting how different babies can be in their breastfeeding styles and readiness to start solids.

Introducing solids is often seen as moving on to the next stage, as if the baby is “advanced” for his age. This makes parents (or grandparents) proud. Despite the WHO’s recommendations, all cultures encourage solids too early. These days a lot of parents find “baby-led weaning” very attractive. Another way of putting this would be “starting solids at the baby’s pace.” We offer the baby different foods which he’ll eat all by himself in the quantities that are right for him. At the beginning, a baby doesn’t even know that eating satisfies his hunger. He tends to put everything in his mouth. So it’s best to offer to nurse first to take the edge off his hunger, and he’ll be in a better mood to try solids. (A starving hungry baby will probably be very upset and in no mood to be interested in solids. He’d be more likely to tip his food on the floor.) He gradually comes to understand that solids will satisfy his hunger. During the second year a mother might do things the other way around—start with solids and nurse afterwards. Solids gradually replace milk, so they are a stage of weaning. Weaning begins as soon the baby is given anything other than his mother’s milk.

When the Series Meeting is about beginning solids, it’s useful for Leaders to guide the discussion to include the signs of readiness. An important point you can share with mothers is to watch the baby instead of the calendar, since some babies aren’t very interested in eating solids until well after the middle of the first year.

A Leader wants to explain LLL recommendations in a positive and respectful manner without commenting on any particular foods negatively (such as junk food) and without promoting any sort of diet as the best way to eat (such as vegetarianism). Are you comfortable using LLL’s recommendations about introducing meat or cow’s milk for a baby if a mother should ask?

<Some sample questions>

* Wie zeigten deine Kinder, dass sie essen wollten?
* Wie denkst du über den Rat, einem leichten Kind schon mit vier Monaten Beikost zu geben, dass es besser zunimmt?
* Wie hast du das Stillen nach der Einführung von Beikost gehandhabt und wie war es für dich, als XXX nicht mehr trinken wollte?
Wie haben dir deine Kinder gezeigt, dass sie bereit sind für andere Nahrung?

Was sind die Gründe, dass ein Baby nicht früher feste Kost zu sich nehmen sollte?

How did your children show you that they were ready for solids?

What do you think of the advice that a baby who is of low weight should start complementary feeding at four months for a better weight gain?

How did you manage breastfeeding after the introduction of complementary foods, and how did you feel when XXX didn’t want to nurse any more?

How did your children show you that they were ready for other forms of nutrition?

What are some reasons for not starting a baby on solids too early?

* Good Nutrition

Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

People sometimes wonder why LLL has a meeting devoted to nutrition. It makes sense to think of it as the logical next step after getting our babies off to a good start by breastfeeding. However, it is important for Leaders to remember what the concept says and what it doesn’t say. Because the concept is broad, there are many ways to implement LLL philosophy in this regard.

Diets free of unwanted chemical additives, diets with organic foods, low-fat or low-carb diets, vegetarianism, etc., are some of the many options this philosophy might include. When we lead Meeting 4, Leaders present the concept as it is and then make sure that the discussion includes all kinds of options. Mothers need to know that they do not have to make what some might consider radical choices in order to provide a healthful diet for their families.

* English translation follows.

A LLL, nous aimons donner plusieurs illustrations de ce concept afin que les mamans n’aient pas l’impression qu’elles doivent nécessairement manger bio, ou être végétarienne ou adopter tel ou tel régime. Les mamans peuvent veiller à ce qu’elles proposent à leur famille, comme à leur propre alimentation, en restant fidèles à leurs valeurs. Elles commencent à donner le meilleur avec leur lait, pourquoi ne pas continuer avec des aliments sains?

En réunion, nous pouvons développer l’idée qu’il est possible d’éviter les plats tout préparés et consommer une grande variété d’aliments dans leur état le moins transformé possible. Les mamans peuvent apprendre à lire les étiquettes et à éviter l’excès de sel, de sucre, confiseries, les sodas, etc. Il n’y a pas de mal à se faire plaisir, pourtant. « Manger de tout avec modération » pourrait être un bon principe et la maman qui allaite n’a pas à se priver de quoi que ce soit, tant que sa consommation reste modérée (café, chocolat, alcool si elle aime ça). Tout passe dans le lait mais en quantité moindre si l’absorption elle-même a été limitée.

At LLL we like to give several different examples of this concept, so that we don’t give mothers the impression that they have to eat organic food, be vegetarian, or follow any particular diet. Mothers are in charge of their own families’ nutrition and will maintain their own values. They begin by giving the best—their milk. Why would they not continue with healthful foods?

At meetings we can talk about avoiding processed foods and eating a variety of foods in as close to their natural state as possible. Mothers can learn to read labels and avoid excessive amounts of salt, sugar, sweets, soft drinks, etc. It’s all right to eat a little of what you fancy, however. “Eat everything in moderation” is a good rule, and a breastfeeding mother doesn’t need to deprive herself of anything as long as she eats everything in moderation (including coffee, chocolate, and alcohol, if that’s what she likes). What goes into her milk will be in minimal quantities if she has consumed only a limited amount.

You wrote: “My mother gave us crazy things like carob instead of chocolate, made bread from scratch and our own yogurt, etc.” Again your mother was a role model—this time for good nutrition. Sounds like it rubbed off on you. Having a garden has also helped your family choose healthful alternatives. What a wonderful experience for your daughters.

In LLL there is room for many approaches. Sometimes people may get the impression that LLL only supports whole foods or even vegetarian diets. This is not the case. The basic principle of nutrition is to eat a variety of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

I enjoyed reading your personal journey to improving your diet over the last few years. Like so many mothers, you started thinking about this seriously during pregnancy and targeted certain items to reduce and eventually eliminate. Small steps like this can lead to big changes, as you have seen for yourself. Planned, gradual change is an important message to communicate to mothers at meetings. Sometimes the discussion can get skewed toward more radical changes, such as vegetarianism, food co-ops, and organics. This can be overwhelming to mothers who, like you, want to know how to improve their families’ diets incrementally. The plan for Meeting 4 on page 76 of Leader’s Handbook offers good ideas on how to talk about “not so good choices” and “better choices.” You note that “there is always room to grow,” and as Leaders, we can offer a variety of simple ideas for mothers to consider in that continuum of improvement.

A LAD Session for Leaders and Leader Applicants

LLL Philosophy in Our Daily Lives
Lesley Robinson, ALA Canada

I presented my favourite LAD session at a Leader Day to a group of Leaders and Applicants. For the Leaders present it was an opportunity to reaffirm their commitment to LLL philosophy. Leaders were able to think about ways of discussing the concepts with interested mothers in order to determine how they might meet the prerequisites to applying for leadership. For the Leader Applicants it provided an opportunity to consider how their own experience related to the concepts of LLL philosophy. It helped them to think about what to include in writing their personal histories.

The biggest challenge of this session was in having enough time to cover everything everyone wanted to share. We needed to keep an eye on the clock to make sure that we managed to cover all of the concepts. At the end of the session, all of the participants felt uplifted and inspired. It was a great session with which to end the day.

The session was a discussion of LLL philosophy in our own lives, inspired by quotes from the LLL Founders from Seven Voices One Dream published by LLLI in 2001. The book is a history of LLL from the perspective of the Founders themselves. Although some Founders are unfortunately no longer with us, their seven voices still resonate as a reminder of what unites us all in this organisation: our commitment to a common philosophy which remains at the heart of how we help mothers.
LLL Philosophy in Our Daily Lives
Quotes From Seven Voices One Dream

Mary Ann Cahill: For the women involved in this new and increasingly time-consuming venture, “Family First” became a guiding principle. It was never voted on, just acted upon. (page 49)

Marian Tompson: The one thing that both my personal philosophy and LLL philosophy have in common can be summed up in one sentence: “Be sensitive to the needs of your children.” (page 50)

Edwina Froehlich: The most important part of what I gleaned from La Leche League was that I had a chance to explore what we later came to call LLL philosophy—how to become an effective and nurturing mother to your children. Of course, we always believed that kind of mothering, of necessity, began with breastfeeding. (page 68)

Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.

Marian Tompson remembers saying to her husband: I want to breastfeed even if it doesn’t make any difference nutritionally because I want that feeling of closeness with the baby. (page 4)

Betty Wagner: It just seemed so easy and natural. It just seemed to be the right thing to do. (page 17)

Viola Lennon: The suggestion that breastfeeding was an enjoyable experience that would bring you closer to your baby was an idea that stayed with me into my own adult years. (page 18)

Mother and baby need to be together early and often to establish a satisfying relationship and an adequate milk supply.

Viola Lennon: As far as “early and often” is concerned

... That’s the only way breastfeeding is going to get off to a good start. And it’s also the only way that a woman is going to build up an adequate supply of milk. (page 53)

In the early years, the baby has an intense need to be with his mother which is as basic as his need for food.

Mary Ann Cahill: Mary White became known as the “guardian angel” of the mother-baby relationship.... Circumstances might change, she’d remind the group, but a baby’s needs do not. (page 48)

Edwina Froehlich: We realized early on that it was pretty hard to succeed at breastfeeding unless you had an overall acceptance of the idea of being there, in person, for your baby—what we called “mothering” the baby. (page 66)

Breast milk is the superior infant food.

Mary Ann Cahill: Many of the beliefs encompassed in La Leche League’s philosophy were accepted without question. The superiority of a mother’s milk for her baby was one. (page 46)

For the healthy, full-term baby, breast milk is the only food necessary until the baby shows signs of needing solids, about the middle of the first year after birth.

Mary Ann Kerwin: When I had our first baby in 1955, I managed to hold off on introducing solids until he was five or six months old. As the baby got beyond infancy, I felt as though a lot of people disapproved of the fact that he was getting all of his nourishment through milk. You know, the idea that “You’re starving that baby!” It was a very volatile issue. (page 56)

Mary Ann Kerwin: Right from the beginning of La Leche League we were pretty consistent in telling mothers that human milk was by far the best food for their babies up through about the first six months of life. They didn’t always want to hear that, but that’s what we told them—and we were right. (page 57)

Ideally the breastfeeding relationship will continue until the baby outgrows the need.

Viola Lennon: With all of the subsequent Lennon children I just seemed to nurse longer and longer. I had adjusted to the fact that baby-led weaning is the way to go. (page 54)
Alert and active participation by the mother in childbirth is a help in getting breastfeeding off to a good start.

Marian Tompson: It was the idea of wanting to do what was right and best for our children that caused me to want to have unmedicated births. (page 50)

Viola Lennon: In regard to childbirth, while La Leche League doesn’t necessarily recommend any kind of childbirth specifically, an educated natural childbirth is a marvelous entrance into breastfeeding. (page 54)

Breastfeeding is enhanced and the nursing couple sustained by the loving support, help, and companionship of the baby’s father. A father’s unique relationship with his baby is an important element in the child’s development from early infancy.

Mary Ann Cahill: Each of the Founders could recall numerous instances of how crucial her husband’s support had been to her as a mother. Breastfeeding the baby is a commitment, one that takes precedence over others’ needs or wants. Without a husband’s understanding, this could cause problems. For La Leche League as a whole, the advent of the Women’s Movement brought parental roles into question. Why couldn’t—a father be the caregiver for the baby? Who’s to say that fathers can’t be as nurturing as mothers? La Leche League says so, not because fathers can’t be nurturing, since they can, but rather because they nurture differently, and besides, everything in the young child’s makeup cries out for mother. (page 48)

Marian Tompson says of her husband, Tom: As far as breastfeeding, and the time it took to take care of the children, he was totally supportive…. When La Leche League came into our life, he was totally supportive of that, too. (page 5)

Good nutrition means eating a well-balanced and varied diet of foods in as close to their natural state as possible.

Mary Ann Cahill: When looking at the seven, it could be said that all were nutrition-minded, but Edwina truly lived and breathed the subject. Her enthusiasm, devotion to learning, the joy she took in preparing good food, and her faithfulness to the high standards she set for herself, all inspired countless families over the years. (page 49)

Lesley Robinson lives with her husband, Mark, in Ottawa, Canada. Their three grown children, Kate (born 1985), Alex (1987) and Will (1989), have flown the nest. Lesley was accredited in 1987 and has been a LAD representative since 1991. She is currently Administrator of Leader Accreditation for La Leche League Canada and C-DAM (CLA) for Ligue La Leche (French Canada).

Editor’s note: Special thanks to the author, Lesley Robinson, for her beautiful illustrations included in LADders.

Thanks to the many dedicated LAD representatives who have shared extracts from their letters and provided translations for us. The next instalment of “LLL Philosophy in Our Hearts” will be in the second LADders in 2011. We welcome more discussion of LLL philosophy from your own inspiring replies to Applicants. Please send by 5 May 2011 your favourite dialogue extract with reference to one or more of the following two concepts to the LADders staff at: LADdersmail@gmail.com

In the early years
In the early years the baby has an intense need to be with his mother, which is as basic as his need for food.

Mothering through breastfeeding
Mothering through breastfeeding is the most natural and effective way of understanding and satisfying the needs of the baby.
LAD Council Report
to the LLLI Board ~ March 2011

In the absence of a LAD Director, LAD Council members have stepped up to ensure smooth running of the Department. We are offering support to each LAD entity by organizing LAD sessions; creating/updating resources; recruiting/orienting new LAD representatives; responding to inquiries.

**Semi-Annual Reports:** The LAD Council collects the Semi-Annual Reports and sends them to the LAD Development Team. We also have started compiling the accompanying statistics.

**LADders:** This multilingual publication produced by LAD Council every three months has been praised by LAD representatives around the world as a tool useful in their work. Many administrators from other departments also have applauded this new LAD publication. You can view the four issues at:

- Issue 1: [http://www.llleus.org/LAD/laddersLADders_2010_1.pdf](http://www.llleus.org/LAD/laddersLADders_2010_1.pdf)
- Issue 2: [http://www.llleus.org/LAD/laddersLADders_2010_2.pdf](http://www.llleus.org/LAD/laddersLADders_2010_2.pdf)

(Username: LAD  Password: LADis#1)

**Surveys:** The LAD Council conducted two LAD Surveys to determine the effectiveness of current LAD practices. The first explored how satisfied recently accredited Leaders are with their leadership preparation. The second asked LAD representatives to share what tools and procedures are most effective in accrediting new Leaders. Results have been (and will be) published in LADders.

**LLL World Directory** is kept up-to-date to facilitate easier communication regarding Applicants who move.

**Highlights from LAD Entities**

**Online**
- Updating LAD entities’ Web sites.
- Organizing a Leader Applicant Yahoo group.
- Inviting Leader Applicants to participate in a mothers’ forum on Area’s Web site.
- Updating LAD Web pages for use by LAD representatives worldwide.

**Resources/Projects**
- Updating the BRG by adding references to Breastfeeding Answers Made Simple (LLL Canada), 2010 WAB (Alliance).
- Creating a new guide for Leaders who sponsor Applicants.
- Creating worksheets and exercises.
- Creating a new resource, “Communication Skills for Leader Applicants” (Alliance).
- Developing Leader Applicant Resource Kit (Alliance).
- Revising Leader Applicant’s Handbook (Great Britain).
- Working toward Area Agreements.
- Expanding LLL network: “Ten New Groups Project” funded by the British Government (Great Britain).

**Publications**
- *Leaven* articles.
- Newsletters for Applicants: *Chrysalis* (LLL Canada), *Arc-en-ciel* ([Rainbow], Ligue La Leche), and *Horizons* (Alliance).

**Translation**
- Translating LADders, Childbirth and Breastfeeding, and other LAD materials.
- Offering bilingual Leaders’ support to more than one entity.
- Searching for translators for non-English-speaking Applicants.

**Opportunities**
- Organizing LAD sessions/workshops.
- Helping Applicants make progress on leadership preparation at workshops.
LAD International Semi-Annual Report
LAD Council

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*Includes estimated figures

LAD Statistics
Comparison of Global Statistics for Four Reporting Periods
LAD Council

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Where Have All the Applications Gone?
Karin Gausman,
Regional Administrator of Leader Accreditation, Appalachian Region,
LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education
Reprinted from the Winter 2011 issue of Eastern Union,
a quarterly publication from LLL Alliance

Have you seen a decline in the number of applications in your Area? There could be several reasons. Identifying the cause can help you brainstorm effective responses.

“Cleaning House”
Have you recently been diligent about closing long inactive applications? While it may initially look discouraging to see a drop in the number of open applications, if the remaining ones are those which are truly likely to finish, the drop in numbers may be a good thing. By winnowing the applications down to those that are active, you will make good use of your time. You won’t be discouraged by having to spend lots of time touching base with Applicants who don’t respond or nudging those who aren’t actually working on their applications. That kind of “housekeeping” can make your Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) work more efficient and satisfying.

Cycles
Look back over several years’ worth of Semi-Annual Reports (SARs) to get a bigger picture. Numbers of applications usually go in cycles. There is often a surge right before or after an Area Conference or other enrichment activity. There is usually a drop during holiday times or busy summers, or if your Area has been without a CLA for a long time. It could be that your Area is just in the low part of a cycle.

Accreditations
This number is also a little cyclic, because applications cannot be completed unless they first start, and the “starting” can be cyclic (as above). However, if you see a long-term decline when looking at several years’ worth of SARs, that merits a closer look. Following are some causes that you can have an influence on.

Too Many Applicants Discontinuing—What Might Help:
Pre-application dialogue: Perhaps an Applicant started out excited but her application soon languished when she saw what was required. When a Leader has thorough pre-application dialogue with a mother, she includes information about the application and what is needed to meet the LLLI Criteria for Leader Accreditation. When a member applies for leadership with a clear understanding of what will be expected of her, she is more likely to follow through on her commitment to preparation for leadership.

Confusion about requirements: Perhaps an Applicant is confused about what is required. She might have incorrect information from her supporting Leader, who is basing what she says on her own application experience many years ago. You might offer to send a simple checklist that summarizes required work.

Variety of ways to fulfill requirements: Be sure the Applicant understands that there are a variety of ways to fulfill each requirement, for example:

- If she thinks that writing a personal history is daunting, she might submit it as bullet points instead of paragraphs, with one or two concepts in each submission. Or she might give you an oral version on the telephone (allowing time for you to take notes—see LAD Lifeline 2007 No. 1).

- When working through the Breastfeeding Resource Guide (BRG), she might choose one resource as her reference (e.g., the 2010 Womanly Art). She can focus on whichever resource she thinks she is most likely to use as a Leader, without looking up references in other listed books/brochures. It is helpful for her to see that she can find the information in a number of places; however, she can satisfy the purpose of the BRG by defining which reference she will use most.

- She might have Leader’s Handbook checklist discussions by email or phone if it is a hassle to tote her children to yet one more meeting.

Talk about specific roadblocks: Ask the Applicant if she has encountered a roadblock and brainstorm with her ways to get around it. For example, perhaps her Group/Chapter has several Applicants who all meet to discuss Leader’s Handbook checklist topics and she is the only one who cannot attend. Her Leader may not be able to duplicate efforts in both in-person group meetings and online with this one Applicant. There may be another Leader in her Group (or another one) who would be happy to “meet” with the Applicant online. Perhaps a LAD representative (you, or even one in another Area) could fill in for the Leader. Many LAD representatives have checklist topic discussions saved in their computer from working with isolated Applicants, and it would be easy for them to have email discussions with the Applicant.
Positive aspect to a discontinuation: A discontinuation is not always something to avoid, though. One important function of the application time is that it allows the Applicant to get a “hands on” feel for the time commitment of leadership. The time needed for application work corresponds closely to that required to fulfill the responsibilities of leadership. An Applicant may discover that the time she thought she had really isn’t available at this stage of her life. Better she learn this during her application than later, as a Leader who cannot carry her share of the work. A discontinuation for this reason is a valid and positive decision. Many Applicants have discontinued their applications and reopened them later when the timing was better—and have then completed their applications promptly!

Not Enough New Applications
Number of Groups: Most Applicants come from Groups, so declining numbers of Groups will often mean fewer Applicants. Talk with the other Area administrators about why Groups are folding, and what might be done to counter that.

Busy Leaders: Leaders may hesitate to promote applications because they are swamped and don’t think they have the time to help Applicants. Point out that the time they put in now will make their workload less in the long run, when they have more co-Leaders to help. Talk with them about ways to streamline their support of an Applicant. You might plan a workshop session on a “Busy Leader’s Guide to Supporting Applicants.” Direct them to the online resources for Leaders who are supporting Applicants. Remind them how much of the application work is done by the Applicant alone or with a LAD representative. Do they realize they might only need to take responsibility for helping with the Leader’s Handbook checklist and the Preview?

Confusion about prerequisites: Leaders may not want to encourage applications because they aren’t sure who might or might not meet the prerequisites. That assessment can be challenging for us too! However, you can reassure the Leader that you (and your support people) are there to help. Encourage her to discuss questions with you before a member applies.

Leaders may have misconceptions about what the prerequisites mean. For example, some Leaders still mistakenly think that no employed mother can apply for leadership. Others may have recommended Applicants inappropriately, and then been discouraged when the applications did not continue. You might plan a brainstorming session at a workshop for Leaders or an online discussion on a Leader email list about how to determine whether or not a certain experience meets the prerequisites (general situations only—no names or identifying details). You can help Leaders learn what questions to ask and what information to relay to you in their Leader Recommendation.

Overwhelmed Leaders: Leaders may be unknowingly discouraging interest in leadership by presenting the image that leadership is a chore, that they are swamped and not having fun. It’s an irony that when a Leader most needs the help, she may be least likely to get it. Encourage harried Leaders to make leadership more attractive by limiting their Group work to “Leader only” jobs and enlisting help from members for everything else. Encouraging members to get more involved not only lightens a Leader’s work load, but increases a member’s feeling of ownership in the Group. This makes her more likely to seek leadership.

Getting back to the mission: This article would be remiss not to mention “the elephant in the room.” Leader discouragement due to confusion/disagreement with the direction LLL is taking can lead to lack of interest in promoting leadership. You might remind discouraged Leaders that the current restructuring primarily affects the administrative aspects of LLL. Perhaps this is the time for a dispirited Leader to put aside reading email lists that discuss topics she finds discouraging. When it comes to how she and future Leaders relate to mothers who come to them for help, there have been no changes. Leaders can focus on the satisfaction they get from helping each mother-baby dyad. Babies haven’t changed and mothers still need support and information to breastfeed them. Helping each mother who comes to us, after all, is what leadership is and will continue to be. And that is something we can all promote!

Karin Gausman has been a Leader for 36 years and is currently Regional Administrator of Leader Accreditation for the Appalachian Region of LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education. Karin leads with a local Group in Loveland, Colorado, USA, where she lives with her husband, Jim. They have three grown children and four grandchildren.
How Would You Respond?

Here is an extract from a letter from a Leader Applicant, written to her LAD representative during her application. There is no single right answer. Sharing our own possible approaches can help us to consider a variety of ways to respond.

**I have learnt a lot about meeting my baby’s needs at LLL meetings and how important it is to meet them immediately because a need that is met goes away. Most of our Group’s mothers wear their babies and toddlers in slings. A friend invited me to an Attachment Parenting meeting and I really enjoyed it. I felt that it was such a good fit with what we are doing and learning about in LLL meetings that I wanted to advertise them at the next Series Meeting. My Leader told me that I can’t do this because it is mixing causes. I don’t understand that because everything that is discussed at Attachment Parenting meetings is in line with LLL philosophy. Surely we can work together.**

**Sample Responses**

As you have continued to attend LLL meetings, you have learned about the importance of meeting your baby’s different needs, and not just her need for nutrition. When you attended the Attachment Parenting meeting with your friend, you saw a real connection between what both organizations promote. Like you, many mothers find that the Attachment Parenting model fits well with their own parenting philosophy and with the information and messages they encounter at an LLL meeting. Yet there are many other mothers who come to LLL meetings who have a different parenting philosophy. They may be taking away and benefiting from other information and leaving the rest, such as sling use, behind.

LLL is a single-issue organization whose sole purpose is to support breastfeeding mothers. We want to do all we can to welcome ALL mothers, regardless of their beliefs or opinions on other subjects outside the realm of breastfeeding. For this reason, LLL does not actively endorse other organizations. A newcomer to an LLL meeting where an Attachment Parenting meeting is actively promoted may come away with the impression that she may have to support that organization as well, or follow that particular parenting philosophy if she wants to continue attending meetings or receive breastfeeding support from LLL.

There is some helpful information in the Leader’s Handbook on page 212 (third paragraph) and page 228 (third paragraph) that speaks directly to this issue. Please let me know if this helps to answer your question about why LLL does not promote other organizations, and let me know if this makes sense to you.

Sally Allison, New York, United States

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You have found Attachment Parenting ideas to be helpful and inclusive of LLL philosophy because wearing babies and toddlers in slings helps to meet their needs for mother’s presence and her milk. You noticed that “most” mothers attending your Group meetings use slings, and you feel confident that they would be interested in Attachment Parenting. It surprised you when your Group Leader mentioned “mixing causes” and cautioned against advertising this organisation during Series Meetings.

As you prepare for leadership, LLL’s philosophy of helping, as well as LLL’s philosophy of mothering through breastfeeding, is important to consider. The Leader’s Handbook explains this in more detail, how we aim to provide a welcoming, respectful atmosphere for all women interested in breastfeeding their babies, not just those who readily embrace all aspects of LLL philosophy. The “mixing causes” principle helps us avoid excluding mothers who make other choices for breastfeeding and meeting the needs of their families. Aligning with another worthwhile cause can unnecessarily limit the number of mothers we help. Please read pages 36–37 and 40–47 of the Leader’s Handbook. I look forward to hearing more of your thinking after reflecting on this aspect of leadership as you continue to discuss and practice with your Leader.

ACLA from Great Britain

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I’m glad that you’ve found a group with values close to your heart. Women who come to LLL meetings often hear new ideas related to our central philosophy of mothering through breastfeeding. Learning to breastfeed often leads mothers to understand that babies need to be parented with close physical contact at other times, too. The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding notes that “breastfeeding helps you and your baby feel connected and attached to each other, weaving an emotional cord to replace the umbilical cord.” (page 10)
You have observed that most of the mothers in your Group wear their babies and toddlers in slings, which facilitates the mothering connection and breastfeeding. While the practice of “baby wearing” is as old as the history of humans, it is not the only way for mothers to enjoy nursing their babies. Mothers hear about other ideas at LLL meetings as well. Some of these ideas are closely connected to breastfeeding discussions, such as co-sleeping. Others are not, such as vegetarianism, water births, cloth diapering systems, homeschooling, and natural family planning. Sometimes mothers find that one or more of these ideas resonate with them and become an additional passion in their lives. Your experience at the Attachment Parenting meeting is a good example of how this happens.

As Leaders, we keep our meeting discussion focused on breastfeeding and LLL philosophy. LLLI policy does not allow us to promote other organizations when we are speaking as Leaders. The Founders wisely chose to limit the focus of the organization, and early on came to understand that “mothering through breastfeeding” is the heart of our message, and helping mothers breastfeed their babies is our goal.

Still, there are ways that LLL could work together with the Attachment Parenting group. For example, at LLL conferences there is usually a room set aside for businesses and organizations to rent a table to promote themselves. There are rules governing what would be appropriate businesses, products, and organizations for the event, and exhibitors must be approved by the conference coordinator. Organizations can also buy advertising in the conference program book. In all cases, LLL has a disclaimer stating that it does not endorse any products or organizations; exhibitors and advertisers pay a fee, and LLL offers the opportunity because the products or organizations may be of interest to attendees.

An Exercise about Mixing Causes, [http://www.LLLEUS.org/Applicants/mixing_causes.html](http://www.LLLEUS.org/Applicants/mixing_causes.html), may help you and your Leader have a further conversation about this particular situation. Imagine for a moment that you were to advertise the Attachment Parenting group at your next meeting. Think particularly about the following two questions from the exercise:

- What mistaken impression might a mother make about what LLL believes or supports?
- How might mixing causes in this situation discourage a mother from returning to LLL?

Eileen Saks, New Jersey, United States

New Extract

The experiences I have with other people breastfeeding influence me and the way I feel about it. A few days ago I spoke to a friend of mine who has a ten-week-old baby and learned that she had finally given up breastfeeding. I feel so sad and disappointed and somehow guilty. I know it is not my fault and I know that she should do what is the right thing for her—there is no point having a breastfed baby if the mother is permanently resentful and exhausted, surely? I have managed to tell my husband how I feel about this situation, but I can’t help wondering: “If I have failed to help one of my best friends enough to support her through this difficult time, what hope do I have of helping women whom I don’t know personally?”

How would you respond? Send your suggested reply or an extract you would like to share with other LAD representatives to Eleanor Becker at: ellleanorbecker@gmail.com

A Taste of LAD International

In this first issue for 2011, we have the pleasure of meeting two enthusiastic LAD representatives living in England. Then we are transported into the heart of Europe where a recent achievement has been joyfully celebrated! We take this opportunity to congratulate Leaders everywhere making their ongoing contributions to accrediting new LLL Leaders in varied and productive ways. Please write and share your stories while introducing yourselves and the LAD work you do. Contributions may be sent to: nina.robertson@btconnect.com or LADdersmail@gmail.com
Hi, my name is Benaifer Bhandari and I have been with La Leche League Great Britain (LLLGB) for nearly 10 years. I have two sons, 10 and 12, who are home-educated. The way that I found I could stay with this wonderful organisation and still meet my sons’ needs yet keep my interest going was to join LAD. It was an easy decision as I have worked in “training” for many years, and it is the kind of work I love.

With the introduction of LLLGB’s Leader Applicant’s Handbook,** it has become even easier to combine listening skills with a structure to support Leader Applicants in getting from beginning to end really effectively.

I only work with Applicants via email and used to respond immediately until I spoke with other LAD members. I now devote as much time as it takes, once a week. It works much better for me and is definitely better for the family.

I’ve also been lucky enough to be part of a government-funded project to set up new LLL Groups around England. This has meant that I have been able to run training days for Leader Applicants. I love planning creative ways of helping them move forward in their applications and make the most of the day we spend together. The day ends up being full of interaction with us all leaving fulfilled and inspired to do more.

We love LLL in this house. My husband fundraises annually, my sons have not known life without LLL, and I feel privileged to be part of such a great organisation and incredible team.

I'm Jennifer Vaudin, a Leader with LLL Great Britain (LLLGB) since 2004 and an Associate Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (ACLA) for more than a year. I began in LLL Coventry where I sponsored a number of Leader Applicants. We moved further north to the Derbyshire Dales for my husband’s work, and I joined LLL Derbyshire.

I’m married to John who works in information technology in Sheffield city centre and we have two sons, Edward born in 1998 and William born in 1999. William has complex special needs including Pathological Demand Avoidance Syndrome, which is in the same family as autistic spectrum disorders although requiring a very different approach. We also have a Welsh Springer Spaniel puppy who is proving a most excellent reminder of what it feels like to be a new mother, not knowing who to trust for information and being given dire warnings about ruining her forever by following my instincts. Other interesting features of my life include four cats, two guinea pigs, and an Edwardian stone-built semi** to restore to its former glory. Aside from that I love watching the view from my bed, reading, and nature.

I have a professional background in health and education, but I am unable to do paid work due to ill health, and a lot of voluntary work is beyond me too. The ACLA role is a great way to use so many hard-won skills without compromising my family life. In the UK there are now many different routes into supporting breastfeeding, but the conversation between Applicant and ACLA remains something special and powerful.

**Editor’s note: You can view the LLLGB Leader Applicant’s Handbook at:
Leader Applicant’s Handbook with images http://tinyurl.com/LAHB-with-images (100 Mb PDF including photos and graphics)
Leader Applicant’s Handbook without images http://tinyurl.com/LAHB-No-Images (0.5 Mb PDF)
Module Resources http://tinyurl.com/LAHB-Module-Resources (2 Mb Zip Archive containing Skills Practice, Articles, Documents and Module Summaries that accompany the LAHB)

**Editor’s note: A semi-detached house is one joined to another house by a shared wall; in the USA similar houses are often referred to as duplexes.
I am Eszter Schneiderné Diószegi, Coordinator for Leader Accreditation for Hungary. I live in Budapest, Hungary, with my four children (aged 13, 10, 9 and 7) and my husband who is a pharmacist and an active supporter of breastfeeding.

Like many first-time mothers I experienced quite a few problems with breastfeeding my first child. My family did support me, but we lacked the proper information and I did not know who to turn to. Nevertheless I nursed my son for almost one and a half years. When I was expecting my second child I decided I would do everything differently to avoid all the problems we had had. And—what a wonder—it all worked out great to breastfeed my daughter exclusively and on demand!

When she was about eight months old, I accidentally bumped into LLL Hungary’s Web site on the Internet. I was fascinated! I felt like I got home. There were actually other people who thought the same about birth, nursing, meeting a child’s needs as I did! When my third child was born I started to attend a La Leche League Group. The welcoming and supporting atmosphere caught me right away. I knew from firsthand experience what a difference it can make to have the information and support in breastfeeding; I felt I would like to pass it on to other mothers. So I started on the path which eventually led me to become a La Leche League Leader.

In 2005 I started my own breastfeeding support group in the neighborhood where I live, and I became an accredited Leader in January 2006. As my children grew I felt I could contribute more work to LLL. I became interested in LAD work at the 2008 European Mastery Symposium in Assisi, Italy. I became the first Hungarian-speaking Associate Coordinator of Leader Accreditation, which was a great accomplishment for LLL Hungary. It means a lot for interested mothers who are thinking about leadership that correspondence is now available in their native tongue. The first Applicant I corresponded with was accredited in 2010.

I really enjoy LAD work as I remember what an important role correspondence played for me in organizing and understanding better my own experience, my biases, my thoughts. I hope I can pass this feeling on to Applicants, while I also learn about different mothers and their different experiences. I encounter some difficulties as there are very few written LAD materials translated into Hungarian, but I hope that it will gradually change in the future.

LLL Hungary has accomplished great achievements and development lately, which means that with all our efforts we became an Area within LLL Europe in January 2011!

We have very good relationships with LLL in Romania as it was started by mothers who belong to the Hungarian ethnic minority. We offer them support and invite them to our regular Area get-togethers.

Breastfeeding rates are pretty high here in Hungary. The majority of mothers want to breastfeed, so we get quite a lot of phone calls and emails, and many mothers attend Group meetings. I think it is rewarding to work in a setting where society overall is supportive of breastfeeding. Of course we also encounter difficulties due to lack of knowledge from some health care professionals or family members. I hope that in the future we will be able to interest more mothers in LLL work, especially in remote parts of Hungary where so far no breastfeeding support has been available.
LAD Promenade

Congratulations on your appointment!

Julia Afgan  ACLA for Germany
(Incoming ALA for Germany, beginning 15 April 2011)
Cecilia Carregall  ACLA for Argentina
Ashleigh Cavner  ACLA for Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Canada
Sherryl Dombeck  ACLA for Illinois, USA
Lupe Forsang  CLA for Pacific Horizons, USA
Alejandra Galvan  CLA for Future Areas in South America
Stephanie Heddon  ACLA for Pacific Horizons, USA
Wendy Jeckell  CLA for Central and Southern Ontario, Canada
Kathleen King  CLA for Illinois, USA
Shiuh-jane Lin  ACLA for Future Areas in Asia and the Middle East
Arynne Mehl  ACLA for Southern California and Nevada, USA
Melissa Nootz  ACLA for Montana, USA
Mary Rainer  ACLA for Sunshine Area, USA
Jennifer Reid  ACLA for Central and Southern Ontario, Canada
Eszter Schneiderné Diószegi  CLA for Hungary
Nancy Vega  ACLA for Future Areas in South America

LAD Council is happy to celebrate our one-year anniversary for the creation of LADders. At the time we started planning the first issue, we had many questions: Is it possible to publish a multilingual magazine? What are we going to call it? Where shall we upload the file? How about the layout? “Starting from scratch” describes how we felt a year ago.

Our primary role as LAD representatives is to correspond with Applicants and Leaders. Working on the four issues of LADders has given us an opportunity to realise how much LAD representatives enjoy writing and how skilled you are. The submissions and sample responses which continue to arrive support us and keep us going. Thank you!

LAD Council has been delighted to compile every single issue. We exchange information and learn from one another in order to improve, just like climbing up a ladder. We look forward to working further with you.

LAD Council

LADders is a publication by LAD representatives for LAD representatives, designed to offer LAD representatives a place to share information and experiences. © LAD Council