LAD’s Global Role

Alison Parkes, Coordinator of Leader Accreditation, LLL Great Britain, and LAD Council Member-at-Large

I am a Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (CLA) in Great Britain and also an Associate Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (ACLA)-at-Large for Future Areas in Asia and the Middle East. I’m working with Leader Applicants as close to me as a nearby town and as far away from me as Hong Kong. It has been a privilege and a joy to share in the accreditation journey of mothers from different backgrounds and with different nationalities and first languages.

I’m fascinated by what takes a mother from her first tentative expression of interest in LLL leadership to “I want to be a Leader” and ultimately “I’m an accredited Leader.” The Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) helps to create the conditions for this transformation. The LAD’s role is global because it transcends national borders, class, race, ethnicity, and culture. LAD representatives serve in the engine room—or maybe the garden—of the organisation, entering into a partnership with Applicants and their supporting Leaders, a partnership with a vision: to help women prepare to inform and support breastfeeding mothers.

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LADders is a publication by LAD representatives for LAD representatives
Its purpose is to help LAD representatives do their jobs with confidence and pleasure by offering a place to share information and experiences.

2012-1 No. 8
LLL has a vision: to realize, deepen, and share the love and wisdom found in the breastfeeding relationship (Purpose and Principles Reference Set, Appendix 3, LLLI Policies and Standing Rules Notebook.)

What attracts mothers to leadership?
The mother-to-mother support of an LLL meeting is often where the seed of interest in leadership is sown. A Leader’s warm and empathetic presence, her example of mothering through breastfeeding, the energy and commitment she brings to her role as a Leader—these, along with our key publication, The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding, help to inspire a mother to say to herself, “I want to become a Leader.”

After a seed is sown, the next step is germination, when the seed’s growth begins. This is where the LAD begins to play its part. LAD International offers resources to answer mothers’ questions about what leadership entails. From the LLLI Web site home page, mothers can click on “Become a Leader” and read Thinking About LLL Leadership? http://www.llli.org/lad/talll/talll.html or print out the compact version of this document http://www.llli.org/docs/lad/thinkingaboutleadership.pdf Corresponding support for Leaders, Thinking About LLL Leadership? Leader’s Guide, is also available http://www.llli.org/leaderpages/lad/talll-leadersguide/talll.html (LLLID and password required)

The Web pages of Area Networks and Affiliates around the world provide similar information in several languages. Conveying the message that mothers interested in leadership matter and that they deserve high quality information and resources is one way the LAD helps the leadership seed to germinate.

After germination, the mother’s interest begins to grow. Colourful and fragrant tulips, bougainvillea, roses, lilies—the flower market of beautiful budding plants, each one special and unique. Around the world, the LAD is adapting to the needs and preferences of modern mothers, fulfilling its global role of helping Applicants prepare for leadership. This role crosses international boundaries, reaching deeply into what motivates mothers and leads them to apply for leadership. Below I’ll look at some of the ways the LAD has adapted and is adapting to its ever-changing marketplace.

Modern preferences for learning and communicating
Many Leader Applicants are familiar with computer technology and online networking systems. The LAD wants to “meet Applicants where they are” and when possible offers:

- Online application materials for easy access
- Corresponding by email
- Communicating via Skype or telephone calls
- Facebook, Twitter, Applicant chatlists

By making a range of options available to mothers, we extend leadership to any mother who meets the prerequisites. I recently worked with a Leader Applicant who was dyslexic. Although she could do the basic reading required of her, she found it difficult to write (by email) for her personal history dialogue. Instead we used oral discussion via Skype for the majority of our application work together. It also helps to remember that the Applicant may wish to communicate by postal mail. In some parts of the world, Internet access is not available.

Many LAD representatives have noted that some Applicants are prone to skimming, which is an understandable response to constant bombardment with too much information and visual overstimulation. Most Applicants may look for pertinent information online, but may not read a book cover-to-cover. So we are adapting our application materials as well as our email letters to this new pattern of reading behaviour. It may be more effective in correspondence with Applicants for LAD representatives to use bold headings and underlining to highlight key points, and not to hesitate to repeat crucial information.

e-Readers
It is possible to download The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding and also application resources to an e-Reader. Jenny Buck, a Leader in Hong Kong, has discovered how to transfer printed material onto her e-Reader. She says: “Transfer is very easy. It's described in the user manual. You just have to connect to your computer via the USB cable that it comes with (same as charging cable), and copy and paste the files onto the e-Reader, which behaves like a memory stick.” PDF files opened as email attachments can be saved as if they were e-Books. Jenny has transferred the LLL Great Britain (LLLGB) Leader Applicant Handbook onto her e-Reader.
Workshops
In some LLL entities, Leader Applicant workshops are an integral part of leadership preparation.

• In LLL Switzerland, Applicants are required to attend workshops to practise skills and cover essential application topics.
• In some Areas, Applicants have the opportunity for workshops which provide hands-on practice of leadership skills through role-play and mini-meetings.
• In Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, where there are currently 21 Applicants, LAD representatives are developing creative ways of working with large groups of Applicants.
• In some places, preparation for leadership begins before mothers apply, through workshops which introduce them to application topics, thus helping to expedite their applications once they apply.
• In other places, Leader Applicants are “recruited” from peer counsellors who already have background breastfeeding knowledge. This too helps to expedite their applications.

Some application resources and translations
• Leader Applicant Web Pages on LLLI Web site http://www.llli.org/leaderpages/lad/app/applicant.html (LLLID and password required), accessible from the Leader Pages.
• Leader Applicant Web pages of LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education (Alliance) http://www.llleus.org/LAD.html
• LLLGB Leader Applicant Handbook. It has been translated into French and is currently being translated into Russian.
• The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding has been translated into many languages worldwide. It is now available in Russian—what a wonderful achievement!
• LLL Canada Leader’s Handbook.
• Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit created by a Regional Administrator of Leader Accreditation for Alliance.

Global wisdom
What the world needs is wisdom, as opposed to information. – Eckhart Tolle

The following statements and stories (shared with permission) explain Leaders’ experience, empowerment, and wisdom as well as the LAD’s global role. As LAD representatives, we affirm and empower Leader Applicants “to realize, deepen, and share the love and wisdom found in the breastfeeding relationship.” Thank you for all you do in this department!

I happen to be in a position where all of my choices reflect the LLL concepts and I do think that it is important that LLL is represented by women who believe that this ethos is both valuable as ideals to hold and useful in raising a family.

Applicant, Great Britain

In Lebanon there is a common social misconception that parents should not carry their babies often, should let them “cry it out” at night, should feed them on a schedule and be pretty strict on amounts of love and affection they can give so as not to “spoil the baby.” If I had followed this tradition in Lebanon, I would have not only failed to comply with the LLL philosophy, but also I would have threatened the whole breastfeeding relationship with my daughter. Breastfeeding has to be on demand to ensure high level of lactation, baby’s calls have to be answered every time because a stressed baby will have a much more difficult time latching to a breast, which can also undermine breast milk supply with time, and lastly, the mother needs to show love and affection to her baby to have frequent releases of oxytocin, love hormone, in her blood to maintain a high level of lactation. So it would have been impossible for me to take that one philosophy concept out and be a successful breastfeeding mother who wants to support other women around her in breastfeeding. I had to embrace fully every concept suggested by LLL, including this one, whether it is directly related to breastfeeding or not, because they are all part of one.

Applicant, Lebanon

Writing this, I realise that neither before in pregnancy or since with school, etc., have I ever felt so in control of my own decisions... I think that must be one of the things that make breastfeeding special. My son eventually stopped feeding at around four years. That being two years ago, it now already
seems a bit unbelievable that I really did that, I fed for four years!  
Applicant, Great Britain

I haven’t had much time to picture myself as a Leader and think about what I want to do because I’ve been so concentrated on just finishing the application. Now that I am finished, I still don’t really know what to expect life as an LLL Leader to be like. But I know that I’m ready for the change. I’ve attended meetings as a mother long enough. It’s time to take on a new role. I’m looking forward to the challenge and best of all, I’m really excited finally to be able to join my co-Leaders and all the other LLL Leaders I know, as one of them!

You’ve been a great help during this whole process! Your patience and constant belief in me have meant so much to me. Your encouragement and helpful suggestions on ways to get through the tough spots were so very welcome.  
Applicant, Belgium

application proceeded in good order and everything was well arranged. Besides, you provided me many good chances to learn and practise on breastfeeding issues. Thank you.  
New Leader, China

I want to thank you for your fruitful work. I admit that I wasn’t confident in my successful accreditation with my shaky English. When my co-Leader called me the other day, I was visiting a mother of a newborn baby. As a confirmation of what we discussed, I came away with the feeling that I didn’t do anything special, but the mother was much more relaxed and confident, and baby was nursing at the end of our conversation. I’m happy to be part of this mother-to-mother tradition.  
New Leader, Bulgaria

I was convinced during the application that the reason why LLL is what it is today is because the LAD system has been established so well. It can be challenging to help mothers become Leaders and to make a bridge for future of LLL. However, LLL world is growing thanks to hard work by LAD people. I am only a new Leader, and it is only my dream, but I would like to work for the LAD one day in the future.

New Leader, Japan

Alison Parkes was accredited in Great Britain (GB) in 1988. She discovered LLL when her first son, Gareth (26), was a baby; she became a Leader soon after her second son, Duncan (24), was born, and she set up a new LLL Group when her daughter, Lorna (19), was a toddler and the family moved to the town of Colchester, where she now lives with her husband, Robert. Alison was Director of the LLLGB Publications Department for several years before joining the LAD in 2003. She served as LLLI LAD Director for five years with Karin Gausman. Alison recently participated in the LLLGB Ten New Groups Project and is involved in a similar project starting soon in Wales, GB.
Global Network: LAD Council members have continued to work cooperatively 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; and responding to inquiries. We maintain the global network through frequent, cordial communications.

Semi-Annual Reports: The LAD Council collects the Semi-Annual Reports. Statistics for the April 16, 2011 – October 15, 2011 reporting period and comparison of the four most recent reporting periods are attached.

LADders: The latest two issues of LAD Council’s quarterly international, multilingual publication can be found online at: [http://www.llleus.org/LAD/ladders/LADders_2011_4.pdf](http://www.llleus.org/LAD/ladders/LADders_2011_4.pdf) [http://www.llleus.org/LAD/ladders/LADders_2012_1.pdf](http://www.llleus.org/LAD/ladders/LADders_2012_1.pdf) (Username: LAD Password: LADis#1) Dialogue samples from recent issues of LADders were compiled into an “LLL Philosophy Notebook” to help LAD representatives dialogue with Applicants about the concepts.

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

LADI Inquiries to the LLLI Web Site: Responded to queries from around the world, from mothers interested in LLL leadership where there is no local Group.

Review of LAD Practices: Ongoing efforts to use the results from two LAD Council surveys plus other feedback to determines what is—and is not—working well, assess length of time required for accreditation, be mindful of extent of preparation desirable for effective leadership, and continue to experiment with innovative ways to facilitate accreditation.

Responded to LLLI Management/Board Inquiry regarding LAD concerns and needs.

Highlights from LAD Entities

Resources/Projects
Revising Leader Applicant Handbook (Great Britain).
Testing use of Leader Applicant’s Resource Kit (Alliance).
Las Vegas, Nevada, USA, Group recruited 21 Applicants; 1 accredited thus far.

Publications
Leaven articles contributed by LAD Council for the “Preparing for Leadership” column.
Newsletters for Applicants: Chrysalis (LLL Canada), Arc-en-ciel ([Rainbow], Ligue La Leche), and Horizons (Alliance).

Translations
Translating LADders, SARs, Leader Applicant Handbook, and other LAD materials.
Providing bilingual LAD representatives’ support. Accrediting Leaders without a common language, with help from translators.

Support for LAD Representatives
Responding promptly to CLA and RALA inquiries, questions, and requests for resources.

LAD International Statistics

LLL Germany and LLL Switzerland are no longer Affiliates; they are now Areas supported by LLL Europe. From the 2011 April SAR, their statistics are included under the column “Europe” in the first chart, “Semi-Annual Report Compilation,” and under “ID” in the second chart, “Comparison of Four Reporting Periods.”
Semi-Annual Report Compilation  
16 Apr 2011 – 15 Oct 2011

* The information from the previous SAR is indicated in parentheses.

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**Comparison of Four Reporting Periods**

LAD Council

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**When Will She Respond?**

*Sally Allison, Administrator of Leader Accreditation, LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education*

Reprinted from *Alliance Link*, Issue 2012-1

As administrators in La Leche League, particularly in the Leader Accreditation Department (LAD) where correspondence is at the core of what we do, we've probably all asked ourselves: When will that mother or Leader or administrator get back to me? What might be holding her up? Did my message reach her? It can be frustrating, annoying, or even nerve-wracking not to hear back from someone, but just for a moment, consider how your own response times may be perceived by others.

Timely communication is such an important aspect of LAD work that it is part of the job description for each LAD representative position. Why do we put so much emphasis on timeliness? Because most often the person we are responding to is an Applicant or Leader who has asked a question, shared something quite personal about her mothering experience, or needs information from us about an application or
accreditation. These are important communications, and the other person could be eager, excited, concerned, or even anxious to hear from us. Our response time can send a powerful message, whether we intend it to or not.

Consequences of a delayed response
For Applicants who are eager and enthusiastic to begin work or move ahead on leadership preparation, delayed responses could mean that they lose that energy. Other activities or opportunities might come up, and the Applicant could lose interest in becoming a Leader. Leaders, as well as Applicants, might become disgruntled with LLL, the Area, or the Coordinator of Leader Accreditation (CLA) or feel anxious and apprehensive about how their messages have been received. When the other person is a Team or Council member or another LAD representative, the opportunity to give our input may be lost, or we may risk putting others behind in their own work. Overall, a delayed response can send the message that the other person or the work that she is doing is not very important to us.

Do I always have to respond right away?
Many of us now have the capability to respond to a message immediately, even if we are away from home. That doesn't necessarily mean that we have to or that we should expect others to do the same, yet even a brief acknowledgment that the message was received can be reassuring. LLL and the LAD continue to emphasize the importance of putting family first, and sometimes that means we can't answer right away. At the same time, it is important to state it as the reason for a delayed response only when absolutely necessary.

What response time should I strive for?
The LAD standard is to respond within two weeks of receiving any communication, a time frame that was established when handwriting or typing and sending letters by postal mail was the main way of corresponding. Since we are now able to respond much more quickly using email, many LAD representatives consider one week a more appropriate time frame.

What if something comes up—you are going on vacation, there is an emergency, or you need time to respond to a lengthy personal history? This is an appropriate time to write a brief email and let the other person know you may be delayed in your response. If you are consulting with your support team and/or working on a sensitive response, and if it is going to take more than two weeks, you might inform the other person of the consultation. Providing a time frame for when you expect to get back to her in a more substantive way means that she is not left wondering what happened. If you are finding it more and more challenging to respond in a timely manner, contact your support person and let her know. She can help you figure out what strategies might work, or what size workload would be more manageable for you.

Strategies for finding time to respond
Many of the strategies that we share with Applicants can help us as well:
- Set a goal for completing the response, and have a reward in mind for when you meet it.
- Set aside specific days of the week or times of the day to do LAD work. For example, if you are most productive in the morning, dedicate some of that time for LAD work. Do some writing first, before reading emails or getting caught up in other things.
- If you find it much easier to do LAD work with as little distraction as possible, you might prefer to work after your children are in bed, when they are at school, or any time you are likely to be alone. Ask your family for help if needed.
- Print out an email or document and take it with you if you know you will be waiting somewhere, or if you just want to get away from your computer.
- Organizing your workspace can help you to better organize your thoughts.
- Take a break from time to time, especially if you find yourself stuck.

You are a role model
It is important to be a positive role model when you work with a new LAD representative on her orientation. Our response time to her is crucial, and we also want to emphasize this aspect of LAD work
to her. The orientation time provides an opportunity for her to practice and further develop this discipline and make timely response a habit.

We are disappointed when we hear of a mother who stopped breastfeeding because she couldn't find support. The same is true if an Applicant withdrew because she lacked consistent support. Timely responses can mean that an Applicant will be a Leader in a matter of months, and will be prepared to support more mothers. Let's do all we can to ensure that Applicants feel supported, and that we model timely responses for everyone who contacts us.

Sally Allison has been an LLL Leader since 2000 and has worked in the LAD for eight enjoyable years. She is currently Administrator of Leader Accreditation (ALA) for LLL Alliance for Breastfeeding Education. Sally is married to Lynn Stork and they live with their two daughters, Rachael (13) and Lauren (10) Allison-Stork in Rochester, New York, USA.

The Older Applicant

Marie Beam, LAD Council

At a Series Meeting, an obviously older woman who has come without children announces during introductions that she has three grown children and is there because she wants to become a La Leche League Leader. How should the Group Leader respond?

When we picture a Leader Applicant, typically we envision someone with a toddler or infant—or both—in tow. The vast majority who apply for leadership do so when they are in the midst of intensive parenting responsibilities, and it allows us an opportunity to observe their mothering in action over a period of time. For most, it is a natural progression to come to meetings, have one’s needs met, and gradually develop sufficient experience and confidence to in turn help other mothers as a Leader and “pass it forward.”

Occasionally, though, we are approached by a mother whose children are no longer little, who has become interested in La Leche League leadership later in her life. Perhaps she has fond memories of attending an LLL Group in the past, or sees a need in her community for breastfeeding support and wants to help meet that need.

How do we assess a mother’s qualifications for leadership when she does not fit our picture of a “typical Applicant,” and there is no opportunity to observe her actual mothering?

A good place to start is to encourage the mother to obtain and read the latest edition of The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding. Ask her to consider, as she is reading, whether she would be comfortable advocating all aspects of LLL philosophy as it is presented in The Womanly Art.

Even if she has attended LLL meetings in the past, encourage her to attend a full series. Observing her at meetings will give the Leader the chance to evaluate interpersonal skills. Does she respond to others at the meetings with empathy? Does she exhibit good communication skills? Does she relate well to mothers who may be the age of her own daughter? Does she reminisce about “back in my day,” or does she keep her comments focused on the mothers present so that her age, and the ages of her children, are not significant to those who may be much younger?

Ask her what her goals are for becoming a La Leche League Leader. It could be that a mother’s main motivation is to add LLL accreditation to her qualifications, in which case she likely would see leadership as a short-term commitment. However, if she sees herself setting up a new Group to meet the needs of an underserved population, using her skills to help the Area in some way, or doing outreach to promote breastfeeding—these are exciting possibilities!

Once the mother has read The Womanly Art and attended a recent series of meetings, the Leader needs to take time to explore leadership with this woman, as she would with any interested mother. Careful discussion of each concept is important to ascertain whether the mother’s past mothering experience embodied LLL philosophy, and whether she would
have met all prerequisites if she had applied when her children were young. How long did she breastfeed? When did she introduce solids? How did she handle loving guidance? Was there any significant separation from her young children? Memories may be fuzzy, particularly for a mother with multiple children; but if her answers reflect parenting choices in accord with LLL philosophy, she may be able to apply for leadership.

What if attending Series Meetings is impractical because there are no Groups in her vicinity? Practicing some questions from the Preview together could help form a clearer picture of the mother’s skills. It would not be expected for the mother to provide correct breastfeeding information, since she has not yet done application work; the focus would be on her approach and tone.

An older mother can bring a wealth of skills and experience to the Leader role. Since she may no longer be busy with the constant demands of a young family, she may also have that precious commodity—time—to devote to leadership.

As always, if you have questions about whether a mother meets all prerequisites for LLL leadership, consult your LAD support person to discuss your concerns.

Marie Beam lives in Kensington, Maryland, USA, just north of Washington, D.C. She and her husband, Eric, have three children, Alex (25), Emily (22), and Matthew (17). Marie has been a Leader since 1992 and a member of the LAD since 1996. She is currently in LAD Council.

Who, whom, which, and that

• “who” and “whom” refer to people
  For example: A mother who attends Group meetings . . .

• “who” also indicates the individuality of the people in a group
  For example: Group members who participated in our World Breastfeeding Week event . . .

• “which” and “that” refer to objects, animals, and places

• “which” and “that” can refer to a group of people when the meaning is the group as an entity
  For example: The LAD, which is an international department, LLL Groups that held World Breastfeeding Week events . . .

Possessive verbs, phrases, and pronouns

Language that implies other people are our possessions can come across as condescending. For example: “I have a Leader Applicant,” “We have five members,” “My/our Leader Applicant,” “Our/your mothers.”

Here are some alternatives:

- Our Group has a Leader Applicant.
- There are five members in our Group.
- My Group’s Leader Applicant has two children.
- Our Group’s Leader Applicant is also the Group Librarian.
- We reminded the mothers in our Group to renew their memberships.

Just to make things more interesting, using these same possessive pronouns and phrases to refer to co-Leaders, co-administrators, and support people only seems to indicate the organizational relationship and doesn’t come across as condescending.

- My co-Leader will bring the checkbook to the meeting.
- My co-ACLAs and I just got a memo from our CLA.
- Last week, our ACL sent some information about the LLL European Management Symposium.

Writing with Respect

Juanita Watt, Los Alamos, New Mexico, USA
Adapted from LAD Lifeline 2002 No. 3

Respect. This word is used a lot in La Leche League. As Leaders we respect the mothers we help, as well as the Leader Applicants and co-Leaders we work with, as individuals and as adults responsible for making their own decisions. The language we choose—both written and spoken—is one way to show our respect. Here are some examples:
Words and phrases usually associated with children, animals, and objects

These tend to keep their “flavor” when used to refer to adults and may come across as condescending or manipulative. For example, “grow,” “nurture,” “groom,” “generate,” “locate,” and “prepare” are commonly used with children, animals, or objects. Children and plants “grow” or need “nurturing.” We “groom” our pets, “generate” electricity, “locate” our car keys, “prepare” dinner.

When referring to Leader Applicants or mothers, how about using these words?

- inspire
- interest
- invite
- work with
- encourage
- attract
- assist
- help

Another example: “Next week I plan to meet at the park with Stephanie, a Leader Applicant with our Group. We’ll be discussing the Leader Applicant reading list and other pertinent items to help her prepare for leadership.” This wording indicates she’s the one doing the preparing.

Avoiding the word “process” with “application” and “accreditation” reflects our goal to design each application to meet the needs of the individual. Often just “application” or “accreditation” is enough, or try “accreditation journey,” “application period,” “application time,” “accreditation procedures.”

Sensitivity to a word’s “flavor” helps when using analogies and metaphors as well. These can add excitement and imagery to our writing. We just need to be aware of whether we are personifying objects or “objectifying” people.

For example, “What she learns at LLL meetings can help an Applicant grow as a mother” sounds condescending because it compares her to a growing plant (or child). However, “What she learns at LLL meetings can help an Applicant’s confidence in her mothering grow” avoids this because “grow” is used to describe the Applicant’s confidence, not the Applicant herself.

Language that sounds controlling

Words like “advise,” “counsel,” “teach,” “educate,” “warn,” “should,” and “must” can come across as controlling because they imply that a Leader is responsible for a mother or her decisions.

Here are some alternatives that reflect a peer relationship between adults:

- suggest
- encourage
- help
- support
- inform
- offer
- can or might

Some sentence structures can sound controlling or imply that a suggestion will work for everyone. For example, “Nurse every two hours” and “Nursing more often will build your supply” can come across as advice or a “guarantee” of results. “Many mothers have found that nursing every two hours . . .” and “Nursing more often might help to build up your supply” are more open-ended and leave the decision up to the mother.

When we do need to state an expectation or requirement directly, using simple present tense or adding a reason and “please” to a request for action sounds more respectful and polite, less like an “order.” For example, “Leaders offer information and suggestions, not advice” or “To help avoid delays, please sign and send in the Statement of Commitment promptly.”

The language in our letters and other written materials is a powerful tool for modeling appropriate
ways to share information and help mothers. I hope these ideas inspire you to continue to express your thoughts vividly and creatively and in ways that respect each individual.

Juanita Watt is a Leader in Los Alamos, New Mexico, USA, and serves on the Treasury Workgroup for LLL of New Mexico. She’s a member of the Leaven Editorial Review Board and enjoys helping the LAD Council with LADders. She and her husband Bob have two daughters, Kathy and Julie, and two sons-in-law. Juanita originally wrote this article for United States Western Division Connections No.39, January/February 1992, and adapted it for LAD Lifeline 2002 No. 3 and this issue of LADders.

Has LLL Changed Over the Years?
A Longtime Leader’s Perspective
Anne Devereux, Coordinator of Leader Accreditation, New Zealand

Welcoming a new baby into any family is a profoundly moving experience. So it is fitting that I start by talking about Ida Grace, our 26th grandbaby, who arrived five weeks early on 1 January 2012. Although treated as a premature baby, I thought that 5lbs 12ozs (2.3 kg) was a very respectable weight. Ida had a mind of her own when it came to breastfeeding and soon showed that she was not to be trifled with when it came to “being on a hospital schedule.” She is learning a great deal about being loved and cherished with breastfeeding and cuddles while her doting parents are learning a great deal about themselves and their new role. Three happier people you could not meet!

Way back in 1969, I read about La Leche League and thought that this organization was just what I needed when we were expecting our seventh baby in 1970. Breastfeeding had always been my choice, although my management certainly lacked science! Hence I was persuaded to offer complementary bottles of formula or early solids because my babies often did not meet the requisite amount of weight. So reading The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding came as a welcome surprise. I couldn’t wait until Edward, our seventh child, was born to try out what I now knew about breastfeeding. And it worked! I admit that with some of my older babies, I had chosen formula because it seemed easier or because breastfeeding information was nonexistent. Do I feel guilty? No. Do I feel regret? Yes. However, we have had the pleasure of seeing all our grandbabies being breastfed, some for many years.

In January 1971, the first LLL Series Meeting was held in our city, and later that same year I was invited to be part of the “Committee.” Writing about my birth and breastfeeding experiences along with the then required reading (The Womanly Art, Nursing Your Baby, Methods of Childbirth, and a small number of information sheets) were part of the accreditation journey, although formal philosophy as such was not used as the criteria for my responses. It was more a matter of what I did and why. In fact, reading through some of my application material, I wonder how I was ever accredited! LLL philosophy became more interesting for me when in late 1972, about the time I was accredited, eight “Concepts” were formally adopted by the LLLI Board of Directors. The following year the philosophy statement relating to the baby’s need for his mother was introduced, to be followed in 1975 by the one relating to discipline/loving guidance. Over the following ten years, revisions were made to the wording to better refine intent so as to fully support the Founders’ vision for our organization and for mothers, babies, and their families all over the world.

Probably one of the most difficult areas of philosophy has been how we have worked through mother-baby/child separation issues. In the mid-1980s, there seemed to be a “blanket” ruling for potential Leaders—no separation other than minimal amounts (e.g., dental or medical visits) until the child was at least three years of age. It would be true to say that many amazing women who would have made fantastic Leaders and were committed to some work outside the home for a variety of reasons, felt
that they could no longer represent the organization. Almost three decades later, mothers are acknowledged for their dedication and wisdom in finding child care that reflects their family’s values and provides an environment in which their children are respected and nurtured.

It has been a privilege to have been involved with the LAD twice. My first “tenure” began in the mid-1970s. In the late 1970s and early 1980s LLL New Zealand (LLLNZ) was experiencing a rapid rise in the number of women applying for leadership. This meant that my correspondence was not confined to the LLL Area in which I lived but reflected mothers from all parts of New Zealand. It was during this time that I began to realise fully the importance of the Leader Recommendation. I knew that I would probably never meet the women with whom I was working, and so I depended very much on the insights and wise words of the support Leaders. Other LLL duties arose and I moved away from the LAD, although I confess to always having a special place in my heart for the work it does and for the many mothers who give time and energy to become part of another woman’s journey through motherhood and breastfeeding to leadership.

In 2000, I was again drawn to the LAD, as a CLA. In LLLNZ, an ACLA is the Administrator rather than “Associate.” Initially I had the privilege of working with mothers from all over the country, although now I work exclusively with Applicants from the LLL Area in which I live. Geographically, though, this Area covers a large region, so again I do not always have the opportunity to meet Leader Applicants and must rely on insights provided to me by the support Leaders.

If there is anything to take away from my story it is that it is never too late to learn. This has encouraged me when helping women who may not have had the most satisfying breastfeeding relationship and want to know more before having another baby. I often wonder where breastfeeding “sits” in the world of research. While I recognise that biology and nutrition must figure as important, my personal feeling is that society and anthropology have the most influence.

As Leaders, we know what makes the difference. It is watching other mothers, listening to their stories, and using some of those experiences to help us breastfeed and mother our own children. Has LLL changed over the years? Its emphasis on mothering through breastfeeding, as set out in its philosophy, is no longer seen as “fringe.” Most of the “revolutionary” statements made on behalf of LLL in the early years are now part of mainstream education and health care. Leaders complement Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative-accredited maternity facilities and lactation consultants by their ongoing work in communities. LLL philosophy is often described as the “glue” which holds us all together. We know that while many women are attracted to LLL for its breastfeeding information and support, there will be other mothers who feel that their needs may not be met there. Sometimes this is a cultural or ethnic decision, or it could be misguided advice from family or friends. Recognising this goes some way to understanding why mothers make the decisions that they do and why LLL in its wisdom initiated the Breastfeeding Peer Counsellor Programme. While this programme does not expect Peer Counsellors’ mothering and breastfeeding decisions to reflect LLL philosophy, it is interesting to see how readily mothers respond to a study of the concepts and to the way LLL works in supporting their mothering and breastfeeding. It is this style of mother-to-mother learning that is the key to how and why LLL is the unique organization that it is.

Anne Devereux is married to John and they have eleven children ranging in ages from 32 to 51. Four of their children live in Australia and six in Dunedin, New Zealand. One of their daughters was killed shortly before her 19th birthday in June 1987. LLL came into their lives in 1969 when Anne read about this organization in a woman’s magazine. When it held its first public meeting in December 1970 shortly after their seventh child was born, she went along to see how she could be helped with breastfeeding. Anne’s family is now waiting with excitement for the arrival of two further grandbabies—one in late March and another in early October. All of their grandchildren have been breastfed, most for long periods of time. Breastfeeding stories are plentiful in their family as their daughters and daughters-in-law share their experiences.
Dear ACLA,

I know you haven't heard from me in a long while. You probably thought I had dropped off the face of the earth! I really would like to finish my application quickly and I remember that you said we could do the personal history on the phone if we needed to. I don't think there's much else left to do and I'd really like to finish by next week because that is my deadline for certification as a childbirth educator. If I'm a Leader by then it will count as the breastfeeding component for my certification. I really hope I can make the deadline, so I won't have to start over.

Thanks for all your help.

Love,

Annie Applicant

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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.

Dear ACLA,

I know you haven't heard from me in a long while. You probably thought I had dropped off the face of the earth! I really would like to finish my application quickly and I remember that you said we could do the personal history on the phone if we needed to. I don't think there's much else left to do and I'd really like to finish by next week because that is my deadline for certification as a childbirth educator. If I'm a Leader by then it will count as the breastfeeding component for my certification. I really hope I can make the deadline, so I won't have to start over.

Thanks for all your help.

Love,

Annie Applicant

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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

Lesley Robinson, Canada

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Sample Response

Good to hear from you. Since it had been so long since I had heard from you, I had guessed that you were no longer interested in leadership. If you would like to reinstate your application, the first thing you would need to do would be to renew your membership, so that you continue to meet the prerequisites to applying for leadership. According to my records, you still have a lot of work to complete. The Breastfeeding Resource Guide has been revised, and I can send you the updated version if you want to continue. My offer to work on the personal history on the phone or in person is still open, although I think it is important for you to think about your reasons for doing it orally. Sometimes it is a matter of getting over a block about getting things down in writing. For some it is more a question of having the time to devote to the application. If that is the case, then it is worth considering how much time would be available to work as a Leader. The application should be a good indicator of the amount of time you would need to devote to planning and leading meetings, managing the Group, answering mothers’ questions and so on. I would be happy to meet with you to discuss this further, either here or in a coffee shop if you prefer. I have found the coffee shop option to work well, depending on how it works for children, but for the work aspect I find it usually helps in getting focused on the task in hand. Let me know your thoughts.

Lesley Robinson, Canada

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New Extract

Dear CLA,

There is a desperate need for an LLL Group in my community. The nearest Group is 200 km from here, across the border in another country. I am a Board-Certified Lactation Consultant and I have been working in a maternal health unit where I have set up a peer counsellor programme to support new mothers with breastfeeding. I would love to be able to provide the kind of mother-to-mother support that an LLL Group could offer, so I would like to do your training to become an LLL Leader. My own breastfeeding experience was a few years ago. I had complications after the birth of my first child, so I wasn't able to breastfeed him. With my daughter all went well and I enjoyed a great breastfeeding experience. She refused to nurse when she had an ear infection at around eight months and would not go back to the breast, but overall it was a wonderful experience for both of us and I'd love to be able to share that with other mothers. Please let me know how to proceed.

Sincerely,

Kara

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
Application Checklist

Would you like to be able to see each Applicant’s progress at a glance? If you place an application checklist at the front of each application file, it is easy to find out when she last wrote to you and what she has already achieved. You can find a sample Application Checklist for LAD Representatives at: http://www.lleus.org/LAD/ACLA.html (Username: LAD Password: LADis#1)

e-Calendar

You might feel the need for a reminder system in your LAD work. For example, after you have sent a recommendation form to a Leader, how can you remember when to follow it up? Some LAD representatives use a calendar installed in their email system such as Google Calendar. You can set a reminder to yourself for a particular date. Some email systems send you a message, or you can get a pop-up display on your screen.

A Taste of LAD International

This column offers us an opportunity to get to know other LAD representatives around the world. We look forward to your stories. Contributions for the next issue are welcome at LADdersmail@gmail.com by 9 May 2012.

Allyson Shames, Virginia, USA

My name is Allyson Shames, and I've been involved with the LAD almost as long as I've been a Leader. I began attending meetings in 2001 in Iowa City, USA, after realizing that my first child, David, had no intention of weaning when "everyone" else's babies were doing so. I was accredited in early 2004, shortly before moving to Charlottesville, Virginia,
where I've lived for the past eight years with my husband, Curt, and now three children, David (10), Aaron (8), and Kate (5). I joined the LAD as an ACLA for LLL of Virginia/West Virginia, USA, soon after our move, after attending a Leader Enrichment Workshop session run by Marian McCabe, my predecessor. When her CLA term was up, we switched positions, and I became CLA and she ACLA, and we've continued to work together in this capacity ever since.

LLL has gone through a lot of changes in my eight years with the LAD, and my position has changed from ACLA/CLA of Virginia/West Virginia to CLA of Old Dominion and SAGE, which are two of the Areas formed from within Virginia, and I will shortly be taking over as CLA of two other Areas, GeoMoKs and Gateway, as well. Throughout the changes, I've consistently appreciated the other LAD Leaders—in spite of ups and downs, we're a remarkably stable department and consistently provide support to one another.

One of my favorite parts of working with Applicants is the opportunity to help people deeply consider their beliefs and parenting practices. Through ongoing dialogue, I love really encouraging mothers to think. I love watching them realize their strength, growth, and confidence, while helping them challenge themselves to recognize and overcome biases. I love hearing their stories, but even more, I love being part of leadership preparation that comes from them telling their stories.

I very much look forward to my new challenge of working as CLA for most of our Area Network. I'm excited to learn about Areas beyond my own, as we continue to discover new ways to connect and support one another as mothers.

Erin Yamazaki, Ontario, Canada

My name is Erin Yamazaki, and more than anything, my family defines who I am. Since having a family I have grown in so many new ways. I have been married for almost 13 years. My husband and I both grew up in the Ottawa Valley, Canada, but met in university. We have spent our married life living in Kanata, Ontario. My husband is my rock and my biggest supporter in whatever I do. We have two wonderful children who keep us very busy. It always amazes me just how fast time flies, and just how quickly they’re growing up.

Our son Adrian will turn seven years old this March and is in Grade 1. He loves school—and when not at school he loves being a teacher to his younger sister and anyone else who wishes to be a student in his class! He also loves winter—especially shoveling and skiing. He is very active and enjoys many sports, but he also plays piano. He absolutely loves recycling and OC Transpo—that is our city’s transit system. He dreams of becoming an OC Transpo driver when he grows up. He collects bus schedules and can tell us how to get anywhere in our capital city.

Our daughter Addison will turn five this March and is in Junior Kindergarten. She too loves school, and loves music and dancing. Tap is her favourite. She also plays piano. Her other love is gymnastics. She is our entertainer, but also our perfectionist. She’s quite the independent one and amazes us at the things she can do. This past year she added reading, riding a two wheeler, and jump roping to her list of accomplishments.

We all love the outdoors and spend most of our free time doing something outside together! Swimming, cycling, fishing, downhill skiing, and snowshoeing are some of our family favourites. One of our favourite times of day is waking up together in the morning and enjoying my husband's famous breakfasts. This picture is one of us on Bark Lake near Barry’s Bay, Ontario, last summer.

I love learning new things. I also love working with families and helping them to find their parenting confidence. I fill lots of my free time volunteering for my children’s school and for their various activities. I also spend some time teaching downhill skiing in the winters. I have been a La Leche League Leader since 2008, and co-lead meetings here in Kanata each month. I have been working with the LAD for just over two years. I mostly find time to do my LAD work after the rest of my house is asleep. I
am definitely a night owl and not a morning person. I appreciate the flexibility of our digital age as it makes it possible for me to work with the LAD.

I find it a privilege to work with mothers through the application as it is a journey of self-discovery for them. I believe that La Leche League’s strength is our Leaders, so it is always exciting for me to see a mother become a Leader. It is amazing that LLL can bring together so many special women who can each be so unique, but also with so many things in common. It also excites me to think that with each new Leader accredited how many more mothers and babies can benefit from LLL and have a satisfying breastfeeding relationship.

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**LAD Promenade**

*Congratulations on your appointment!*

Karin Ali  
ACLA-at-Large, Alliance, USA

Terri Aquilina  
CLA, Ohio, USA

Michaela Brunner  
CLA, Austria

Jan Cranston  
ACLA, Michigan, USA

Joan Crothers  
RALA, Great Lakes Region, USA

Suzy Landreth  
CLA, Nebraska, USA

Melissa Reneau  
ACLA, Texas, USA

Eileen Saks  
CLA, Raritan Valley, New Jersey, USA

Allyson Shames  
CLA for Gateway, GeoMOKan, Old Dominion, Sage, USA

Angie Taylor  
CLA, Northern California, Hawaii and Northern Nevada, USA

Comfortable places attract people. Many LAD representatives serve in this department for many years and keep accrediting new Leaders. We are pleased to share some photos of LAD representatives with their grandchildren. Special thanks to them for years of commitment to the LAD and to LLL.

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Joan Peloso, Florida, USA, with her granddaughter, Rebecca, born June 19, 2008

Rita Schroeder, Luxembourg, with her grandson, Yann, born 23 March 2011
It is a wonderful boost to a LAD representative’s morale when she receives the occasional heartfelt expression of gratitude from an Applicant she has been corresponding with. Here are some inspiring comments shared by an ACLA, received from an Applicant during their personal history dialogue. They demonstrate what LLL is all about and what is also rooted in LAD work: “mother-to-mother” support.

*Your response was a real pleasure for me to read! The way you express yourself and the information you give make me hold my breath impatiently and wait for more and more . . . Your words fill me with enthusiasm to reach more breastfeeding mothers and babies. It is a privilege to communicate with you!*

Please send your article ideas, submissions, photos, and suggestions to *LADders* at: LADdersmail@gmail.com Thank you for your valuable work in this department.

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 2012