

Continuum

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SPECIAL DONOR ISSUE

What is the LLL magnetism that draws in our hearts, engages our minds, and attracts our donations?

Clearly, as CONTINUUM's lead article suggests, there is work still to be done. LLLI—with the help of its donors and over 7,400 Leaders in 65 countries, 6,100 trained peer counselors in 33 countries and publications in 30+ languages—brings information and support to mothers worldwide. A worthy cause indeed.

But the pull of LLL is also very personal. Donor Marie Beam, a Maryland Leader, expresses it well. "The wisdom and generosity of La Leche League Leaders have helped guide me... [they] have been my role models, my counselors, my confidants, my supporters in time of greatest need, my dearest friends."

The power and pull of La Leche League? Perhaps it is as simple—and profound—as LLL's lifelong positive impact on not only mothers and babies, but also the volunteers who serve them.

The state of breastfeeding 2005

Every once in a while—especially if you've been out of the breastfeeding world for a while—it's good to check up on the state of this womanly art we hold so dear.

The 2005 Progress Report on Breastfeeding: Ten Years after Beijing states, "Internationally, there is clear recognition that breastfeeding plays a significant role in the health and development of women and children. The place of breastfeeding and human milk in the economic affairs of a family, a community, or a nation is also important, and is too often underestimated and undervalued." The report is a joint statement from several breastfeeding advocate groups, including La Leche League International.

For many countries, breastfeeding remains a life and death matter. Every year, according to a 2004 UNICEF press release, "more than 10 million children die from mainly preventable causes, including diarrhoea, pneumonia, measles and malaria. If every baby was exclusively breastfed from birth to six months, an estimated 3,500 children's lives could be saved each day." Yet, reports the World Health Organization, less than 35 percent of babies around the globe are being breastfed exclusively even for the first four months.

According to the Progress Report, which calls on every country "to develop a comprehensive national policy on infant and young child feeding," some strides have been made. More than 18,000 maternity facilities in 134 countries have been awarded Baby-Friendly Hospital status. Action has been taken by some 120 countries on the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. In countries that market the advantages of breastfeeding and promote Baby-Friendly Hospitals, breastfeeding rates are increasing.

In the United States, just 46 facilities have

been designated as Baby-Friendly Hospitals or Birth Centers as of March 2005 and the U.S. government does not support the International Code.

USA breastfeeding rates over the past decade, however, have been on the rise. The Ross Products Division of Abbott Laboratories has been tracking breastfeeding statistics extensively since 1955. Their most recent

report in 2003 shows that breastfeeding rates increased by at least 10 percent from 1993 to 2003 (from 55.9% to 66% for in-hospital and from 19% to 32.8% at six months). These rates still lag behind the Surgeon General's recommendations of 75 percent in-hospital and 50 percent at six months. And in-hospital rates dropped four percent between 2002 and 2003—

whether a trend or fluke remains to be seen.

Those less likely to breastfeed include WIC mothers, black and Hispanic mothers, mothers under 24 years of age, those without a college education, and those in the south central states.

While the implications for not breastfeeding in the United States are not as deadly as in many of the developing nations, the consequences are still high, even beyond the health benefits lost. Jon Weiner, in a USDA report on the "Economic Benefits of Breastfeeding" in 2001, suggests "A minimum of \$3.6 billion would be saved if breastfeeding were increased from current levels to those recommended by the U.S. Surgeon General. This figure is likely an underestimation of the total savings because it represents cost savings from the treatment of only three childhood illnesses: otitis media, gastroenteritis, and necrotizing enterocolitis."

You can read the full report at <www.la.lecheleague.org/advocacy/beijingprogress.html>

If every baby was exclusively breastfed from birth to six months, an estimated 3,500 children's lives could be saved each day.

A message to our donors

Welcome to our annual donor issue of Continuum. All of us at LLLI so appreciate your support. The bulk of our work with mothers and babies is made possible by individual donations by women and men like you.

I look forward to meeting many of you at two special events for donors at the conference.

On Saturday, July 2nd, donors of \$1,000 or more will be invited to a Leadership Circle/Founders' Circle reception. These major donors will have an opportunity to spend some time in a small group setting with the LLLI Founders and Executive Director and receive a special thank you from LLLI.

On Sunday, July 3rd, donors of \$250 or more have been invited to the Donor/Speaker reception, hosted by the LLLI Board and the Funding Development Department.

If you are planning to be at the conference and would like to meet with me during that time, please drop me a note at sweishaar@llli.org or contact me through the office. One of the best parts of my job is meeting with our donors and hearing firsthand what motivates you to support LLLI.

There are two particularly exciting new initiatives that I want to share with you—the new 50th Anniversary Fund and LatchOn.org. You can read more about these unique opportunities to support LLLI and other breastfeeding initiatives in this issue of Continuum and on the Web at:

<www.lalecheleague.org>

Stephanie Weishaar
Funding Development Director, LLLI

LatchOn.org presents a unique marketplace for project-based giving

Imagine a clearinghouse of possible projects related to breastfeeding, nutrition, and parenting. Add in an opportunity for safe, easy, targeted donor support. Top it off with an ability to assure quality control and track project progress.

That's the basis for the newly launched LatchOn.org, a creative, action-oriented, Internet-based approach to matching people who have resources to projects in need of funding.

LatchOn.org is the dream-child of a small, international community of LLL Leaders who dared to dream big. While projects are not limited to La Leche League, they are connected through a common philosophy about mothers, babies, breastfeeding, nutrition, and parenting that are well-aligned with LLL principles and practices.

Every project posted on LatchOn.org will identify a project leader, include a business plan, and pass a rigorous authentication process.

LatchOn.org releases funds to a project once 85 percent of the needed amount is raised. Project support may come from one or multiple donors.

Donors can search the site by topic (there are five) or by any of 12 geographic locations. Tax-deductible contributions can be made securely on-line.

Some of the currently posted projects include:

5,000 for the 50th! — a massive undertaking by the LLLI Alumnae Association to identify and reconnect with Retired Leaders in conjunction with LLLI's 50th Anniversary Celebration (beginning in 2006 and culminating with its July 2007 Conference). Leaders who retired prior to computerization of LLL records in 1985 are known to the organization only through drawers-full of

old forms. In the years following, there was no comprehensive system for maintaining current contact information. The Alumnae Association believes that Retired Leaders are a valuable asset to La Leche League. Finding these former Leaders is an exciting challenge, one that will count on many volunteer hours, strong networking, and funding support for printing, mailing, advertising, and data entry.

Reader-friendly resources. The purchase of indexing software for the LLLI Publications Department is another project listed on LatchOn.org. Such software will save staff time, improve accuracy and consistency in indexes, and help make LLLI periodicals, books, and Web-based resources more accessible to readers.

A new computer for publications. Purchase a G5 Mac computer (and needed RAM) for full color publishing of NEW BEGINNINGS (the flagship magazine for La Leche League International) and other projects. Today, printing companies are requiring files made with up-to-date software, which require new computers in order to avoid compatibility problems.

A traveling library for lone Leaders. The Leader Enrichment Library (LEL) is a lending library created to support isolated LLL Leaders and those who lead Groups with small memberships. Through the LEL, these volunteers will be able to receive through the mail books and other materials on breastfeeding, parenting, nutrition, and other relevant topics.

Kansas LLL is cruising!

The 2004 World Breastfeeding Week celebration in Kansas took a new twist. The Area held a drawing for a 2004 PT Cruiser automobile using a campaign slogan of "Breastfed Babies: Cruising to a Healthy Life." This was a statewide effort, with everything that a Leader needed to organize the fundraiser provided free by the Area. The results: over \$25,000 raised and 100 percent of LLL Groups participating!

The Area is using its share of the revenue (over \$6,000) to offer capacity-building grants to Groups. By doing this, Kansas LLL is not only learning what is important to Leaders, but also providing a safe and simple way for Leaders to learn about grant writing. This knowledge can then be used to submit grants to other funders, such as community foundations or local corporate donors, that will benefit their Groups and the mothers and babies they serve.

Two levels of grants were offered—\$500 and \$300. In winter 2005, the Area Council approved funding for nine grants totaling more than \$2,800. Leaders asked for money to underwrite mothers' LLLI membership, print stationery, provide a central telephone number, purchase *THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING* for local physicians' and hospitals' waiting rooms, provide tear-off sheets for doctors, and start a new Group with a complete library.

There is still money available and grants will continue to be offered until all the funds have been distributed back into the Groups. LLL of Kansas is strongly committed to investment at the local Group level to further the LLLI mission and a new application cycle has recently begun.

Robin Rzhia, Kansas

Ed note—For other Areas and Groups who've donated generously to LLLI, see the list on page 7.

Europe promotes a breastfeeding blueprint for action

"We hurried through an Irish rain shower, up wide steps between classical pillars, and into the impressive Dublin Castle. We were meeting to launch 'Protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in Europe: a blueprint for action,' the product of over two and a half years of hard work led by a dynamic team at the University of Trieste," reports LLLI Board Member Rachel O'Leary, who attended the meeting on behalf of LLL Europe.

The project was funded by the European Union. Input from a steering committee of experts from 28 countries and comments at various stages of the draft by a wide spectrum of breastfeeding advocates and educators helped shape the document.

Many of these contributors had LLL connections, including LLL Leader Flore Diers-Ollivier, who had the huge job of representing mothers in Europe! Flore managed to make sure that mother-to-mother support was mentioned in the text, with the help of Juanita Jauer-Steichen, Area Professional Liaison (APL) of France.

Comments were contributed by Martina Carabetta, Area Coordinator of Leaders (ACL) Italy; Christa Reisenbichler, LLL Austria; Roselyne Duché-Bancel, LLL France; Eleanor Emerson, LLL Germany; Lydia de Raad, LLL Netherlands; and Paola Negri and Maria Rita Inglieri, LLL Italy. As the draft neared its final stages, LLL Europe contributed comments thanks to Connie Little, ACL Spain; Jane Farren and Mary Bird, LLL Ireland; Flore and Rachel.

The Blueprint for Action covers policy and planning at national, regional and local levels; information, education and communication; training; protection, promotion and support; monitoring; and research. It offers policy-makers a wide-ranging guideline

for action on many levels. The full report is available at: http://europa.eu.int/comm/health/ph_projects/2002/promotion/fp_promotion_2002_frep_18_en.pdf

LLL in Europe

At the conclusion of the Ireland meeting, organisations were invited to speak on behalf of the Blueprint. Included in Rachel's comments were the following facts and figures:

"In Europe, there are over 1,000 Leaders working in Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, France, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Luxemborg, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, and Switzerland. LLL materials are available in all the languages of these countries, with books, magazines, and leaflets for mothers and health care professionals.

"Last year, Leaders in Germany helped 8,600 mothers by phone; in Hungary, one Leader spoke with 758 mothers. In France, 233 animatrices organised 140 groups, led 1,800 meetings, welcomed 20,000 mothers and their babies, and answered 14,000 telephone calls from mothers."

Host a 50th Anniversary Fund House Party!

It's party time! In fact, it'll be a whole year of partying for LLLI. With its 50th Anniversary just around the corner, La Leche League International is encouraging house party fundraisers as a fun way to raise awareness and money to sustain its work well into the future.

The goal of the 50th Anniversary Fund is to raise \$500,000 by the July 2007 50th Anniversary LLLI Conference Celebration in Chicago. This proactive funding drive will help ensure that LLLI programs stay strong and solvent in the decades to come.

Party funds will go towards basic program support, such as:

publications—as simple as tear-off sheets on the benefits of breastfeeding and as complex as a 680-page reference book for health professionals and lay breastfeeding counselors

the Center for Breastfeeding Information—the world's largest collection of breastfeeding studies

international conferences, workshops for lactation specialists and physician seminars

the LLLI Peer Counselor Program, where over 6,100 women have been trained to support breastfeeding in minority and low-income communities

the 800 Helpline, which provides immediate counseling for mothers in need and refers families to the local LLL group in their area for ongoing support

work with international agencies such as UNICEF and WHO to ensure that breastfeeding stays on the policy agenda

A great kick-off!

The 50th Anniversary Fund House Party Fundraiser Program kicked off with a number of recent events.

In February LLLI Board Chair



Marcia Lutostanski and her husband, John, graciously opened their home to a group of Active and Retired LLL Leaders in Houston, TX, for an evening of good food and lively conversation about the future of LLLI. In addition to donations, this first party yielded some productive discussions that may connect LLLI with a major corporate donor.

Simultaneous parties on April 17 provided an opportunity for attendees at multiple sites to share in a phone conversation with LLLI Founder Edwina Froehlich. Edwina and Founder Mary Ann Cahill were the special guests at a party hosted by Kaye Lowman-Boorom and her husband Gene Boorom. (You may remember Kaye as the author of the *LLLOVE STORY*.)

Other parties that day were hosted by Sally Dorsten in New York, Joy

Ferson in Oklahoma, Laura Fails in Kansas, Erin Moore in North Carolina, and Charlene Burnett in Missouri.

A common denominator for all the parties was the warm, friendly feeling of an LLL meeting, with participants sharing touching and often humorous stories of their LLL involvement.

More parties have been held or are scheduled in the coming months, including a "Party in the Park" in Tel Aviv, hosted by Miri Laufer; a "Backyard Bash" at the Houston, Texas home of Brandy Watson; a "Party with Viola Lennon" hosted by Rebecca Weisheit in Illinois; a "St. Louis Kickoff" hosted in May by LLLI Board Member Heidi Sloss; a "50th Anniversary Bash" in Maryland hosted by Stephanie Weishaar; and a "Party with Marian on the Farm" in Illinois, hosted by Rebecca Magalhaes with special guest Marian Tompson.

You are invited to all of these parties! For dates and details about these and other parties, check the LLLI Anniversary Fund Party Central site at <http://www.partyhostcenter.com/lalecheleague/>

Throw your own party!

It's easy! Your party can be as big or small, simple or elaborate as you



Guests at Kay Lowman-Boorom's houseparty enjoy hearing stories from the Founders and other long-time Leaders.

desire—from a backyard barbeque to high tea, from an intimate gathering of friends and associates to a grand reunion of retired Leaders in your Area. A few simple steps and you're on your way!

1. Register your party. Send an e-mail to Stephanie Weishaar at <sweishaar@llli.org> or log on to <www.partyhostcenter.com/lalecheleague> and click on "Host a Party." The Website has detailed, step-by-step instructions for setting up your own host page, where you can send email invitations, accept RSVPs and contributions, track your progress, and much more!

2. Establish your fundraising goal. A minimum of \$200 is a starting point, though many hosts have set higher goals. And if \$200 seems unreachable, rest assured that any goal is valued. Your party might also inspire others, extending the fundraising beyond your event.

3. Enlist a co-host or recruit a host committee. While optional, this will

definitely make your work easier! Recruiting one or more people can extend your invitation list, secure additional funding, or provide help where you need it most.

4. Invite your guests. Let your friends, family, neighbors, and coworkers know about your party. Tell people when to arrive if you'll be joining in a conference call with the Founders. Inform guests that your party is a fundraiser and that you'll be working toward reaching your goal.

5. Focus on turnout. Encourage everyone to RSVP and contribute online before the party—that way, you'll have a better idea about reaching your goal. Even if guests cannot come, make it easy for them to donate. Consider e-mail or phone reminders to expected guests a few days before your party.

6. Prepare for party time. Carry out your theme if you have one. Set up for the conference call with Founders if

you've selected a simultaneous party date. Print out sign-in sheets and contribution forms (available on the Web site). You may want to order some items from the LLLI catalogue to have on hand, such as brochures about LLL and the importance of breastfeeding.

7. Throw your party and ask for contributions. Talk about your own experience with LLL and why you are such a strong supporter. Ask someone else in your community to say a few words about his or her connection to LLL and why a donation is important.

8. Follow up. Send all checks, credit card information, contribution forms and sign in sheets to LLLI. Feel free to thank your guests, although LLLI will send written acknowledgements within one week of receiving the donations and contact information from you. Be sure to post photos on the Web site and share lessons learned on the Community Network Discussion for Leaders or email to sweishaar@llli.org.

House Party vignettes

At Sally Dorsten's party in Manhattan, one of the guests was so moved by Sally's generosity and the stories she heard there that she decided to host a party herself, even though she did not breastfeed and never heard of LLL prior to Sally's invitation! This guest and future hostess was born in Honduras and moved to New York as a teenager. When her baby was born about 25 years ago, the hospital staff told her she didn't have enough milk and sent her home with formula. She recalls wondering why everyone in Honduras breastfed without problem, but she followed the medical advice. Hearing about the impact of LLLI, she felt compelled to help us support women so they will not be so easily dissuaded from breastfeeding.

"I'm Betsy Knight. I'm a Retired Leader and dying of ALS." It was a powerful, poignant introduction by a guest at Kaye Lowman-Boorum's party, but one filled with generosity of spirit and with love and appreciation for LLL. Betsy, who was a Leader for 25 years, spoke about how much she wanted to be around when her married daughter has a child. (Since the party, Betsy has learned her daughter is expecting a baby in January 2006.) Giving her daughter an autographed copy of *THE WOMANLY ART OF BREASTFEEDING* is one way she is passing on the legacy. Betsy came to the party with her former co-Leader, Sandy Levin, who owns a skating rink and, as a result of the party, plans to hold a fundraiser there for LLL in the near future.



At Sally Dorsten's party, Leader Judy LeVan Fram from Brooklin, New York, discusses a recent meeting at the UN that she attended for LLLI.

Donors are the heart of La Leche League support

During LLLI's 2004 fiscal year (April 1, 2004 - March 31, 2005), 2,912 donations were received from Leaders, Members, and friends of LLL. Over 650 donors gave \$100 or more. These special donors are listed below. A ♥ designates a Pacesetter donor of \$500 ~ \$999; Founders' Circle donors of \$1,000 or more are designated by ♥♥. Donors of \$5,000 and above (known as the Leadership Circle since Nov. 1, 2004) are designated by ♥♥♥ and listed in bold. A heart-felt thank you to every one of our donors, at all giving levels.

ARGENTINA

Sylvia Wray

BRAZIL

Wendy Welsh

CANADA

♥♥Alexander/Saralee Christ

Donna Cookson-Martin
Barry Vassberg**FRANCE**

Carmen Vandenabeele

GREAT BRITAIN

Rachel O'Leary

GUATAMALA

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Melanie Kraut
Ann Lapinski
Donna Logan
♥♥Rosalie Maimone
Rachel Mann
Amy Mantell
♥♥Sharon Matuszek
Lenora Mesibov
Nancy Metz
Cynthia Meyers
Angela Neal
Rose Ann Orlando
♥♥Constance Pond/
Glenn Hubbard
♥♥Deborah Reich
Jeanne Rosser
Caroline Seligman
Julia Palmore Shaida
Catherine Shannon
♥♥Samantha Shubert
♥Tracey Stoeber
Michelle Stronger
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Lisa Treichler
Carin Van Der Donk
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Life beyond LLL: Meet Lorelei de la Raza, Senior Olympian, embracer of life

Lorelei de la Raza, currently on Leader Reserve, was an "approved," "certified," and then "accredited" Leader beginning in 1973. Her zestful approach to life challenges all of us to "grow better," not just "grow older." A Houston resident since 1957, she and her Bolivian-born architect husband, Rey, have three married children and two "incredible" granddaughters. Besides tirelessly promoting breastfeeding within the community, Lorelei continues to challenge herself and inspire her family and her community to a passionate exploration of all that life has to offer.

Your husband once said, "Whenever she gets something on her mind, she stays on it..." Can you elaborate?

Rey was referring to the slow and sometimes frustrating process of learning the skills of basketball. This adventure began four years ago when Rey gave me a membership to a fitness club. It had a basketball court with glass on two walls and a skylight. The court's beauty drew me inside. That's when I picked up a basketball for the first time. Rey and I had been fans for years, but I never had played the game. I graduated from high school 20 years before Title IX, the law that gives equal opportunity to women to play sports.

Since there were no classes available to me as an adult, I did some creative problem solving. I went to the community center to watch young girls being coached. I volunteered at a holiday basketball camp for kids where I could help and also watch and learn. I went to Rice University to watch the ladies team, taking notes the entire time. I even wrote a letter to the head coach asking if I could attend their girls' summer camp. She agreed, and I spent two weeks with 13-year-olds learning the skills of ball handling and shooting. All the while, in order to feel the ball as

*Whenever she
gets something on her mind,
she stays on it...*

*Focusing on something
and conquering it.*

*I think that's a great
personal trait.*

—Rey de la Raza

an extension of my being, I dribbled the ball everywhere—to church, the post office, bank, library. An unexpected benefit from learning to dribble and pass the ball with either hand is that I have become ambidextrous. Previously I was dependent on my left hand, but now I am equally skilled.

This was an exciting but also scary time because I was attempting something totally different. After a basketball player showed me proper shooting form, I made a conscious decision to commit to correct form, even though I couldn't make any baskets at first. I practiced for long hours and became a "gym rat."

And the pay off?

A friend who had observed my inept attempts in the beginning commented two years later, "I admire your determination and discipline in mastering a new skill. Many people would never venture out and try to learn a new activity, and for that they will never reap the benefits and rewards that come with it." The rewards for me are being able to teach others how to shoot—

from children to seniors. They are amazed how well the simple principles, when applied consistently, really work. They love it when the ball goes through the hoop.

I ended up joining a Senior Olympics team (55-59 age group), which gave me an opportunity to play with other ladies at the Local and State Games. As the gold medalist team for Texas, we are going to Nationals in Pittsburgh in June. I also will be running the 5k, 10k, 400m, 800m, and 1500m races, having won a gold medal in my age group at the State Games in all five races.

Many of us know we should be more active and eat healthier. How have you "stayed the course"?

It was natural for our family to be active. We took hikes with the kids, including one with Lisa in a sling at 10 days old. Rey pedaled kids to school on his bike; I walked them home while we made up songs. Marc would say, "When I grow up, I want to have muscles like Mommy."

I was active not to look strong, but in order to be self-sufficient. I felt confident that I could move, lift, or carry anything in a given situation—that I didn't have to wait for someone to come along to help. Who needs weights when I could lift huge sacks of potatoes during our co-op shopping trips!

As far as diet, on my birthday in 1989, I read *Compassion the Ultimate Ethic: An Exploration of Veganism* by Victoria Moran. At that moment, I chose to be vegan for ethical reasons—a decision that has brought me great peace of mind. I eat a rainbow of colorful, delicious, nutritious plant foods, thereby contributing positively to a peaceful, non-violent world. Of course, I still like chips and chocolate, but since my food choices are based on compassion, I am never tempted to stray off course.

Was this an interest that developed from your experiences in La Leche League? How did you first become involved?

Unlike the typical LLL Leader, I attended my first LLL meeting after I had breastfed my babies. Being a young, naïve mom in the late '60s and early '70s, I didn't realize that I needed more information at the time. I nursed because my mother nursed; I never considered any other possibility. When my last baby weaned prematurely after a nursing strike, I was heart-broken.

Yearning to be with nursing moms, I finally found LLL. Then I read and learned and shared my love of breastfeeding with all who would listen. Shortly after, I submitted my application, and to my joy, I became a representative of LLL.

You once motivated an 83-year-old woman to enter the Senior Olympics!

This was indeed a very satisfying experience. Here's how it happened. We met at the same fitness club and developed a warm friendship. The lady enjoyed taking water aerobic classes in the swimming pool. She was very interested in and excited about my Senior Olympics activities. So prior to the next year's Local Games, I decided to offer her the opportunity to do the same thing—to demonstrate the capabilities already within her. She accepted my invitation, took swimming lessons, and trained for her races. After a lifetime as an active vibrant woman, she deserved to have a medal around her neck and to bask in the admiration of her children and grandchildren who came to support her at the swim meet with cheers and hand-made signs.



The phrase

"Life after LLL"

is more accurately for me

"LLL for Life"

This seems to parallel the experience of working with young breastfeeding mothers at League meetings...

Yes, this situation is similar to the joy we as Leaders feel. We help to empower mothers to acknowledge their abilities to make good choices about how to mother their babies—and to have the courage to follow their hearts.

In thinking about how your choices have influenced your children and grandchildren (and they, you!), two areas you mentioned were their attitudes toward breastfeeding and their openness.

Lisa nursed her dolls and accepted breastfeeding as the norm, even before she knew why it was a good thing. She is eager to nurse her own babies.

Having grown up with a mother who was an LLL Leader, Michele said she heard over and over, "Listen to the baby." In her life, she has taken that to mean, "Be open to another way; allow yourself to change your mind."

As an adult, my life changed for the better when I listened to my daughters. Both of them had been encouraging me for years to incorporate stretching as part of my exercise activities. I flatly said, "No." I didn't like it and it was way too boring. Well, finally and with humility, I listened. Now I stretch for nearly an hour prior to my daily fitness activities that include playing basketball and taking dance, kickboxing, and high-intensity aerobic classes. Being completely loose and warmed up allows me to execute whatever moves are involved in the activity.

Probably the most important message I shared by example was to be an independent thinker. I've always made choices that were right for me, even though they weren't popular or in fashion. In junior high, I tried wearing high heels, felt the pain, and decided I would never wear them again. In the '50s when I lived in the South, I would board a bus, push through the mass of people standing at the front, go to the back and sit in an empty seat—giving no thought that those seats were occupied by people of a different color.

So what's next? You seem to always be seeking a new challenge.

I don't feel that I seek challenges, but rather am open to following my intuition to pursue the next step. The process of writing this article has led me to the decision to withdraw from future team competition in basketball after the June National Senior Olympics in Pittsburgh. Here's the reason.

The most difficult challenge in playing basketball for me is the physical contact. The bumping, pushing, and getting knocked to the floor that comes with boxing out, rebounding and playing good defense was a startling surprise at first—and still leaves me in tears and with cuts and bruises after practices. Having never played rough in my family, this physicality is foreign to me. And I am not getting any better in dealing with it.

Recently my brother shared some information that gave me much to ponder. It was the text of a talk by Perry Saidman called "Competition—an inhumane activity." A few of the main points are as follows:

We are born to cooperate and share.

Competition invites labeling and ranking people.

Competition damages relationships because it breeds aggression.

Cooperation teaches the value of relationships and how to trust each other.

Team sports see cooperation only as a means to victory.

Any activity whose goal is victory cannot be play.

If one is competing, one can't experience true playfulness, fun, joy, and self-satisfaction.

*Isn't this what life
should be for us all—
a continuing discovery
of our latent abilities
and possibilities?*

So my conclusion is that since I am not an aggressive person (and don't want to be), my attempts at getting used to the physical contact have not been successful. It's not who I am. I still love basketball and definitely will continue to practice, and play for the enjoyment, skills and camaraderie of the game. My favorite game is one in which we don't keep score but rather cooperate, with the goal of improving, not competing.

You once stated, "Isn't this what life should be for us all—a continuing discovery of our latent abilities and possibilities?" For those of us less certain about where our "abilities and possibilities" lie, how can we go about discovering them?

Years ago, after my empty nest was feeling cavernous, I read an article on "Finding your purpose in life" in my church's weekly magazine. In the article, the author states, "I urge you to find a passion that stirs your soul."

One time I was chatting with a friend/mother about finding my passion for basketball. Sometime later she excitedly told me, "I found it! It's watercoloring!" She had purchased a small watercolor kit to give as a gift, but instead took it with her on a trip. After trying it out, her new adventure began.

She started a watercolor class and discovered the newfound passion that stirs her soul.

So, how does one find that passion? First, it helps to simplify by dropping outgrown viewpoints and activities from your life, so that your thought is open to new ideas. Don't limit yourself; try something new; read about it. Then ask yourself, "Does it fit?"

One change I made was to switch my support for our organic community garden from caretaking a bed to writing the garden articles for the newsletter; thereby furthering my love of writing. However, I still am able to pick yummy lettuce, parsley, and snow peas.

And you still exhibit a passion for La Leche League?

LLL continues to be part of my life now as Leader Reserve. I don't lead meetings, but I do attend them occasionally, help out at Baby Expos, and keep in touch with our Group Leaders through our email loop.

Even though my three nurslings are grown and married and my activities have changed, I still cherish the ongoing opportunities I have to model LLL ideals and share them with others.

I envision myself being an LLL Leader always. It is part of my identity, who I am. I always carry LLL meeting notices and a sling brochure with me. I purchase slings at bulk rate to give away or sell at my cost and I give away LLL books.

The phrase "Life after LLL" is more accurately for me, "LLL for Life."

Interview by Meg Sondey, Mexico

Alum fun! WIT carries on the spirit of an LLL Group

"Female friendships that work are relationships in which women help each belong to themselves." This quote from author Louise Bernikow says well why the WIT friendships we have nurtured over the years mean so much to us.

WIT—Women In Transition—is a group of ten LLL Leaders who have been friends for over twenty years. We still meet monthly for our fix of friendship, support, encouragement and laughter. At times we go to the theater, have a sleep-over, or travel together. Recently, five of us went on the Alumnae trip to Savannah.

Being involved in La Leche League instilled in us a desire to keep learning about the things that we love and that matter most to us. We all shared the desire to be the best parent we could be. We had the breastfeeding down, but parenting the older child was new to most of us.

When we first started meeting on a monthly basis, we discussed parenting and self help books. We supported and encouraged each other in handling the challenges of raising our children. We have been there for each other when our children have done great things and when they made poor choices. We joke that our children have ten mothers.



A group of WIT members on the Alumnae-sponsored Savannah trip.

We have evolved from learning about parenting to learning more about ourselves. As our children have grown, we have come to realize just how important it is to have our own time. It was a big step for some of us to meet without our children in a restaurant instead of in one of our homes; of course little ones were always welcomed. Today, we no longer discuss a particular topic, but what is on our mind.

We have closed many a restaurant, been told to be more quiet because we were laughing a bit too loudly, exchanged the best white elephant and special birthday gifts; but most importantly, we have reached the point in our friendship where any one of us would drop everything if a WIT friend called needing help.

We have shed many tears over the years with the challenges we have faced. A number of us have experienced crises in our lives; at various times we have had children that were alienated/estranged from their family. We lost one of our members to cancer. We suffered the stillbirth of a grandchild. Many of us have experienced serious health issues, marital challenges, the death of our parents. The list goes on as it does for many people, but we have each other.

Not only does the acronym for W.I.T. (Women In Transition) well describe our group, but it is the wit that helps us to keep our balance. We love to laugh, know how to have a great time, and work at and value the friendship that we share.

A neat by-product to our long

friendship is that now our spouses (M.I.T.—Men in Transition) get together to play cards at one of the homes when we go out. Also, our children seem to recognize the importance of our special friendship. One of our daughters, when pregnant and asked if she was going to nurse, said: "I have to. If I don't all my mom's friends will come over and talk with me until I do."

Join the Alumnae!

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

- \$10 for CONTINUUM (I am currently an LLL Leader or member)
- \$30 for a retired Leader/member LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)
- \$46 for CONTINUUM and an LLLI Individual Membership (includes NEW BEGINNINGS)
- \$75 for a 3-year LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)
- \$125 for a 5-year LLLI Alumnae Membership (includes CONTINUUM)
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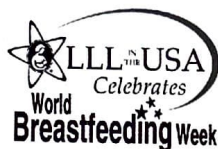
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PR, politics, profit & priorities...

When the USA National Breastfeeding Campaign was introduced in CONTINUUM two years ago, there was every reason to celebrate the long-overdue public relations focus on spreading the word about the importance of breastfeeding. But there is little cause for celebration now.

LLLI's new "Facts about Breastfeeding 2005" cites two studies that find, despite federal promotion and funding, the breastfeeding message has been delayed and altered.

A three-year government campaign was launched in June 2004, aimed at parents who would not normally choose human milk for

infant feeding. This campaign was delayed in its launch date and altered in its message due to political pressures from those concerned about anti-formula messages. Those who stand to profit or lose from decisions women make on their infant's nutrition have blocked bringing evidence to the public consciousness.

Lowe, N. K. *Health promotion begins at the breast.* JOGNN 04-516; 33(3):297

Federal funds of \$40.4 million were set aside for projects determined to have an impact on breastfeeding. In review, only 13.7% of this research appropriation actually had a direct or indirect impact on achieving stated goals (6 of 362 funded projects). A total of \$4.1 million dollars (10.2%) was used in new technologies and pharmaceutical products or modifying and improving the composition of artificial milk preparations.

Brown, L. P. *et al.* *Does federal funding for breastfeeding research target our national health objectives?* Pediatrics 03-4; 111(4):e360-64

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