



La Leche League Canada

Supporting Breastfeeding Families Since 1961

Did you know that La Leche League Canada turned 50 this year? For half a century, our volunteer Leaders have been supporting mothers choosing to breastfeed their children and wishing to meet other mothers with the same idea. Recently, while reviewing the documents that helped to create La Leche League Canada I was impressed by the foresight of those early Leaders who worked to bring this organization into existence. Among the documents are those bearing the signatures of Margaret, Elizabeth, Pauline, Cynthia, Joan, Jannie and Saralaine and other Leaders. Their belief in the at-that-time rare and startling idea that children should be breastfed changed the lives of countless babies and their families. These women were the first of many Leaders through the years.

Since 1961, nearly 3,000 women have served as volunteers. As well as giving their own children the best beginning, these Leaders passed on their invaluable knowledge to other mothers and their families. That 3000 sounds like a large number, doesn't it? However, when you realize it encompasses 50 years, it represents **an amazing amount of devotion, expertise and caring put into thousands and thousands of hours of breastfeeding support by a relatively few across this vast nation.**

Jo Anne and Tricia are two of those thousands of mothers who reached out for breastfeeding support. Jo Anne breastfed her children, became a Leader, started a Group in her community and today is the proud grandmother of seven breastfed grandchildren. Tricia found the help she needed and believes that La Leche League gave her daughter the very best start in life. The stories of Jo Anne and Tricia illustrate how mother-to-mother breastfeeding support can directly affect lives, how a simple act of signing a document can create the important outcome of good health in a child you will never meet and how incredibly, in our complex and impersonal world, mothers continue to give the most personal kind of help to other mothers.

Tricia recently told us her story:

Prior to becoming pregnant with my daughter, Madelyn, I had no idea that LLLC existed and now I don't know how I would have gotten through the last few years without it. While I was pregnant I was approached by a LLLC Leader who explained the group to me and what they had to offer. I decided to find my local group in Winnipeg and attend a meeting as I wanted to learn everything I could about providing "the best" for my child once he/she was born and I felt that breastfeeding was one of them.



The meetings provided me with information and a network of people that I knew I could count on and I especially appreciated being introduced to the book, "The Womanly Art of Breastfeeding" as I read it cover to cover before my daughter was born. When I gave birth to my daughter, the following days were difficult and I had our LLLC leader's phone numbers at my fingertips if I needed anything or had a question. I continued to attend several meetings after my daughter was born and it was so comforting to know that there was a network of women and people "out there" that I could always count on and go to when I needed some support.

*I am so grateful to all the women who take the time to work with and on behalf of LLLC as **I believe the group's mandate is vital to the health and well-being of our society.** My daughter is now 2 years old and we still have our special times throughout the day when we cuddle and I nurse her. There are many things in life that I am not sure about, but one thing that I am totally sure of is that when I am breastfeeding my daughter, I am doing the absolute right thing. Thank you LLLC for all your support to me and my family. I am so happy to know that you are there for all the Moms and families out there who need you, because they do.*

Former Leader Jo Anne shared her mothering and La Leche League Canada journey with us too:

Sometime in 1966, I read an article in Reader's Digest about an organization in the U.S. (LLL) that helped mothers breastfeed. "That's how I'll feed my babies" was my response. However, when I produced twins, lack of both preparation and education allowed me to go along with everyone who said I couldn't breastfeed two. Their health problems (allergy to cow's milk and a partial bowel obstruction) would have been alleviated by breastfeeding. We made it through those early years, but I vowed it would be different the next time.

*Before my next baby arrived, I knew all about La Leche League. I prepared for Dave's arrival by attending the series of 4 meetings at the Toronto-Agincourt group led by Gail. I was very excited and felt prepared... **I was so grateful for those meetings, attended by women who were either expecting or with their babies in tow. They covered so many topics I'd never thought of.***

I became the Leader in Agincourt as Dave turned two, just before giving birth to Kate. Those were busy times but very satisfying. League mothers were my partners and friends at meetings, helping me help new moms with their questions and concerns.

As a Toronto Leader, I took my turn one day a month answering the LLL information phone line. It was wonderful to hear the fearful despair of a caller turn to hope and joy after we'd talked about her difficulty.

In October of 1977, just after the Toronto Conference, I moved north of Toronto and was the first Leader of the Unionville-Markham Group. I retired from leading in 1980, served in several advisory capacities for a few more years before retiring from LLL work. I now have 7 grandchildren, all of whom were/are breastfed. I am thrilled that my daughter and daughters-in-law all are great mothers and all chose to breastfeed.

A couple of years ago, I used the internet to look up what's happening with LLLC and LLLI these days. I was excited to know that 50 years of helping new mothers is here. I have been financially supporting the organization again, as I believe this is how to help new mothers get the support they need to give their baby the best start. It's my way to give back for the mother-to-mother support I received when I was a new inexperienced mom. All our children will benefit from what La Leche League offers.

There is nothing more important in life than giving a child the best start. With your help, La Leche League Canada can continue to offer breastfeeding support to women across the country. Please take a moment to consider a donation to honour the legacy of Margaret, Saralaine, Jo Anne and all those Leaders who served through the years. Every day mothers like Jo Anne and Tricia and babies like Dave, Kate and Madelyn need the expertise of La Leche League Leaders. Your donation will help more mothers receive support when they need it. A pledge form and envelope are provided for your convenience or you may donate online at www.LLLC.ca.

I hope to hear from you soon because **breastfeeding support cannot wait — the needs of the mother and her baby are immediate.** Support must be there when our Leaders get that first call, initial contact or email. The health of our children is too important to put off for another day. Please donate now.

Sincerely,



Wendy Dale
La Leche League Canada Board of Directors

P. S. **Why not consider joining me as a monthly donor?** Monthly donations are easy on the budget and, if you select one of the options such as electronic funds transfer or credit card, very environmentally friendly.

