

Northern LLLights



The Area Leaders' Letter for La Leche League of Minnesota and the Dakotas

Summer 2021, Issue No. 163

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SUMMER LIVIN'....



Jessica Santini Levenhagen and her sons Holden (4), and Cooper (7), are living their best lives this summer. Here's hoping your summer will bring you just as much joy!



Live, Love, Latch!®

Live, Love, Latch!®

LLL USA will once again hold *Live, Love, Latch!®* events throughout National Breastfeeding Month, which is August 1-31, 2020. All events will be virtual. For more information about Live, Love, Latch!® and to stay updated as more events are added, go to lllusa.org/live-love-latch/ or www.facebook.com/LiveLoveLatch.

From the Desk of

Anne-Marie Studer, Area Communications Coordinator



As school finishes up for the summer, it always feels like a natural time to reflect on the past year. And what a year it's been! I homeschooled my son (Grade 1), and my pre-K daughter and toddler tagged along for the ride. My toddler took full advantage of the situation, and his nursing habits looked a lot like a younger baby's for most of the school year! Now that we've wrapped up school, I'm looking forward to a more laid-back pace and a more committed effort to encourage a little less nursing during the day. Mona's beautiful reflection on her breastfeeding relationship and weaning journey with her son on page 8 is a reminder of how a gentle, but firm approach can bring closure to what can be an emotional journey.

And speaking of new beginnings, we are excited to welcome two new Leaders to our Area! Get to know Sarah and Kirsten on pages 9-10. Welcome, Sarah and Kirsten!

A heartfelt thank you to Lindsay who is stepping down from her role as interim Area Coordinator of Leaders. Lindsay took on the role a year ago and embraced the challenges of our Area in the midst of a pandemic. She was the driving force behind our virtual Leader Day last fall and has done all of the heavy lifting behind the scenes in getting our Area organized and up-to-date. We are grateful for her willingness to take on the role and are infinitely grateful for all she has done. Thank you, Lindsay!

As always, I am very grateful for Amy Nelson's time and help in the final edits of Northern LLLights.

Wishing you all an enjoyable and restorative summer!
Anne-Marie

A Note From Your Area Coordinator of Leaders

Lindsay Taylor, Area Coordinator of Leaders

Dear Leaders of MN/DAs,

Happy summer to you! My aim with this letter is to let you know what the Area Team is up to, and how you can benefit from our work and participate if the time is right for you.

First, I will be ending my time as Interim Coordinator of Leaders on August 31. I have been on the Area Team for five years: four years as Area Communications Coordinator and one year as Area Coordinator of Leaders. I am committed to the mission of LLLI and am proud of the work of this organization; I have always been fond of my co-Leaders, whether I am volunteering with them within a local Group, on the Area Team, or across our three states. I will not be retiring from LLL and plan to continue volunteering with Group work and as a District Advisor. My departure from the Area Team means that one of you needs to step into a leadership role for MN/DAs -- in fact, a few of you can do just that as there is more than one open position. While committing to three years is

the usual ask (sounds long but goes quickly, just ask anyone on the Area Team), we are flexible and open to an arrangement that works for you. If you are interested in trying on a hat or just learning more, give me a shout and let's talk. You can see the list of open positions on page 11, as well as my contact information.

Recent work by the Area Team includes the updates to the MN/DAs Area Agreement. Very soon a mailing will be going out to all of you, and I suspect that by the time this newsletter reaches your mailboxes, you will already have the revised Area Agreement in your hands. Our aim with the revisions, guided by LLL USA, is to make clear the responsibilities and procedures of Leaders in MN/DAs.

Next up on the agenda is making Leader Pages, the Leaders-only section of llofmndas.org, updated, relevant, and usable. I'm excited about this project because (1) it's overdue and (2) Leaders deserve easy-to-access resources to help them with their local work of supporting breastfeeding families.

Area successes this year:

- You Leaders supporting breastfeeding and chestfeeding families
- Eleven virtual meetings happening per month.
- New members on the Area Team: Naomi Benjamin, Anne-Marie Studer, and Jessica Underwood
- A fun and informative virtual Leader Day in November
- Stronger Leader relationships through Leader Connection virtual gatherings (thanks, Anne!) and Facebook sharing among Leaders
- An updated special circumstances document
- Education opportunities that Jessica has facilitated
- Anne-Marie has produced fantastic newsletters
- Megan has kept up Area finances with dedication and smarts

I'm proud of the Area Team and the work that has gone into caring for Area Leaders this past year.

I remain your Coordinator of Leaders until the end of August, and I'd love to hear from you.

WarmLLLly,

Lindsay

Updates From Your Area Coordinator of Events

Anne Ferguson, Area Coordinator of Events

Join your fellow MN/DAs Leaders for our next Leader Connection Time on **Friday, July 23rd at 9:30 am.** This is a time for us to chat about LLL leadership stuff, parenting stuff, or just life stuff!

Here is the Zoom link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88633880476?pwd=enc4RVRIaVFPOEpyZUxYYWNaRG5OUTo9>

Please mark your calendar and try to join us for a little while! We'd love to see lots of faces! Please share with any Leader Applicants as well.

A Day in the Life of a District Advisor

Heidi Mischke, St. Paul Como Midway

By now you've seen the frequent appeals for Area Team positions. In order to explain these roles, we thought it might be helpful to have the Leaders who have filled them tell you just exactly what it is they do.

First up is Heidi Mischke, long-term Leader and District Advisor (DA).

1. How long have you been a DA?

Since 2007.

2. Why did you decide to become a DA?

I had been a Leader for three years and was looking for an Area job. My Co-Leader Jeanne Badman was a DA, and she was able to give me details about what the position entailed. It seemed like a job that was very doable. The Area sweetened the deal by offering a scholarship to attend the 50th Anniversary Celebration of La Leche League in Chicago to any Leader who agreed to become a DA. That led to one of the most extraordinary experiences of my life.

I was able to meet my breastfeeding heroes, like Edwina Froehlich, Dr. Jack Newman and Ina May Gaskin, and personally thank them for how they had supported my breastfeeding journey.

3. What do you enjoy most about your role as a DA?

I have been able to get to know many Leaders over the years. When I started, Donna Wallander was a DA. I learned a lot from her as she had served as an ACL, CLA, DA and Program Chair for three Area Conferences during her forty-seven years as a Leader. She was full of great stories!

4. Any thoughts for Leaders considering taking on a DA role?

I believe that it is helpful to be organized, personable, patient yet persistent. These are traits that most Leaders have in order to work with breastfeeding families. The DA is a very manageable Area job, and frankly, the more DAs we have, the more the work can be distributed so that the time commitment is even shorter!

5. What is your most memorable moment(s) as a DA?

When I started in this role, I would go to the library to use a computer to compose my monthly letter and make copies of it. I would mail that letter along with a copy of the Leader Activity Report and Series Meeting Report to all of the Leaders. Then I would wait for the reports to be returned to me via the U.S. Mail. Obviously the method has changed!

6. Any thoughts on the time commitment involved in this role?

The main task of being a DA is requesting monthly reports and then managing that data. At the start of each month I send an email to Leaders. Then when I hear back from them, I record their information. Every six months I have to compile all of those numbers and then send them to the ACL. The amount of time that it takes me to do this varies, depending on how many Leaders are reporting to me and how promptly the Leaders report. Overall, I would say that I average one-half to one hour a month during regular months and up to two hours in January and July when I compile all of the stats. I also assist Leaders with any questions about Leadership, like how to deal with a mom who is bringing up information contrary to LLL philosophy during a meeting or helping Leaders to resolve conflict within a Group (which rarely happens!). If a Leader is considering taking an LOA or retiring, I can help with discerning the right decision. It is similar to what we do as Leaders with helping a mother decide if she should wean her child. Please feel free to contact me at daleandheidimischke@q.com if you have any questions.



Virtual Infant Nutrition Panel

Anne-Marie Studer, Area Coordinator of Communication

Last fall, our Group was approached by a family medicine physician and community faculty member at the University of North Dakota. She was planning to give a lecture on infant nutrition to first year medical students. The first hour was to be a recorded lecture for students to review, then the second half of the lecture would be a remote panel discussion. The panel included a dietician and lactation counselor from the University of North Dakota and a midwife, in addition to myself as an LLL Leader.

Dr. Snow, the physician facilitating the discussion, had breastfed her own children during her first and third years of residency. She quickly realized how little she (both as a mother and a physician) knew about breastfeeding and pushed to have more breastfeeding education incorporated into the residency program at her school. As an instructor at the University of North Dakota, she now wants to ensure that her students have the chance to meet and ask questions of breastfeeding support persons in the community.

The discussion took place on Zoom and was by far the largest Zoom meeting I have ever attended with over 70 participants! The students had prepared questions and one hour was devoted to a Q&A session with the panel.

There were many questions and the students demonstrated a clear desire to learn what it is family physicians can do to support parents in their desire to successfully breastfeed their children. The common thread throughout the session was the emphasis on access to resources besides a medical professional: an IBCLC, a CLC, or an LLL Leader, in addition to supportive family and friends. Once class time was officially done, most students logged out, but many remained to ask further questions.

Overall, it was very encouraging to see a faculty member include this panel discussion as part of her students' education and even more encouraging to see the level of engagement and participation from the students. I even had a former high-school student of mine, currently a first-year medical student, approach me at our local World Refugee Day celebration last week to mention he had been part of this class and appreciated the perspective the discussion provided.

As Leaders, we all know and appreciate how empowering knowledge can be, and hopefully these students will take what they learned with them and continue to empower the families they interact with.

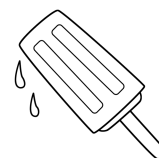
Summer Recipe Corner

Christina Forga, St. Paul Metro

Homemade Lemonade Icy

1 cup lemon juice
1 cup honey or white sugar or brown sugar or agave (I use agave)
8 cups of water (really 6-9 cups of water depending on your sweetness preference)

Make in a pitcher, stir well, and transfer into icy pop zip lock sleeves, and freeze.
Makes a great summer treat without dyes or additives or food allergy worries and very easy to make 100% organic!



Update on In-Person Meetings

Below is the latest communication (May 26th, 2021) from LLL USA on the status of in-person meetings. Please reach out to us if you have any questions about meetings in our Area. You can read the letter in full on the Leader page of LLLUSA.org.

The LLL USA Council met virtually for its Spring Face-to-Face session April 28-May 2 and again for our monthly conference call on May 19. We have had earnest and in-depth discussions on the topic of COVID-19 and the impact on in-person LLL support and meetings/events.

Throughout the pandemic, many Leaders have voiced their thoughts and concerns to their LLL USA Council Delegates. We thank you for your understanding and patience as we navigate this pandemic with respect and caution.

We acknowledge the desire of some Leaders to resume LLL in-person Group meetings, home visits, and events. We know the value of LLL meetings goes beyond the words and headshots seen in a virtual space. What can be challenging in a virtual format is often the very modeling of behavior, which validates and provides support. We know shifting to all virtual support has been exhausting, and we applaud your efforts to think creatively to continue providing support to families during these unprecedented times through phone calls, text messages, video calls, and social media. LLL USA Council also holds space to acknowledge that offering only virtual support may present barriers for some families.

LLL USA Council's desire is for all LLL USA Meetings and individual support to be accessible for all families, without any restrictions or barriers. LLL USA Council wants to emphasize that we do not wish to encourage nor require any Leader to ask about a person's vaccination status, require masks, or place limitations on size/location of their individual meetings.

At this time, LLL USA Council thinks it would be very difficult to hold in-person meetings or one-to-one in-person support without any limitations, restrictions, and/or barriers. LLL USA's priority is to protect the health, safety, and integrity of LLL USA Leaders, meeting host sites, and families we serve. **Therefore, LLL USA Council recommends the continued suspension of all in-person support while we seek input from the five LLL USA Area Networks.** We recognize that information on COVID-19 is ever-evolving, and we make a commitment to keep Leaders informed on any updated recommendations.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Amekuedi, Linda Anderson, Carole Blane, Yocheved "Hedi" Herrmann-Blanton, Petrichor Kneeland-Campbell, Ashley Mazzanti, and Stephanie Bodak Nicholson

The LLL USA Council

Group Profile: Anoka County

1. Who are the Leaders of your Group?

Naomi Benjamin, Jo Kucala, and Sarah Shelafoe (newly accredited!).

2. How long has your Group been meeting?

I'm actually not sure - I'd love it if someone who's been around longer knew! I have some records in our finance stuff that goes back to 2008.

3. What is your Group's meeting location?

Until COVID interrupted life, we had a really convenient location at a local church. They had a pretty large meeting room and their nursery was full of toys that they allowed meeting attendees to use. They also allowed us to store our library and other supplies there. They made the decision soon after everyone stopped meeting that they would no longer have outside groups, so we do not currently have a location to go back to.

4. How do you do outreach or publicity?

Our biggest mode of reaching people is Facebook. I know of a couple prenatal classes that also provide our info, and our info is in the Anoka County breastfeeding resource brochure that they provide to lots of people - those who receive county resources, doctors offices, etc.

5. What is your Group's biggest challenge?

Keeping consistent attendance/longer term members.



6. What are you most proud of?

Navigating virtual meetings that we and our members can enjoy. While at first it seemed to be a burden to get going and we didn't have much attendance, I believe that when the time comes that we can have in person meetings again, we will likely keep some virtual option.

7. What are your foremost goals for the next year?

Finding some consistency of members would be great, as well as that balance of providing meetings that meet the needs of the people who come with questions/concerns but also keep others who are in a different season engaged.

8. What else would you like to share with other Area Leaders?

This is likely not anything new to other Leaders, perhaps just more of a reminder: simply that each of us has our own style/area that we feel most comfortable (leading in-person meetings, focusing on phone/email/other one on one support, organizing and promoting the Group, etc). Sometimes there are roles that are no one's specific strength, but still need to get done for the good of the Group. Ideally we can find ways to complement each other's strengths to make the whole better than the sum of its parts!



Personal Essay: All the Milk

Mona Altman, Eden Prairie



As I sit down to write these thoughts I am in the midst of weaning my third baby. Samuel is one month shy of three; the ultimate age in his mind. He has grand plans of how he will learn to drive a truck when he is three, as well as how he will take on all of those pesky little life jobs such as dressing himself. He also has decided that at three he can be done with nun-nuns. I am giving him a bit of a head start on this one. After tandem nursing for the past 15 months, I am ready to have one nursling again – mostly ready. And Sam seems ready, too – mostly ready. So, we are going for it.

When a breastfeeding journey stretches over thirty-five months, weaning appears as a slow and gradual process. I suppose Sam has been weaning for something like two years now, as he has increased the family grocery budget with his appetite and grown from my sweet babe-in-arms to this life-loving little man I now behold. Whenever I reach this point, when I see nursing truly coming to an end, I grow a bit nostalgic for the time that was. I find myself wondering, *just how much milk did I make for my Sam?* How curious I would be to quantify this act of love.

Measuring before my eyes the gallons of precious nourishment I have made and given.

As any mother who has tried it will acknowledge, breastfeeding can be tough at times.

Tandem nursing has been especially hard for me. While some struggle with those early days of infancy, it seems the days of toddler nursing are the difficult point for me. I have learned a lot about how nursing is a relationship and how to create loving but firm guidance about nursing manners. When little brother Henry was born I knew Sam was not ready to wean completely, but I also knew I needed some limits for him. Using structure and routine, we were able to help Sam know when and where to ask to nurse so that the answer would be yes. I didn't want to be constantly refusing him, which was hard on our relationship, but I also had to be honest with myself and know that saying yes to every nursing request wasn't going to be good for us either. With my guidance, he learned that we only nursed in the morning, at nap, and at bedtime. And then we only nursed in his room. And then we dropped the morning nursing, which was hard on busy family life.



In the midst of this give and take of mother and child, a global pandemic hit, changing life as we knew it, and making me more determined than ever to continue to nurse both my little ones. It was one thing I could give them. Putting them to my breast was my little act of hope. Now Samuel naps peacefully after asking if he could nurse and me saying no again. I have said so many times this week, "It is sad when the nun-nuns are all done. I am sad, too," but each time this phrase has been accepted, and he has cuddled into bed for some sleep. His little, blonde head resting next to his stuffed Sasquatch who has been affectionately mistaken for a monkey. I creep back in to check that he is asleep and take one more look at this peaceful innocence, and I am happy. Happy I have given when it was hard. Happy I have chosen love over comfort or selfish pursuits. Happy I gave what I could even when I couldn't give everything. I know Sam likely won't remember breastfeeding, but I hope he will know that things worth doing are worth doing well and when you think you can't give anymore give a little bit more anyway. Even if it is just a drop of milk.

Book Review: *Mothers, Daughters & Body Image: Learning to Love Ourselves As We Are*

Lindsay Taylor, Interim Area Coordinator of Leaders

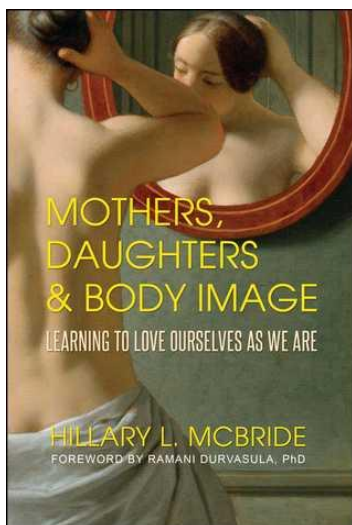
Psychologist and researcher Hillary L. McBride approaches her readers as smart, thoughtful friends, blending body image research, therapist experience, and personal stories to address the topic of body image. While the book is specific to women's experiences, I gleaned many takeaways to pass to my sons, as well. As McBride addresses generational messages, media, strength, spirituality, and more, she asks her readers what they are thinking and addresses a variety of reactions they may be having. For her research, she interviewed several mother/daughter duos and includes their stories in this book.

A standout concept for me is the idea that our mothers give us ladders, and then we give our daughters ladders. The next generation can reach a little higher, a little further, on the climb to healthy body image. It takes many generations to reach complete health, and we can be thankful to our mothers for what they have given us. While reading this book, I spent more time than ever before in my life reflecting on my mother's messages to me. I realized she gave me an education ladder as she was

the first person on her side of the family to go to college, and I always assumed I would get a college degree, even as a young child. She passed that message to me.

I read this book last summer, and as I read through my scrawled notes inside the back cover (yes, I'm an annotator), I want to read it again! Just to give you teasers, my notes include "safety of a mother's love," "media literacy," "rest=come alive," "body transitions, stages, and aging," and "bath of rose petals at 1st period." McBride, who does not have children yet, writes often about what she hopes to pass along to her future daughter, including "I hope I'll be able to tell her ... that I love myself more than ever before, that that hasn't always been the case, but that our journeys in life do not have to be perfect to be magnificent and victorious" (44). Be prepared to cry when McBride shares vulnerable conversations with her own mother and when you read "Epilogue: A Letter to My Daughter."

If you read *Mothers, Daughters & Body Image*, reach out to me. I'd love to talk about the book with you.



HARK! New Leaders

Name: Sarah Shelafoe

Children: Thomas (3) and Joseph (4 months).

My Occupation (if something in addition to motherhood): I work for Xcel Energy in our Supply Chain department.

Partner's Name/ Occupation: Ryan, Commercial Painter.

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Date Accredited / Current Group Affiliation: June 2021, LLL of Anoka County.

Where I was Born: Saint Cloud, MN.

I started attending LLL meetings because: I was looking to connect with other parents after having my first baby.

My favorite part of being a Leader is: Helping others achieve their goals.

Before I had children, I: ran the Twin Cities marathon a few months before getting pregnant with my first child.

My favorite part of mothering is: seeing my children grow and learn.

When I have a few moments to myself, I like to: run, read, and go to happy hour.

My partner and I maintain closeness by: Golfing and exploring Twin Cities' breweries.

My favorite activities with my children are: Swimming, going for walks, and watching movies.

People are probably surprised to know that I: am fluent in Spanish.

The books on my nightstand right now are: "Raising White Kids" by Jennifer Harvey, "Set Boundaries, Find Peace" by Nedra Glover Tawwab, and "No Bad Kids" by Janet Lansbury. (This gave me a laugh writing this because I am always reading multiple books at the same time!)

Name: Kirsten Sattar

Date Accredited/Current Group Affiliation: May 2021/ Northeast Minneapolis and Suburbs

"I currently work as a physician's assistant in the Emergency Room and have worked in this environment for the past five years, all while navigating breastfeeding my two children. I realize that LLL philosophy prefers that mother and baby are not separated but unfortunately that is not a reality for most mothers. My hope is to support mothers in making breastfeeding a priority while going back to work and to help give them the confidence to navigate breastfeeding despite the barriers involved with being a working mom.

My personal mothering and breastfeeding journeys have prepared me quite well for this. I nursed my first son, Axel, until he was 15 months old, and my second, Teddy, and I just concluded our journey at 18 months - all of this while also navigating the stressful arena of pumping and keeping my supply while being a working mom.

Throughout my mothering experience, I have always come back to LLL and its support and I am eternally grateful to its community of women who have helped me become the mother that I am today. In today's society the opinion of others can sometimes eclipse a mother's natural instincts to care for and nourish her baby. I think the biggest thing that LLL has given me in the last few years is my confidence to mother my children the way that feels right to me. I struggled with a number of breastfeeding issues, but the most important issues were often not directly feeding related and LLL gave me the confidence to do what was right for my baby and my family despite the input of others. I admire that philosophy greatly, especially in this divisive world we are living in right now."



Area News

Welcome with LLLove...

Congratulations, Hope Betterman and family! Logan was born on May 5th, weighing 8 lbs 14 oz in a water birth that was about as perfect as it possibly could have been! He has a big brother and a big sister. His big brother is learning to share his mama milk with Logan and is doing surprisingly really great with it. So far Logan is a really calm and happy baby - he especially loves snuggling with his mama and being outside.



Hark! New Leaders

Sarah Shelafoe
749 128th Ave. NE
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sarahjshelafoe@gmail.com
Group: Anoka County
and Suburbs

Kirsten Sattar
4728 Pleasant Avenue
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kirsten.msattar@gmail.com
Group: NorthEast Minneapolis

Retiring With Many Thanks

Calinda Wright, St. Cloud
Jackie Brooks-Yer, St. Cloud
Amanda Nowak, Rochester
Barbara Golley, Rochester

Groups Closing

St. Cloud, MN

Rochester, MN

Open Area Jobs

Join the Area Department Coordinators Team! The following positions are open:

- Area Coordinator of Leaders
- Communication Skills Coordinator
- Coordinator of Leader Accreditation
- Area Outreach Coordinator

We are also looking to fill two District Advisor roles.

If you are interested in joining the Team, or would like to find out more, reach out to Lindsay Taylor, ACL at lindsaytaylor333@gmail.com.

Northern LLLights is La Leche League of Minnesota and the Dakotas' newsletter produced by and for Leaders. This issue was produced by Anne-Marie Studer, with editing assistance from Amy Nelson. All Leaders are encouraged to submit content. The deadline for the Fall Issue is September 12, 2021. Event recaps, meeting ideas, recipes, photos, and any other inspirational or informational submissions are welcome. Submit ideas, articles, or pictures to Anne-Marie Studer at <annemarie.studer@gmail.com>.



La Leche League of MN/DAs
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Communications Skills Coordinator OPEN

Area Outreach Coordinator OPEN

Coordinator of Leader Accreditation OPEN



La Leche League is an international, nonprofit, nonsectarian organization dedicated to providing education, information, support, and encouragement to women who want to breastfeed.

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THE AREA LEADERS' LETTER
FOR LA LECHE LEAGUE OF
MINNESOTA AND THE DAKOTAS
NO 163 Summer 2021

