THE LLLI ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

Continuum

VOL. 20, NO. 1 ~ 2007

Three LLL Alums—and *very* outstanding women

Let's just face it—we're all getting older. Even our children! Older, and, for the most part, better. Amazingly better. More interesting, more accomplished, more experienced, more wise.

So it's not surprising that there were three LLL Alumnae Awards this year. In fact, it's possible there could have been thirty, or even three hundred, had the stories all been told.

What makes us better as we grow older isn't necessarily any different from early days in LLL—things like inquisitiveness, passion, dedication, warmth and caring, a can-do attitude.

So cheers to all of us who are growing older—and better! Amazingly better.

Barbara Parker

Martha Sears

Marian Tompson

The La Leche League Alumnae Association is pleased to announce not one, but three recipients of the 2007 Alumnae Award: **Barbara Parker, Martha Sears,** and **Marian Tompson**. Each of these women exemplifies the qualities in the award criteria. And each, in her own way, has demonstrated unfaltering dedication and a relentless spirit as she has worked for societal change.

Barbara, Martha, and Marian make it clear that the passion and foundation for their work was born out of their La Leche League roots. By having the courage to take a stand against cultural norms, they have changed the hearts and minds not only of those close to them but of countless others in the world.

Barbara Parker, who was active in LLL on the local, state and regional level for 20 years, was diagnosed with two primary breast cancers in 1990 while she was a Regional Administrator. Her passion to understand and make a difference led her to local, regional and national advocacy efforts in breast cancer research. These efforts led to a leadership role in the development of research advocacy for breast cancer.

In the mid 90s, Barbara was employed as a patient advocate in the Duke University Breast Cancer SPORE (Specialized Program of Research Excellence). Duke was one of the first organizations to pay an advocate and this professional recognition launched her work nationally.

As an advocate, Barbara attended research meetings, bringing to the attention of researchers patient questions and issues, and commenting on their ideas from a patient perspective. She also has participated in National Cancer Institute grant reviews and committees and has been involved in clinical trial development in two national cooperative groups.

She worked for ten years in national legislative advocacy in Washington, D. C. talking to state representatives and senators about breast cancer issues. Through these discussions, she made a difference for patients at the seat of power.

Recently, Barbara was an invited author of a chapter on advocacy role in a book for clinicians about clinical trial development. (*Cancer Clinical Trials: Proactive Strategies* "The Advocate Role in Clinical Study Development and Partnering with Patient Advocates in Your Local Institution" Springer, 2007).

Barbara has been a pioneer in the field of research advocacy, building on her own personal experience. Her work in changing the paradigm on a national scale has influenced a variety of different institutions. She overcame

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LLL Alumnae Award winners, continued...

any stigmas about breastfeeding and breast cancer to step out and make a positive impact on countless women at a vulnerable time in their lives. Two online articles about Barbara can be found at http://alumnae.llli.org/Alumnae/Life-Parker.htm and http://research.unc.edu/endeavors/win2005/breast_cancer.php

Martha Sears has had a deep, significant impact beyond the realm of lactation in family nutrition, childbirth, sleep, attachment parenting, discipline for all ages of children, the spiritual side of parenting, and building self esteem in children. In a nutshell, she teaches the world about parenting.

Martha is the mother of eight children, a registered nurse, a childbirth educator, a La Leche League Leader for over 25 years, and a lactation consultant. She is also the co-author of 25 parenting books that have been translated into over 12 languages. She has spoken throughout the world in many capacities, and frequently as a presenter at national and international conferences. But Martha doesn't just work "at the top," she works directly with parents on an everyday basis, too, empowering them to make family decisions that honor and reflect La Leche League values.

Martha has positively influenced countless generations by teaching parents more nurturing parenting practices and guiding families into better nutrition. In addition, her work in the area of mental health has been remarkable. Her integrity and her example to millions of women around the world have had a tremendous cultural impact.

Each of these women, in her own way, has demonstrated unfaltering dedication and a relentless spirit as she has worked for societal change

Martha continues to make herself easily available to mothers worldwide on a one-to-one basis. Martha brings heart and soul to any event by actually demonstrating the kind of mother-to-mother support that is so critically needed in our culture. You can read more about Martha at http://www.askdrsears.com/about.asp.

Marian Tompson, LLL Founder and President and CEO of AnotherLook, is being recognized for her brave and steady efforts to educate health professionals and others about HIV and breastfeeding.

An LLL Leader for over 50 years, Marian has educated herself and many others regarding the complicated science involved with breast milk and breastfeeding.

When Marian began to look into the research on HIV and breastfeeding, she found that no studies differentiated between exclusive breastfeeding and mixed feedings, yet she knew that only in exclusive breastfeeding is the gut of the baby sterile. She dared to begin questioning the medical/scientific/pharmaceutical establishment on the conclusions being drawn.

Marian's efforts have encouraged debate on an issue that enjoys little debate, stimulated research in the field, and provided a clearinghouse and forum for others interested in this critically important health issue.

AnotherLook is dedicated to gathering information, raising questions, and stimulating needed research about breastfeeding in the context of HIV/AIDS.

The organization calls for answers to questions not currently being asked that will foster the development of public health policies and practices leading to the best possible health outcomes for mothers and babies.

Marian has shown tremendous courage, conviction and tireless effort in advocating for a population of women that might otherwise be dismissed or forgotten. She has stepped out with courage and passion to address a controversial topic and respect the rights of all parents to make informed decisions concerning the health of their babies without fear of having those babies taken from them.

This great-grandmother has taken her LLL experience to make an impact on an issue that extends into the fields of science, healthcare/public health, and humanitarian endeavors. Marian has 7 children, 16 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren. Her work can be seen at www.anotherlook.org.

The Breastfeeding Helpline is up and running!

With the help of Alumnae and countless other supporters within and outside of La Leche League, the new LLL Breastfeeding Helpline-US is up and running!

As of June 1, 2007, toll-free phone help is once again available 24 hours a day, anywhere in the United States, providing information and support for women who want to breastfeed, and to healthcare providers and others.

Clearly, it was a service that was missed. In its first month, with mostly word-of-mouth and email publicity, 1,864 calls were received!

The Helpline number is 877-4 LA LECHE (877-452-5324). Callers receive support from a helpline volunteer who is an accredited Leader and also receive contact information for local LLL Leaders. The Helpline website has downloadable flyers for distribution: www.lllusa.org/helpline.

The Helpline is independent from LLLI operations and was created cooperatively between the two US LLL Divisions after LLLI eliminated Helpline funding at the end of 2006.

Over the past several months much work has gone into the creation and implementation of the new helpline.

Initial funding sources raised startup funds, Helpline Coordinator Susan Prado and Associate Coordinator Sarah Miner were brought on board, a service provider was selected after exploring various telecommunication options, the phone number was obtained, volunteers were recruited from both US Divisions and began training, call logging and database software tools were acquired and customized for the helpline, and marketing materials have been created.

These efforts have enabled the helpline to go live; now ongoing efforts are needed to sustain the helpline.

The Helpline needs 120 volunteer operators to answer calls. Right now, almost half that number has been trained and are taking calls. If you are interested in finding out more about volunteering, either to take live calls or answer voice messages, contact Susan Prado, sueprado@gmail.com ~ 630-620-0458 or Sarah Miner, skminer@gmail.com ~ 503-746-7584.

Currently, the Helpline averages 62 calls per day, with some days as few as 36 and other days as high as 110. These numbers will only grow as the number gets more widely known.

If you would like to make a financial contribution, there is a secure online donation site at http://donate2lll.org/helpline or you can send a check made payable to La Leche League Breastfeeding Helpline-US and send to: Carroll Beckham, 2101 Woods End Dr., Fayetteville, NC 28312.

Kudos to Coordinator Susan Prado, Associate Sarah Miner and the entire Helpline team!

LLLI Board development and best practices

The LLLI Board is dedicated to being highly effective to best serve the organization, and to provide strong leadership for the future. Because of these desires, they will be engaging in a process to look at their current practices and decide what areas might benefit from applying the valuable lessons learned by other international boards through the use of policy governance best practices.

Change is often difficult. It takes fearless and dedicated people to examine their own procedures and resolve to change ineffective methods in order to benefit the entire organization. The LLLI Board is filled with just such people. To help with this project, Hugh and Susan Switzer have donated funds specifically to give the LLLI Board the opportunity to bring in outside experts in board development. These experts will assess our LLLI Board practices and recommend changes that will benefit the LLLI Board and the entire organization.

With the growth of non-profits, the LLLI Board has become aware of the importance of applying the best practices of policy governance. Policy governance has proven to be the best way for boards to accomplish their goals. It is a model that helps boards sort out board and staff responsibilities and create stronger board leadership.

The LLLI Board has already aligned itself with many best practices and has seen the positive results of their actions. Alignment of all their processes will provide a strong leadership team to carry LLLI into a bright future where breastfeeding is supported and encouraged and where mothers have the information and support they need to be successful.

Linda Ensley, MBA
LLLI Funding Development Director

The joys of summer reading

Ah, the joys of summer reading! Now that my children are grown and no longer requiring supervision of *their* summer reading, I have rediscovered the joys of the summer booklist project.

Throughout high school, I actually looked forward to receiving that list and the admonition to choose twelve of those "approved" books to read and review by the start of school in September. That may make me a nerd, but it was positively delicious to face twelve weeks, twelve books and permission to do virtually nothing but read for pleasure. Summer seemed endless! The list gave assurance that these books were worthwhile and kept me reading when I might otherwise have discarded a less than riveting tome. In the end they were all worth reading.

But then came graduation, year 'round college, employment, marriage, children and La Leche League. All wonderful, exciting stuff that I happily let trump time with a good book. Any reading I did in my "spare" time was limited to breastfeeding information to enhance my skills as a Leader/Lactation Consultant and self-help books to improve myself as a person/mother. Life was very busy, very purposeful, and *very* serious.

When my husband retired, we began spending the summers—twelve weeks!—at our vacation home on Long Island. The kids were mostly grown (in any case resistant to supervision of any kind), breastfeeding information was becoming redundant, I was sick of improving myself, and I was craving that old, endless "summer of reading" experience.

I began wandering down to the little local library where they had a "new books" shelf. With no list to rely on, I was now drawn on each of these visits to randomly choose a half dozen books I'd never heard of and greedily ferry them back to my chair by the water. Having recently entered perimenopause and the throes of a female midlife crisis, I seemed to invariably choose books dealing with some woman's life transformation. It was very entertaining reading—wry, insightful, sometimes painful and always apropos of my life phase. I couldn't get enough and really looked forward to those summers.

So many books calling to be read.... I craved a list!

I was still too involved in the day-to-day stuff of a large family to read fiction during the other 40 weeks—still reading breastfeeding journals and now embarking on spiritual development reading (self improvement on a new level) during the rare reading moments beyond the local morning paper. Somehow winter wasn't for pleasure reading.

But each summer, back I'd go to the "new books" shelf with that same sense of salivating over a cherished treat. No need for a list. If I were to compile one from this period, my favorites would include : *Miss Julia Speaks Her Mind*, *Julie and Romeo*, *and Lucy Crockett 2.0*.

Suddenly one summer. the "new books" shelf stopped offering up titles that called to me and I was stumped for what to read next. Lo and behold, I'd come out the other side of my personal growth metamorphosis and lost interest in fictional versions. The shelf was too small. I got recommendations from friends and read a variety of interesting and enjoyable titles, mostly new books that these friends had discovered.

The *New York Times* booklist offered up occasional best sellers of interest and my grown children started sharing books they knew I'd enjoy (and they were usually right).

Still, I spent summer afternoons in the stacks of the little library running my eyes along the shelves until I encountered something that caught my attention or pulling out books by those authors who used to be on the summer reading lists. So many books calling to be read. With only twelve weeks to devote to it, I wanted to be sure I chose wisely. I craved a list! Soon it was winter as usual again, no fiction.

Then in the spring of 2006, on the eve of the announcement of the Pulitzer Prize winners, I read an article in the local morning paper by a woman who had made it her project to read all past recipients of the prize—79 at that point—and had done it in six months. The answer to my prayers.

A list of "approved" books (they must be good to have been chosen, no?) to serve as my summer list and organize my reading. Though always up for a challenge, I knew better than to try to equal her time frame. I'm a slow reader and this was, after all, about reading for pleasure.

Eighty, with the new one, would be plenty to keep me occupied for several summers. So in June I began, letting what was available at our little library dictate which books I read first, in no particular order.

It was not always pleasure reading, but the knowledge that the esteemed Pulitzer committee had selected these books as outstanding representations of "the wholesome atmosphere of American life and the highest standard of American manners and manhood" kept me reading through the occasional

rough patch and each book ended up having been a treasure.

Reminiscent of the old high school lists and often represented on them, some are just technically good, and some outstanding. None a waste of time. That summer I read 22 and when I returned home for the winter, spurred on by the list, I continued reading!

Now with summer upon us, an eighty-first prize recipient added to the list, and those lovely twelve weeks at my disposal, I am again immersed in the joys of summer reading. No need to fear the end of the list, as there are always the Noble and Booker prize winners to expand my selections beyond American writers. And when winter returns, I will keep on reading in my own personal endless summer!

Outstanding among the titles I have read so far:

1932 *The Good Earth*, Pearl Buck
1940 *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Steinbeck
1951 *The Town*, Conrad Richter
1952 *The Caine Mutiny*, Herman Wouk
1961 *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Harper Lee
1967 *The Fixer*, Bernart Malamud
1972 *Angle of Repose*, Wallace Stegner
1975 *The Killer Angels*, Michael Shaara
2001 *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay*, Michael Chabon
2002 *Empire Falls*, Richard Russo
2003 *Middlesex*, Jeffrey Eugenides
2005 *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson
2006 *March*, Geraldine Brooks

On number 32 and still reading...

Susan Switzer
Atlanta, Georgia USA

Recording LLL history: Republica Dominicana

How do you capture the extensive and very rich history of a grassroots organization that has grown mother by mother throughout the world over the past 50 years? Story by story. Many Areas have assembled written histories. Others are in the process.

In 1999, the Alumnae, headed by Judy Steele, took on a project to identify LLL's "Second-tier founders" who began La Leche League at the Area level.

This year, the Conference Pizzazz Team (Welda Hoerz, Betty Crase, Patricia DuBray, and Helene Scheff) carried on the search, further identifying these women and collecting histories. Information will be added to the Alumnae website under "Memories & Stories" in the coming months.

Below is one of the stories that has been collected, the story of the founding of Liga de La Leche, Republica Dominicana.

1990 was the year Liga de La Leche, R.D. was born, and for good measure, birthed by two mothers!

Priscilla Stothers, a nurse and health educator from FLorida, USA, moved to the Dominican Republic (DR) with her young family in 1983. Over the next few years, her three healthy, breastfed babies were living proof of the goodness of mother's milk and she often found herself sharing "breastfeeding tips" with Dominican moms.

Though traditionally the DR had enjoyed a pro-breastfeeding culture for generations, it was now being bombarded with breastfeeding misinformation by medical personnel and the community at large.

Priscilla contacted LLLI for breastfeeding materials in Spanish and became a "Breastfeeding Resource Center," giving talks in hospiitals and in a childbirth education center as well as supporting moms individually.

Encouraged by Judy Canahuati (Honduras) and MaryAnne Stone-Jimenez (Guatemala), she completed the process, long distance, snail-mail, to become, in 1990, the first LLL Leader in the Dominican Republic.

Yanet Olivares first attended LLL meetings in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico (PR), where her son Miguel was born in 1990. Before she returned to her own country, the Dominican Republic, the PR Group Leader, Gretchen Rivera de Cummings, invited her to become an LLL Leader. Gretchen was often contacted by the mothers from the DR because her Group was geographically the closest one and her contact information was the one the LLL office provided.

As soon as Yanet moved back home, she started LLL meetings in a depressed urban neighborhood of Santiago, DR. By the end of the first series meetings, she was surprised to receive a phone call from Priscilla, who had discovered, while attending a LLL Latin America Conference in Guatemala, that there was a second LLL Leader in the DR!

From its inception, LLL RD had a two-prong vision: first, to provide support and information in the monthly, traditional mother-to-mother meetings where women are mentored and go on to become LLL Leaders and strong supporters of LLL RD, and secondly, to provide breastfeeding education to the community at large through regular radio and television programs, breastfeeding education in the public hospital and peer counselor training.

Continuum: "A must read!"

While the survey that went out in the last issue of Continuum was far from scientific, the 71 responses did provide good feedback to help guide future issues. Below are some of the findings...

❖ **WAY to receive Continuum:** Responses were about evenly split between in the mail (47%) and email or online (51% combined). A few had no preference, or were willing to let go of mail to save expenses.

❖ **TIMING for Continuum:** Most respondents (60%) prefer to receive the newsletter quarterly. Another 20% felt three times per year was adequate. The remainder wanted it more often.

❖ **LENGTH of Continuum:** Respondents were less clear about the length than the timing. Forty percent preferred 6 - 8 pages; 35% preferred 10-12 pages; and 21% would be content with 2-4 pages.

❖ **LOOK of Continuum:** Most of the respondents (63%) say one color is fine; 18% would prefer more color. The current type size is preferable for 66% of respondents, while 21% indicated they would like to have a bigger print size. The inclusion of ads to help offset costs was checked by 70% of respondents. And most (77%) would like to see some pictures in each issue.

❖ **CONTENT for Continuum:** According to respondents, Alumnae want to regularly keep abreast of what is happening with LLLI (69%), read about Alumnae Association activities (66%), and follow the latest breastfeeding research (53%). These were highest on the list that respondents want to "always" see in Continuum.

A good balance of topics seems to be just what people are looking for—most (60% or more) agreed that they'd like all the topics listed, except articles around one theme, at least sometimes. Here are the combined always/sometimes percentages:

90% LLLI updates
87% Alumnae Association activities
86% Breastfeeding research
81% Book reviews
78% Interviews of retired Leaders
75% Grandparenting
73% We Remember (deceased Leaders)
72% Weblinks to further information
70% Local Alumnae activities
69% Personal growth
67% Humorous pieces
62% Retired Leader updates/search
47% Articles around one theme

❖ **Other ARTICLES you'd like to see:** Alumnae made suggestions for other kinds of articles, such as updates on the Founders, more medical or health-related stories, articles relating to teens and young adults, encouragement to enjoy life's differing stages, history of LLL groups, and the role of the seasoned Leader in the Group.

❖ **Other COMMENTS you made:** Here is a sampling of the forty plus comments that were added.

I look forward to receiving Continuum... makes me still feel a part of LLL and connected to many people, even though we must move on in life.

Love the interviews and book reviews. Love to read about how Leaders have developed themselves personally and professionally from their League work.

Many thanks for all the hard work—it's a delight to receive—as LLL News was years ago!

LLL had such a lifelong impact on me, my family, and children. I am delighted to read Continuum and hope it will continue to be published.

Keep it going even if we have to pay more.

I love to read how those of us who have been around awhile are continuing to support LLLI and breastfeeding. I'm still leading my Group after 26 years and have two grandkids. It's great to know I'm not the only "strange" one for keeping active in LLL.

Overall great; sometimes articles too long; [I] like "blurbs" on topics from many women.

It would be great if when I put it down I felt like I had just had a wonderful chat over a cup of tea with likeminded friends.

Continuum is just what the name implies—a continuing of La Leche League philosophy, friendship, and inspiration via this newsletter.

Gifts for the future

If you are looking into financial planning, there are several ways to include La Leche League in future gifts, including bequests, life insurance, gift annuities, and Charitable Remainder Trusts. LLLI is grateful for receipt of all types of gifts and welcomes the opportunity to work with you and your personal advisors to determine the gift planning arrangements that are most appropriate for you.

Contact Pam Oselka, Major Gifts Officer, 847-519-7730, extension 257, for more information.

Learning to embrace change: bouncing back from pain

Georgie Moore, from Lake Forest, California, recently gave a presentation to the Southern California/Nevada Alums on "Learning to Embrace Change," based on the book Embracing Change, 10 Ways to Grow Spiritually and Emotionally *by Joseph F. Sica. Here is her experience from just one of those ways.*

Bouncing back from pain—casting away heartaches. At 3:00 a.m., we received a call informing us that Ben, our fourth son (of nine children), was in a serious accident. We dressed rapidly, prayed, and told our oldest boy to watch over the house, saying we would call him when we knew more about Ben's condition. When we entered the emergency room, the nurses were busily taking care of our John Doe. They explained that they listed him as John Doe so they could start immediate treatment. He looked pretty bad. He was in a non-responsive condition—a coma. I was told to call his name loudly. I desperately wanted to hug him but they said "don't touch him." How is a mother not to touch her injured child?

The doctors gave him little hope of recovery, but we did not give up. The priest anointed Ben and said, "Well that's it."

Ben was in a coma for six days, hospitalized for several months and had therapy after he came home. The doctors said it was a blessing that Ben was in such good shape from being involved in sports.

Ben's condition, our daily trips to the hospital, and not knowing what was to happen next was hard on his siblings —the first five boys were really close in age. The oldest wanted life to be back to normal and the ninth child, the youngest, was totally confused. We found that Ben's tragedy brought us all as a family closer together. We had to work as a tight team to get through this.

It took me ten years to really heal from Ben's accident. I wrote journals, prayed, and grew from anger and frustration to acceptance and new found trust. It was a process of letting go—a total giving of Ben to God for healing. I wrote the story down and let Ben read it because he had no memory of the accident or first part of the stay in the hospital.

Now Ben has a Bachelor's degree in business and is married with a two-year-old adopted son. The support of everyone gave us strength to live through the tragedy and to find the blessings.

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Everyone is the age of their heart.

—Guatemalan Proverb

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Send to: Susan Geil, LLL Alumnae Treasurer, 4868 N. Hermitage, Chicago, IL 60640

LLLI Updates

❖ **Fashion, Fit, Function, Fun!**
There's a new line of LLLI intimates on the market, including nursing and regular bras and panties "for work, for play, for everyday…" that conform and adjust comfortably to an ever changing shape. Babywear is available too! Every garment will bear the LLLI name and logo and assurance that these are items mothers can feel confident about buying. Items are sensibly priced from $6 to $30 and LLLI will receive both revenue and publicity from this venture. Check them out at: lliclothes.com

❖ **The Revolutionaries Wore Pearls**
A new scrapbook-style book chronicles the growth and development of LLLI over the past 50 years with one simple mission set forth by the Founders in 1956—to help mothers breastfeed their babies—a mission that created an unexpected, uncharted revolution. The book will be available at the LLLI Conference and through the LLLI online store soon.