



LLLNZ ALUMNAE ASSOCIATION

**Newsletter #5
December 2024**



Kia ora koutou katoa

This year has been a wonderfully busy year. We finally were able to have our very much anticipated Conference. Those who attended said it was just what they needed to recharge their LLL batteries. The Alumnae Reunion dinner and Day were well attended. Some Alumnae stayed the whole weekend and enjoyed the main Conference sessions too. The next Conference is already in mind. So please help if you can.

Our committee has now increased by two. Sandy Littlejohns-Clark and Adith Stoneman have joined us. Their introductions will be sent to you in January with the updated membership form. Sandy and Adith have a long history with LLL and their experiences are valuable to harness.

I decided to stand for the LLLNZ Board because I'm passionate about the long term success of LLL. I'm pleased to say that I was elected. I have also taken on the role as Chairperson of the Alumnae. Alison has been in the role since 2015 and now wishes to concentrate on her Leader Accreditation work. Thankfully she remains a committee member.

I hope you enjoy reading our Christmas newsletter.

LLLlove

Lynette
Art Institute of Chicago
Paula Modersohn-Becker Exhibition
Below: *Reclining Mother with Child II* 1906



Above: *Nursing Mother in Front of Birch Forest* 1905

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To help mothers worldwide to breastfeed through mother-to-mother support, encouragement, information, and education, and to promote a better understanding of breastfeeding as an important element in the healthy development of the baby and mother.

Latest News: Marian Thompson resigns

November 9, 2024

Dear Leaders of La Leche League,

I want to share some important news.

On November 6, 2024, I resigned from the LLLI Board of Directors and from LLL itself, an organization that has become a travesty of my original intent.

From an organization with the specific Mission of supporting biological women who want to give their babies the best start in life by breastfeeding them, LLL's focus has subtly shifted to include men who, for whatever reason, want to have the experience of breastfeeding despite no careful long-term research on male lactation and how that may affect the baby.

This shift from following the norms of Nature, which is the core of mothering through breastfeeding, to indulging the fantasies of adults, is destroying our organization.

Despite my efforts these past two years as a Board member, it has become clear that there is nothing I can do to change this trajectory by staying involved.

Still, I leave the door open to come back when La Leche League returns to its original Mission and Purpose.

I thank each of you for your years of making this world a healthier and happier place by being there for all mothers needing help with breastfeeding their babies.

With much love,
Marian Thompson
Founder of La Leche League

Anne Devereux

9 February 1938 – 26 August 2024

La Leche League New Zealand has lost a legend. Anne passed away unexpectedly, but peacefully, at home surrounded by family.

Anne lived a significant life and leaves a legacy of service to others. Family and community and lifting others up were part of her DNA. She gave generously of her time to La Leche League for over 50 years in various roles. Anne built a vast network of friends and colleagues in her local community through her work with Refugee Support in Dunedin, LLL locally, nationally and globally serving as LLLNZ Director 1989-1994 and on the LLLI Board of Directors for six years.



I had the privilege of working with Anne in the Peer Counsellor Programme and in more recent years in the Leader Accreditation Department. Anne could always be relied on to give thoughtful consideration to questions and contribute to a discussion with respectful, constructive suggestions. Her generous spirit, wisdom and ability to relate to any person, instilled confidence and trust in her LLL colleagues. A model of what it is to live your values, Anne was a strong advocate for mothers and babies and cared deeply for LLL philosophy.

Rest in peace dear friend.

Alison Stanton

LLLNZ Conference 19-21 April

Lynette Zander, Lindy Burton, Robyn Watkins and Alison Stanton arrived at St Peter's College on the Thursday evening to assist the conference committee to welcome participants the following day. This cheerful bunch were quickly joined by Alumnae members Adith Stoneman and Robin Jones and the local Regional Alumnae Representatives, Colleen Bassett and Rosie Bentley. We spent the evening labelling speaker gifts, filling conference bags and sorting pre-orders of conference merchandise. Over the weekend some also assisted with transport to and from the airport.

The LLLNZ Alumnae committee have committed to managing the conference registration desk for the last three conferences. It is a splendid way to meet current Leaders and likewise for them to become acquainted with the Alumnae. By managing the registration desk it relieves the conference committee of a large task and avoids current Leaders, especially those attending with young children, missing out on attending conference sessions. Lindy and Lynette will also attest to the task being a fun way to mix and mingle. Do consider joining us next time.



Yvonne Foreman was asked to cut the 60th Anniversary cake alongside the newest LLLNZ Leader Natasha McKenzie from Nelson.



‘Connections’ Alumnae Day, 29 April

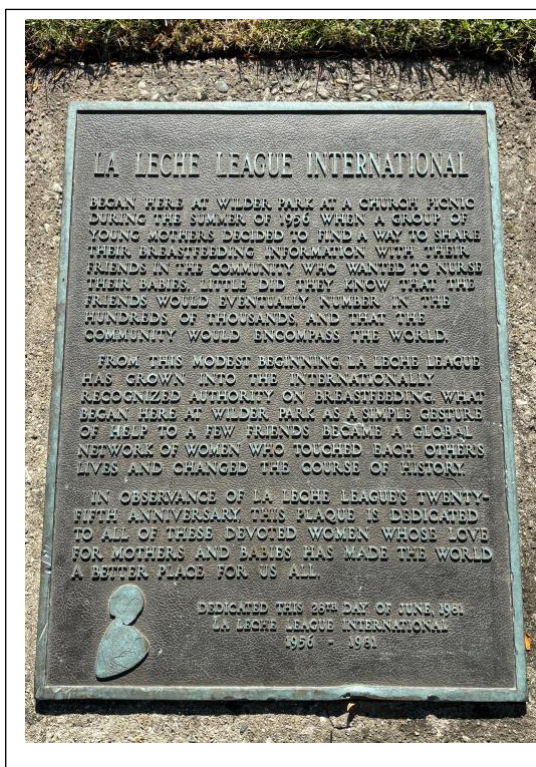
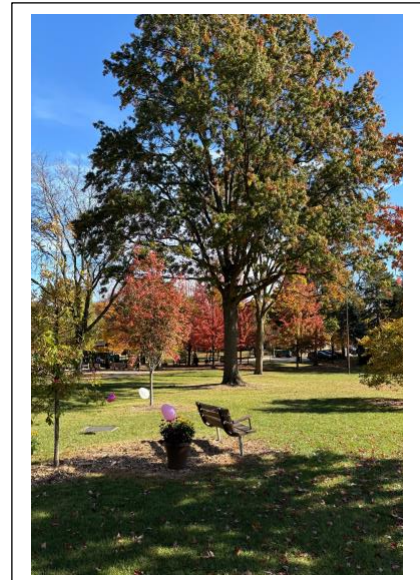
Twenty one members and two partners gathered on Friday evening prior to our Alumnae Day for a meal at the Onyx Restaurant in Cambridge. Conversations flowed as members reconnected with old friends and made new ones. Members had travelled from as far south as Blenheim and as far north as Whangarei.

Friends of La Leche League Visit, Chicago, October 24th-27th

I had the pleasure of joining former Leaders and current long-term Leaders at this event recently. This was a smaller gathering than in pre-Covid times. Just over thirty of us attended and were accommodated at the Hilton Hotel in Chicago, looking over a park and beyond to Michigan Lake.

Prior to the trip, participants were encouraged to liaise to share rides from the airport to the hotel and Judith Elder and I soon spotted each alongside the baggage carousel. We had also been encouraged to liaise if we wanted to share a room. My roommate was Judy Canahauti. So making new friends began even before I stepped out the front door.

Our guided walking tour of Chicago started from the Hilton hotel with an in depth history of the building. My main reason for joining this year's Friends of La Leche League Visit was that it incorporated a visit to Wilder Park, where the idea of La Leche League began. A visit to Wilder Park was on my bucket list. We travelled by



coach and on arrival found local LLL Leaders had marked the sites of various LLL plaques and bench with heart balloons, creating a path to follow. It was a delight to wonder through the park in the company of other long-term Leaders and former Leaders. It was easy to picture Marian Tompson and Mary White with their babies at that church picnic back in 1956.

Our luncheon was held in the Mansion. At this function the daughter and grandchildren of Founder Viola Lennon arrived which was a lovely surprise for us all and particularly for Marian Tompson. The La Leche League dolls from around the world were displayed throughout the venue.

After lunch the 'We Remember' Ceremony was held to honour Leaders who had passed away since the last Friends of La Leche League trip in 2019 to New Orleans. LLLNZ Leaders Suzanne Gullery, Dee McOnie, Pat Edwards, Tracy Ashworth Jill Allan, Lynette Polwart, Mary Buchanan, Jane Ritchie, Glenys Grant, Dorothy Wilkinson, Anne Devereux and Jill Burns were remembered. Susan Moscny, Joan Crothers and Marian Tompson read out each of the names as they appeared on the screen. We were also able to view the 'We Remember' book which has their names written in calligraphy.

DePaul Special Collections and Archives (SPCA)

I had liaised with Jamie Nelson (Head of Special Collections and Archives during the coordination of the LLLNZ History Project and was keen to see the collection for myself. I also had a few specific items I wished to view in particular to satisfy my curiosity. DePaul SPCA is located within John T. Richardson Library on DePaul University's Lincoln Campus. They collect, preserve, and share the history of DePaul University and the Chicagoland area- including the records of La Leche League International.



Two groups of us travelled to the archives by uber and after a brief introduction to the material and an overview of handing instructions, we were free to peruse the files we had previously requested to research or simply free to look. La Leche League's archives are vast. It had been advantageous to browse through the inventory prior to the visit to place a specific request for the material I wished to view.

I valued the balance the organisers had apportioned between organised trips and free time. I also chose to join the Architectural cruise. This didn't disappoint. Afterwards those of us who had participated found ourselves looking at buildings around the city with a new appreciation.

Alison Stanton

Mother Blessing

Have you been to a Baby Shower? I haven't but earlier this year I was asked by LLL Leader Debbie Graham if I would be prepared to facilitate a Mother Blessing for her pregnant daughter Meredith. Subsequently Meredith contacted me and outlined what she proposed.



“Unlike the traditional American baby shower which is usually focused on the baby, the Mother Blessing’s focus is positive energy to prepare the mother for the birth. There are many ways to celebrate a Mother Blessing - examples include the creation of a birthing necklace, foot bath and hair grooming for the expecting mother, as well as sharing thoughts, poetry, songs, personal stories, prayers, best wishes and gifts with the expecting parents. Like any ceremony or

gathering, a Mother Blessing should have an opening, body and closing, but there are no “rules.” The ceremony should be guided by the expecting mother’s own spiritual beliefs and lifestyle. Mother Blessings are usually conducted with participants seated (if possible) in a rough circle, symbolizing strength and unity so that everyone can participate equally”.

Meredith and I met to discuss her spiritual, lifestyle and personal beliefs which would flavour her Mother Blessing which was to be held in Debbie’s beautiful home. On the day people were welcomed with delicious food and some fun written activities, for example “What attributes from each parent do you wish for this baby?” The expectant father, grandfather and a few male friends were present during this part and then around fifteen of Meredith’s female family and friends adjourned to the lounge for the ceremony.



Initially there was chatter and laughter and then the women settled into focusing on supporting Meredith in her coming months of pregnancy to prepare for the birth. The ceremony used many rituals to facilitate this focus: each person being “smudged” with a sage stick to promote mindfulness and emotional balance; meditation; prayer to nature and the Mother Spirit; self-introductions of each woman, acknowledging the ancestry of their mother and grandmother; grooming Meredith with a footbath, hair brushing and sprinkling petals over her head; writing and reading their personal affirmations of Meredith which she would put on her wall for the birth; blessing water that she would drink during labour; and creating a supportive web with a cotton thread linking the wrists of each woman to Meredith which was then cut so they had a bracelet to wear until the baby was born to remind them of their commitment to support her.

By the closing of the ceremony there was a deep connection between the women and Meredith and they expressed how meaningful this beautiful Mother Blessing was and how grateful they were to have had the opportunity to participate.

This is a video that Meredith sent to me prior to her Mother Blessing, along with some photos of other women's ceremony.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=88FVyR2DvtM>

It was a real privilege for me to facilitate this beautiful ritual in support of Meredith and wearing the cotton thread bracelet enabled me to focus each day on her. Such a mindful supportive engagement with an expectant woman.

Rosie Bentley, with Meredith and Debbie's permission.

Right: Meredith's baby, Forrest Jack Cornelius Robson, with his grandparents Tony and Debbie Graham.



Around the Groups

Waikato

Animated conversation as we reconnected was interrupted by the tinkle of cutlery on glass when Rosie welcomed everyone to our ALLLumnae Luncheon on 20th October 2024 at Te Awa Woolshed Café. She gave many apologies from those of you who wanted to join us but could not. We appreciated your comments.

Alison Stanton was leaving NZ for the Friends of LLL trip to Chicago and was visiting Wilder Park where Marion Tompson and Mary White had the idea for a breastfeeding group! Christine Lowe (Scothern) was away on a day tramp but has offered to share her passion with us in the future by playing her harp! Lisa Manning who is now living in Wellington had just returned from settling her daughter Maia into university in London. Petra McQuoid had a memorial service to attend. Janet Leonard and Lynn Joyce had both succumbed to the flu. Miette Smith teaches her grandchildren on Sundays. Holly Gardner (Raymond) was in Dubai visiting family! Heather McKenzie was attending a reunion of her nursing class! Raewyn Park was facilitating a te reo Maori class! We had apologies from Linda Simpson and Robin Jones also. What busy people we Alumnae are!

We send our loving thoughts to Heather Dillon whose husband Len recently passed away.

Colleen introduced Robyn, our 'trigger speaker', as the Co-Founder of the Te Awamutu LLL Group. She saw us, as those early LLL mothers, as 'outliers, zealots.' (Recognise yourself?) She said, "LLL gave us key principles – going back to basics – doing what really works." Robyn has six kids, including a foster son with special needs. She had a 31 year career as a Time-Management Specialist – in her own words, "starting on the backfoot of always being late for everything." From 2006-7 Robyn was the International President of the Global Speakers Federation, serving all countries with professional speaking associations. Brilliant!

True to our chosen theme for the day, Robyn spoke of her passions - speaking, seminars, writing. She is the author of ten books which include historical fiction. We loved hearing about what influenced Robyn's writing, (e.g. Aunt Peggy who died at 99, and the Burnett family Volumes of family letters); how, when Reed Publishing promoted her work, five years later she was their top business writer; how subsequently she publishes her own books. We were able to buy copies – I did. On the back of one it reads 'If you like inspirational stories of young people who achieve greatness against great adversity, you'll love this book.' And on another 'If you like tales of feisty characters who refuse to be told 'no', you'll love this tension-filled story.' Christmas presents, anyone? Robyn's books are available here - <https://robynpearce.com/collections/novels>. Rosie bought *Getting a Grip on Parenting Time*, one of Robyn's non-fiction titles in which she has found very useful time and tidy tips.

Then it was our turn to share our passions with one another. Invariably our comments turned to how LLL helped to mould us. Here are some snippets.

Rosie's passions are: Ceroc dancing (she recently won an award at Ceroc comps), walking the Camino trail on her own, yoga and meditation.

Doris's absolute passion is Family. She said, "I often wonder how our world would be today if women had been allowed to be what (they could truly be)". "I learnt to trust myself" (through LLL involvement) "At first I was ambidextrous – I had no idea how to put my best foot forward." Doris loves doing up places – property. "LLL has given so much to empower me to be the woman I am," she shared.

That prompted Paula to share that she grew skills in active listening. She likes to use organisational skills to bring people together, having found her voice through LLL – "Shy before LLL I found myself getting progressively more confident – getting to believe in what I felt I **should** be." Paula loves taking part in Silver Swan Ballet.

Raewyn spoke of the attribute of patience, the wisdom of women, and of 'opening our minds' to new directions. She achieved a PhD in International Relations while tutoring at Waikato University. On retirement, and inspired by her father's treasure trove of letters and other memorabilia kept safely in a box since WW11, she compiled a booklet of his war-time exploits. This was followed last month by a trip to Italy with her daughter and grand-daughter tracing battle sites and commonwealth graves which had been written about in the memoir. Maybe, she just might continue to write on other subjects in the future.

Yvonne's passion is communication, both written and spoken. And someone said, 'We may find ourselves "that person in the family that keeps the communication going."' Yvonne's passion is peace and quiet. "Having a partner with dementia gives a whole new understanding of the world. Seeing my five kids laughing – giving each other heaps – enjoying each other – contributing to the world" –these things are dear to Yvonne's heart.

Kate is actively involved in Scottish Country Dancing, a passion for many years. Keeping the brain active to allay Alzheimers, and enjoying yoga and meditation are more of Kate's interests.

Lynette asserted her lifelong passion for LLL. She affirmed that 'belief in myself' has been a strength. All too often, she said, "Women don't have a belief in themselves." Lynette loves reading and is keen on photography.

Colleen spoke of her love of writing poetry, birds, New Zealand history and her rekindled faith in God.

And now those scraps of paper that kept saying 'type me up for the Alumnae newsletter' can be discarded.

TELL US ABOUT YOU – for those we missed at the luncheon, we'd love to hear what your passions are.

Our luncheon with Robyn to inspire us with her passions certainly brought out our individual passions. What was so special as always, is being together and acknowledging the depth of experience and knowledge that La Leche League gave us as young women that ignited our potential.

Colleen Bassett and Rosie Bentley



Left: Members of the Waikato Alumnae Top Row: Lynette Zander, Yvonne Foreman, Raewyn Emett, Robyn Pearce, Doris Chapman and Colleen Bassett

Front Row: Paula McCormick, Rosie Bentley and Kate Corfield

Membership

Thank you to all who renewed their membership this year. Your membership contributed to sponsoring several Leaders to attend the LLLNZ Conference in April.

A little reminder to those who have forgotten, our financial year is now 1 January to 31 December. Bank account number 03-0306-0634057-00. If you are unsure whether you have renewed you can contact lllnzalumnae@gmail.com

If you have an event you would like to let others know about or an article you would like to include please be in touch through our email lllnzalumnae@gmail.com

Wishing you peace and joy this holiday season

Lynette, Robyn, Lindy, Alison, Adith and Sandy

