

Networking & Advocating for Cloth diapers

By Lori Richardson

I've been cloth diapering my son since he was born nearly 26 months ago. Soon after learning I was pregnant, I was scouring the far reaches of the Internet researching the benefits of cloth diapers and building up my supply of cute newborn diapers. I was over the moon for them! I was in awe of how much they had changed since the flats, pins, and vinyl pants of my childhood. Modern day cloth diapers had become innovative and high-tech.

Cloth diapers were a natural choice for me considering my education in environmental science. However, while researching, I was completely shocked to learn about the health benefits of cloth diapering and also the unknown chemicals lurking within each piece of plastic backed paper shell in a throwaway diaper. Using disposable diapers was not an option for many reasons.

Thank heavens for the Internet. Without it, I would have been limited to using those horrid, cheap prefolds filled with polyester batting, plastic "novelty" diaper pins, and basic vinyl-lined waterproof wraps, all of which can sometimes be found at drugstores and superstores across the United States. I couldn't understand why large chain stores couldn't carry reputable cloth diapering supplies. No wonder more people didn't know about the modern world of cloth diapers. The only way to learn about them, it seemed, was by committing to countless hours of sleuthing in the Internet underground. First, you had to find them and then, you had to piece together the information you found. I vividly remember feeling very overwhelmed.

Having a point of contact, supporter, mentor who had done it successfully before me would have helped tremendously. If more people knew how far cloth diapers had come and how incredibly easy they were to use, I mused, surely more people would choose to use cloth. Parents needed to know that they had equally effective options when it came to diapering their babies. I have noticed that most parents I talk with still believe

that cotton flats, diaper pins, and vinyl pants are the only cloth diapering supplies available, perhaps because they were the only cloth diapering option when they were babies and that's what is available in the chain stores. If only they knew how far diapers had come, with stay-dry linings, snap or touch-tape closures, and adorable prints, they would fall head over heels in love with them like I had.

A need for education outreach was obvious. We needed media

coverage! We needed cloth diapering commercials! We needed billboards! We needed Public Service Announcements! Without the hundreds of thousands of dollars necessary to do this, I sat on the idea. I vowed that if I ever won the lottery (a long-shot, since I don't even buy lottery tickets), I would pour a bunch of money into public outreach and research not funded by the huge disposable diapering conglomerates.

Real Diaper Association was founded in August 2004, three months after my son was born. I was ecstatic when I found out about the organization because it meant that my dream of spreading the word about cloth diapers was becoming a reality and that many others had the same dream I did.

I soon realized that the only way for me to begin a shift in thinking was to spread the word wherever I could about cloth diapers. I wanted to teach but didn't know how to get started. Where would I teach and how much would room rental cost? How would I advertise? I began talking to friends and family about my desire to teach and educate the public on how far cloth diapers had come. In order to dispel any myths regarding cloth, I started responding to every cloth diapering question I could find on the online parenting boards I frequent. I also included photos of adorable cloth diapers in my online profile as an educational tool for parents interested in cloth diapering.

With that, the magic of networking began. A friend of mine started up a traveling maternity sale and resource center and asked me if I'd like to have a cloth diapering booth. I jumped at the opportunity. I had "cloth diapering advocate" business cards printed with my name and email address. At the booth, I handed out my new business cards and Real Diaper Association brochures that I had printed. I also displayed examples of various cloth diapering systems. A few months later, this same friend asked if I wanted to teach a short workshop on cloth diapers and host another cloth diapering booth. I was becoming a "cloth diaper expert" in my local community.

Two months after teaching the workshop, I was having lunch with a coworker. Somehow, the topic of me teaching about cloth diapering came up and she said, "Lori, you need to meet my friend! She cloth diapers her baby and just bought a local baby resource center geared toward natural parenting. I'm sure she'd love to talk to you about teaching some classes."

As it turned out, I had met her friend at one of my cloth diapering booths and we had even exchanged several emails a year prior when she was still pregnant and had questions about cloth diapering. She emailed me and told me all the details of her new business and said she had wanted to contact me about teaching a class. We couldn't believe what a small world it was.

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Your Grandmother Should Know

An Oral History of Cloth Diapers from Real Diaper Association

Preparing for Your Interview

By Lori Taylor

In each quarterly newsletter during this year, RDA will publish an article to help you participate in our oral history of cloth diapering, Your Grandmother Should Know. In the first article, we introduced the project. In this article, we encourage RDA members through the preparation and interview process. See the Project Guidelines for more details.

Prepare for a Smooth Interview

You are a partner in the Your Grandmother Should Know oral history project. You are the interviewer.

You are the ideal person to ask others about cloth diapers. As an RDA member, you already know about the current state of cloth diapers and you want to tell the world. Through your interviews, you create a historical record of cloth diapering in the mid-twentieth century. There is no project without RDA members following their curiosity to their grandmothers and their older friends and neighbors.

With a little prep work up front, you can make your interview go smoothly even if you have never done anything like this before. We have gathered into the Project Guidelines some of the best advice from those with experience in oral history. You will find there a step-by-step guide to preparation and interviewing.

Who should you interview? We don't know! You know that. Ask your grandmother, your mother, your aunts, or your neighbors. You know the ground locally, so you will find the people who remember what it was like to use cloth diapers a generation or two (or three) ago.

Your preparation will involve finding someone to interview, learning about the time when they diapered their babies, making a list of questions to ask, and gathering the equipment you will need to record the interview. Every interview will be different, reflecting the interviewer and the interviewee. For example, you can make an audio or video recording. Are you already familiar with one or the other? Let your own skills, interests, and available equipment be your guide.

Your Questions, Her Stories

You should prepare a list of questions for the interview. Open-ended questions are more likely to trigger stories. If you ask, "Did you use prefold diapers?" you might hear just, "No." If you ask, "What kind of diapers were available then?" you might hear more. If you leave the question even more open, requesting "Tell me about the diapers you used," the interviewee will supply the details rather than confirming details you supplied. Prepare both kinds of questions.

Have more questions than you think you will need. Start with these, if you like.

- What years did you have babies in cloth diapers?
- How many children do you have?
- Tell me about the diapers you used.
- Where did you get your diapers?
- What did you use for diaper covers?
- Did you sew or make any of your own diapering supplies? If so, what did you use?
- Did you use pins or something else to secure the diapers?



- How did you wash the diapers?
- How did you dry the diapers?
- Who helped, if anyone?
- Have your children used cloth diapers on their children?

Don't just prepare questions about Your Grandmother's own babies. She may remember further back to when her own younger siblings or cousins were cloth diapered. She may have asked her own mother about diapers when her babies were born. Dig to find the oldest memories of diapers she can recall.

At your interview, keep your prepared questions handy, but set out to listen rather than question. Ask just one question at a time. You may need to ask simple questions to start the momentum of the conversation. Or, just jump in with your main question as long as your start isn't too abrupt. You may even want to start with a short introduction to why you find a mundane household item like a cloth diaper so important.

"Cloth diapers seem like such a simple thing, but they can be very important because [your main reason for choosing cloth diapers]. I want to find out what kind of diapers you used and how."

Once she starts to tell you a story you want to hear, you probably won't need to prompt her much more. Do not interrupt responses. Give your encouragement silently by smiling and nodding rather than speaking. This way, the recording is more about the person interviewed than about the interviewer. Also, remember that you are there to hear her story. Don't tell your own.

Your goal is to encourage her to tell richly detailed stories about cloth diapers. These stories are the heart of the project.

(Continued on page 5)

RDA Business Member Directory

Arizona

Wildflower Diapers
Shannon Doan
www.wildflowerdiapers.com
Scottsdale, Arizona
(888) 677-3228 toll free

California

Blue Penguin
Carol Stewart
www.bluepenguin.biz
Los Angeles, California
(888) 422-2945 toll free
(323) 344-1311 fax

Cotton Club Diaper Service
Ruxy Walsh
cottonclubds.com
Chico, CA
530-893-2229

Colorado

Righteous Baby
Ann Hall
www.righteousbaby.com
Lyons, Colorado
(303) 823-5980

Connecticut

Papaya Patch.com
Cari Wolverton
www.papayapatch.com
West Hartford, Connecticut
(800) 521-0701 toll-free
(860) 521-0731 fax

Florida

Baby's Abode
Kathy Williams
www.babysabode.com
Hollywood, Florida
(866) 422-2263 toll-free

Blessed Mothering
Dr. Paola Weber
www.blessedmothering.com
Plantation, Florida
(954) 907-1535
(954) 792-6445 Fax

Heavenly Hineys
Felisa Leppo
www.heavenlyhineys.com
Patrick Air Force Base, Florida
(321) 985-6707
(321) 693-5983 fax

Sunshine Diapers
Brenda Wells
www.sunshinediapers.com
Gainesville, Florida
(352) 335-2093

Iowa

Cash For Diapers
Tamara Sanders
www.cashfordiapers.com
Sioux City, Iowa
(712) 258-1249

Maine

Buzzie Bee
Jennifer Moore Temple
www.buzziebee.com
Rockland, Maine
(207) 542-0505

Kelly's Closet
Kelly Wels
www.kellyscloset.com
Waterford, Maine
(888) 701-7015

Maine Cloth Diaper Company
Christy Perce
www.maineclothdiapercompany.com
Newcastle, Maine
(866) 586-MCDC toll-free
(207) 586-5974

Maryland

Alyahs Alternative
Shayla Boyd-Gill
www.alyahs.com
Bowie, Maryland
(866) 755-7977 toll-free

Minnesota

The Natural Life Store
Kristine Higginbotham
www.thenaturallifestore.com
Coon Rapids, Minnesota
(763) 439-2026

New Jersey

DiaperPin
Jennifer Liptrot
www.diaperpin.com
Oldwick, New Jersey
(908) 872 4407

North Carolina

Natural Baby Supply
Jean van Zyl
www.naturalbabysupply.com
Hillsborough, North Carolina
(919) 338-1861

Ohio

Time For A Change
Nicole Cameron
www.time-for-a-change.org
Stow, Ohio
(866) 229-8797 toll-free

Oregon

Zoom Baby Gear
Cynthia Thompson
www.zoombabygear.com
Beaverton, Oregon
(503) 978-0972

Utah

Firefly Diapers
Lori Taylor
www.fireflydiapers.com
South Jordan, Utah
(800) 597-0561 toll-free

Fuzbaby Diapers
Lori Taylor
www.fuzbaby.com
South Jordan, Utah
(800) 597-0561 toll-free

Tennessee

Wooly Lamb Organics
Sharon Bible
www.woollylamborganics.com
Knoxville, TN
(877) 959-5262 toll-free
(865) 558-8202 fax

Vermont

Green Mountain Diapers
Karen Amidon
greenmountaindiapers.com
Vernon, Vermont
(802) 254-7361
(800) 330-9905 fax

Virginia

PM Organics
Marie DiCocco
www.pmorganics.com
Alexandria, Virginia
(703) 627-1512

Washington

Baby Diaper Service
Mark Stief
www.seattlediaper.com
Seattle, Washington
(800) 562-BABY toll-free
(206) 767-0179 fax

*This list is current as of
Sept 10, 2006*



Accredited Real diaper Circle Leaders

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Aldie, Virginia
annrmaclean@aol.com

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Redmond, Washington
mariewalter@gmail.com

To see complete descriptions of our business members and Circle Leaders, go to:
[Http://www.realdiaperassociation.org/directory](http://www.realdiaperassociation.org/directory)

Why I choose cloth: from our members

"It just makes sense! It coincides with recycling and composting and everything we do to live greener and to save money for our family. We, personally, are a single income family by choice and not because we can afford to be so by saving money and helping the environment to better the lives of our children and grandchildren is reason enough for us." -- Kayce Bailey, owner of Baby's Abode, Lenoir City, Tennessee

"I did not Cloth Diaper my first two children out of ignorance. I had no knowledge on the subject being the first among my close friends and family to have a baby and like many other moms I thought that rashes were "normal". It was not until my third was born that I began to cloth diaper the baby and her 2-year-old brother due to his irritation to the chemicals in disposable diapers. Now as a well-informed mother, I do not touch a disposable! Guess what...rashes are a thing of the past! My baby's bottom is soft without irritations from the chemicals. Her brother, still wears cloth diapers at night, and of course...no more rashes on his poor legs and bottom." -- Dr. Paola Weber, owner of Blessed Mothering, Plantation, Florida

"I have been living in Scotland, where the Real Nappy Network is very strong. I was introduced to real nappies during Real Nappy Week over here and have not used one disposable since that day! I have done hours of research and only become more and more passionate about cloth nappies/diapers every day. Since I am returning to the States, I am eager to get the same fire lit in my area of Washington DC/northern VA! I am sad that it does not seem to be as mainstream in the States as it is in the UK. It is our duty to change that!" -- Ann Maclean of Aldie, Virginia

"I choose to cloth diaper for many reasons, primarily to cut back on the amount of waste my family generates. I also feel that it is better for my daughter's bum! I think that we are a society that only cares about convenience and does not think long term about the damage that we do to our environment. It is really sad that cloth diapering is not the norm, in fact most people that I come across think it is strange that I choose to cloth diaper. The nurse at our doctor's office even said "oh you are one of those" when she saw my daughter's diaper. When I bring my own reusable bags to the store I get the same kind of reaction. I hope to change that kind of mentality." -- Rachel Lawson of East Lansing, Michigan

"Cloth benefits my children for today and tomorrow. It benefits them today by being a less expensive way to diaper my babies and helps me be able stay home at with them. And it benefits my children tomorrow by offering a better environment for them to

grow in. If you care for your child's present and future, cloth diapering is essential." -- Christine Seddon of Sunnyvale, California

"I chose cloth because when I feel a disposable diaper, I wouldn't want to wear it. When I feel a cloth diaper I love it! I don't like the way disposables rub on my boys legs and they get rashes from it. I don't like all the gel that ends up all over my boys bottoms when they sleep for a long time and pee a lot. I think it's pointless to make more trash when we don't have to. I love how easy or hard you can be, no one has to cloth diaper the same, if you have a lot of time then you can do the most complicated systems, if you're a busy mom like me you can do an easy system. I chose cloth so that my babies can be more comfortable!" -- Katie Watson of Chula Vista, California



Seattle, Washington. The meeting topic was "Welcome to your Real Diaper Circle Potluck. What system do you use? What systems have you tried? Describe your at home setup."

Preparing your interview (continued from page 2)

Your Role

You are the interviewer, the fieldworker, and the gatherer of the important information that makes the project what it is. Your interview is the rich stuff of the oral history of cloth diapers. Your preparation will make the interview appear effortless.

If you decide to interview more than one person, you will probably find that you gain skills and confidence from each interview. Plan one interview to start then improve as you keep going. You can't interview too many people.

Yes, You Can

If you have a copy of our Project Guidelines, you have a lot of detailed encouragement. None of the prep steps are difficult. Just take them one small step at a time.

1. Contact the Project Manager for your copy of the Project Guidelines
2. Create your plan
 - a. Arrange an interview
 - b. Research the time period of your interviewee
 - c. List your questions
 - d. Gather recording equipment and learn how to use it
3. Fill out the Project Plan electronically or on paper and return to Project Manager
4. Meet and interview Your Grandmother or another person who can tell you about cloth diapers

Isn't that simple? If any part of the process is unfamiliar because you haven't done anything like it before, practice, try it on a friend, write to the Project Manager for encouragement, or take a deep breath and just do it anyway. This is an adventure! Have fun. Especially if you have spent a lot of time talking to your peers about cloth diapers, it ought to be interesting extending that diaper talk to your grandmother.

By interviewing Your Grandmother, you are part of our effort to fulfill the RDA mission to "connect current cloth diapering parents to the long history of cloth diapering." You are the Real Diaper Association. We are all volunteers together, working to advocate cloth diapers.

- A free copy of the Project Guidelines is available to all current Real Diaper Association members who request it. This is a 49-page book, spiral bound so it opens flat if you need to take it with you to your interview. Please contact the Project Manager by email for your copy of the book and include your RDA member id with your request.
- Read more about the project and download Project Guidelines from the RDA website. <http://realdiaperassociation.org/Your-Grandmother-Should-Know/>
- For more information, contact Lori Taylor at YGSK@realdiaperassociation.org.

In the next issues of the RDA quarterly newsletter, Cloth Diaper News, we will suggest ways you might generate publicity for cloth diapers after you finish your interviews.

Cloth diaper advocacy (continued from page 1)

Since then, I have taught several cloth diapering classes in her natural parenting resource center. I am constantly refining my teaching technique and now have my class whittled down to 1.5 hours long. My teaching focus is on the "how-to" but I also provide some basic information on why using cloth diapers are a better choice. I basically provide a quick overview on all the diapering options available. It is a lot of fun and I am meeting lots of parents who are as passionate about cloth diapers as I am.

I have also learned that some of the parents on the parenting boards I regularly visit have converted to cloth diapers. They later told me that they'd never considered cloth diapers until they saw one of my posts referencing cloth diapers. Now they say they can't believe how easy it is and wonder why they didn't do it sooner. These same parents have recently become cloth diapering advocates on the boards. Now all of us reply to the same posts asking for information about cloth diapers. I am proud to know that I helped introduce others to cloth diapering and now they are advocating for it, too.

I have been amazed at what the power of networking and spreading the word can do for educating the world about the benefits of cloth diapering. The people you educate will go on to educate many others. Consider all ways in which you can educate, whether it be by writing a letter to Oprah urging her to do a segment on cloth diapering or leaving informational brochures in pediatrician's offices. Become a point of contact

as someone who has been there, done that. Advocating for cloth diapers is limited only by our imaginations.

Advocacy tips:

1. Know your facts so that when you hear comments like, "I've heard that cloth diapers and disposable diapers are environmentally equal" or "I just can't imagine having to dunk diapers in the toilet," you have the perfect opportunity to educate.
2. Be subtle. Appearing too passionate can come across as being pushy or crazily preoccupied with diapers.
3. As a general rule, don't talk about cloth diapers unless asked. Otherwise, you run the risk of appearing pushy. There are exceptions, though.
4. Change your baby wherever you can with your cutest diapers, wet bag, and wipes. This is a great way to pique interest and get people asking questions.
5. Establish yourself as an expert in your local or online community.

Lori Richardson lives with her husband and toddler son in San Francisco, CA. She teaches Modern Cloth Diapering 101 every 6-8 weeks at Natural Resources in San Francisco and is strategizing a way to spread the word about cloth diapers beyond the local level.

NATIONAL QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER

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**real
Diaper
association**

Real Diapers for Real Babies

Look for us at the Green Festival

On October 14 and 15th, look for Real Diaper Association at the Green Festival in Washington, DC. We will be on hand at the Green Kids Zone with Mothering Magazine, creating a diaper changing and nursing area for parents. Along with cloth diaper vendors, including RDA business member Karen Amidon of Green Mountain Diapers, we will hold hands-on demonstrations for festival attendees. As always, our goal is to show off the ease and comfort of cloth diapering to those environmentally-minded parents who may not be using them. We are thrilled to participate.



Article Submissions

As part of our member-supported resource center, Real Diaper Association is building a library of articles relating to cloth diapers. One year after print publication, articles from this newsletter are available on our website at:

http://www.realdiaperassociation.org/real-diaper-news_archive.php

We are pleased to publish articles consistent with the Real Diaper Association mission.

What kind of articles are we looking for?

- History of diapering, either a broad sweep or a specific peek into specific experience.
- Science of diapering, including health, diaper rash, or environmental studies

- Specific issues in cloth diapering, such as basic care, nighttime diapers, daycare issues, or how to keep costs low.
- Local cloth diapering advocacy. This might include focusing on reaching new parents, supporting those already using cloth, health care professionals, reaching media, or talking to local officials about solid waste issues.

The articles might be aimed at those who are new to cloth diapering or at those who have experience and want to share it with others, but they should be relevant to Real Diaper Association members. Articles will probably be friendly, written for a popular audience, though we will consider other approaches. We encourage articles that ask the reader to act on what they learn.

For more on our submission guidelines, please visit:

<http://www.realdiaperassociation.org/article-submissions.php>