

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mother-to-Mother Breastfeeding Support

Coldwater, MI. Keeping connected is important part of life in a rural area. Many of us choose to live in small, close knit communities because we value family, friends and neighbors. We depend on each other and are used to going to each other for advise, assistance and information. We pass down traditions, beliefs and habits and we pass down family values. Taking care of each other is a strong family value shared within our communities; and so is doing what's best for our loved one. We know that for infants and their moms, breastfeeding is best! To assist new moms with being successful in their breastfeeding efforts, the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency offers a Breast Feeding Education and Support Program through its WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program to assist new moms in learning how to breastfeed and to care for their newborn infants.

According to Kim Brown, WIC Coordinator at the tri-county health department, "We know that our clients respond best when they can develop a relationship with someone who has the same values, experiences and background. That's why we have developed this program. Pairing young mothers who have been trained with other expectant and breastfeeding mothers has resulted in real improvements in our breastfeeding statistics. After all, who best can provide encouragement or answers questions, but someone who has already walked the path you are on." And since human milk is best for infant development, encouraging breastfeeding early on and consistently is key to healthy babies and healthy children.

Kim Brown goes on to say, "Even when mothers are able to get off to a good start, all too often in the weeks or months after delivery there is a sharp decline in

breastfeeding rates and practices. This is especially true for moms who start out with the sole intention of breastfeeding. It's then that a mother-to-mother support system becomes essential." In the three-county area, peer support is offered to expectant and breastfeeding families through the health department.

August is Breastfeeding Awareness month and to help celebrate the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency is planning a series of displays in your community. If you are pregnant or are currently breastfeeding and have questions, make plans to stop by and visit the display. Breastfeeding peer counselors will be available to answer questions. Displays are scheduled on the following dates, times and locations:

August 3rd	11 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Dairy Queen	58928 U.S. 131, Three Rivers
August 6th	9 a.m. to 3 p.m.	Lobby-CHC	274 E. Chicago St., Coldwater
August 10th	8 a.m. to 12 p.m.	Farmer's Market, Courthouse	29 N. Howell, Hillsdale
August 12th	9 a.m. to 2 p.m.	Kroger	811 S Centerville Rd. Sturgis

If you can't make one of these events, you can contact the peers by calling the WIC site located in each of the three counties. The numbers are:

Branch County Office in Coldwater – 517-279-9561

Hillsdale County Office in Hillsdale – 517-437-7395

St. Joseph County Office in Three Rivers – 269-273-2161

Get your questions answered and learn more about why breastfeeding is best. Your local WIC site can help! Start by visiting our website at www.bhsj.org and click on the Clinic Service button at the top.

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