

Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency

August 1, 2014

Steve Todd, Health Officer
517-279-9561, ext. 0148#

Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director
517-279-9561, ext. 0143#

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Breastfeeding: A True Super Power

(Coldwater, MI). It makes children and their mothers healthier and stronger. It boosts babies' immune systems, protecting them from illness and infection. It guards them against childhood obesity and diabetes. It nurtures a unique mother-child bond. It reduces women's chance of breast and ovarian cancer and protects against post-partum depression. Pediatricians, healthcare experts, and millions of mothers all swear by it. What is it? It's breastfeeding and it's powerful!

August 1-7 is World Breastfeeding Week. August is also Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan. The Michigan Department of Community Health and the Branch-Hillsdale-St. Joseph Community Health Agency's WIC Program remind women they have the power to give their baby the best start in life. Currently, across the state, about 75% of women in Michigan initiate breastfeeding. That's great, but unfortunately, only 13% are exclusively breastfeeding at six months. Those percentages are often lower for mothers of minority descent.

According to Kim Wilhelm, Prevention Services Director for the tri-county agency, "Helping mothers overcome breastfeeding challenges will improve the number of babies who are fed this 'super milk.' At the health department, we can provide assistance and counselors who can help women breastfeed longer and with better success." Dave Fowler, WIC Coordinator for the tri-county agency states "We are proud of our program's efforts to improve the initiation of breastfeeding. In July, over 85% of our tri-county WIC moms had tried breastfeeding their newborns. That's great news for the health of both the moms and the babies, alike!"

There are many ways that communities can support mothers and babies that breastfeed – in the hospital, home, workplace, and in public. According to Governor Snyder, in his

Breastfeeding Awareness Month Proclamation, “Michigan is committed to increasing public support and acceptance of breastfeeding as the infant feeding norm.”

Activities throughout the state are planned to draw attention to the importance of breastfeeding for the health and well-being of mothers and children. Additionally, advocates in Michigan are celebrating recent passage of the Breastfeeding Anti-Discrimination Act, legislation that gives women the right to nurse a child in any place that is open to the general public.

If you are a WIC mom, a breastfeeding mom and/or understand the importance of breastfeeding, the health department would like to invite you and your family to attend the Michigan Annual Breastfeeding Walk, on Wednesday, August 6th, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., held on the Capitol Lawn in Lansing Michigan. A ‘Car’ Van is meeting at the following locations:

- Branch County: Meet at the Wal-Mart Parking Lot at 9:30 a.m.
- Hillsdale County: Meet at the Wal-Mart Parking Lot at 9:30 a.m.
- St. Joseph County: Meet at the Meijer’s Parking Lot in Three Rivers at 9:30 a.m.

Light snacks will be provided. Official walk begins at 12:15 p.m. and will include a photo on the Capitol steps. For further information about the walk or about breastfeeding, please contact your local health department’s county office.

WIC stands for Women, Infants and Children program and is a supplemental food and nutrition program that is free of charge for participants. It is designed to correct or prevent poor nutrition in pregnant, postpartum or breastfeeding women, infants and children up to age five who are at risk for poor health. WIC provides supplemental food, offers professional nutrition education, and makes referrals based on health screening and assessments of need. To learn more about the WIC program and to find out if you are eligible, just contact the health department or visit our website at www.bhsj.org. WIC is an equal opportunity provider.

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Branch County
570 N. Marshall Rd.
Coldwater, MI 49036
(517) 279-9561

Hillsdale County
20 Care Drive
Hillsdale, MI 49242
(517) 437-7395

St. Joseph County
1110 Hill St.
Three Rivers, MI 49093
(269) 273-2161

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