



PRESS RELEASE FOR LOCAL MEDIA

Central Michigan District Health Department

"Promoting Healthy Families, Healthy Communities"

For more information, please call: (989) 773-5921 ext. 8409

2012 E. Preston Avenue, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858, www.cmdhd.org

To: Clare County Area Newspapers

Contact: Kelly Conley, MS, RD, CLE; (989) 426-9431 ext. 8315

RE: 2012 Breastfeeding Awareness Month News Release

Release Date: For Immediate Release - August 2012

The Road to Lifelong Health Begins with Breastfeeding

During the month of August, communities across Michigan will host fairs, walks, picnics and other celebrations to bring attention to the crucial role that breastfeeding plays in the health and well-being of children. The Central Michigan District Health Department (CMDHD) is planning to celebrate the success of breastfeeding mothers and their babies in our offices during the month of August at our Harrison location.

In proclaiming August as Breastfeeding Awareness Month, Governor Rick Snyder recognizes the role that breastfeeding plays in reducing infant mortality and childhood obesity, two key health indicators on the Governor's Health and Wellness Dashboard. This year's theme, "The Road to Lifelong Health Begins with Breastfeeding" reminds us that the choice a mother makes in feeding her newborn will have lasting consequences for both herself and her baby.

The American Academy of Pediatrics states human milk is uniquely superior for infant feeding and recommends breastfeeding as the optimal source of nutrition for children through the first year of life. Research shows that breast milk contains immune factors that protect infants against infection while their own immune system is still developing. Without the protection that breast milk provides, infants are at greater risk for developing ear infections, eczema, diarrhea, lower respiratory infections, and sudden infant death syndrome. Since there appears to be a programming effect on the body such that babies who nursed have lower rates of disease long after they are weaned, not having been breastfed increases the risk for obesity, type 2 diabetes, and certain childhood cancers.

Additionally, mothers who breastfeed have lower rates of breast cancer and ovarian cancer. The longer they breastfeed, the lower their rates.

While the evidence for human milk feeding is clear, many infants are not receiving breast milk as recommended. Michigan mothers initiate and continue breastfeeding at rates below the national average and the Healthy People 2020 goals. Of further concern, Michigan is one of only five states that do not offer legal protection for breastfeeding mothers. In an effort to provide normal and optimal nutrition for our children, it is important to reduce the social, structural, and environmental barriers to breastfeeding that mothers encounter.



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Recognizing the importance of human milk, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Centers for Disease Control and National Initiative for Children’s Healthcare Quality are making funds available in Michigan to better support mothers and babies to be able to breastfeed. Michigan’s Department of Community Health (MDCH), Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Program has provided for breastfeeding peer counselors to be supporting mothers in every Michigan county.

Located at the Clare County Health Department, Rachael is new to the Peer Counselor Program. Rachael was nineteen years old when she had her first son and while she knew that she couldn’t buy the most expensive stroller or car seat, simply by breastfeeding she would be offering him the absolute best start in life. With that being said it was no easy accomplishment. Rachael had a supportive aunt that provided encouragement and reassured her that her body would provide the necessary nutrition for her new baby. All it took was one person telling her that Rachael could do it, that she was doing a great job and to just keep trying. Rachael is hopeful that becoming a Peer Counselor will give her the same opportunity to make a difference in someone else’s breastfeeding experience.

Breastfeeding Awareness Month provides an opportunity to highlight the benefits of breastfeeding and encourage everyone to support mothers who want to breastfeed. Contact CMDHD Clare County Branch WIC clinic at 989-539-6731 for more information on the Peer Counseling program and celebrations planned in your community.

You can visit our website at www.cmdhd.org for location and more information. Central Michigan District Health Department serves the counties of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon. Join us (Central Michigan District Health Department) on Facebook.

- 1) American Academy of Pediatrics. *Policy Statement: Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk*. PEDIATRICS, February 27, 2012; (doi:10.1542/peds.2011-3552).
- 2) CDC. Breastfeeding Report Card – United States, 2011. August, 2011
- 3) <http://www.wkkf.org/what-we-support/featured-work/st-john-hospital-mother-nurture-project.aspx>
- 4) http://www.nichq.org/our_projects/cdcbreastfeeding.html