For Immediate Release

Breastfeeding Awareness Walk to be held 5-7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 1

MORGANTOWN, WV (July 25, 2018) — In the not so distant past, breastfeeding mothers have been asked to leave establishments when they were performing one of the most natural tasks in the world.

Even with the enactment of West Virginia state legislation in June 2014 that affirmed a woman’s right to breastfeed anywhere in public, there is still some confusion and discomfort around the practice.

To help educate the public and make expectant and breastfeeding moms feel more confident, the 11th Annual Breastfeeding Awareness Walk will be held from 5 to 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 1, at the West Virginia University Erickson Alumni Center.

The walk is presented by Monongalia County Health Department’s WIC program and the Monongalia County Breastfeeding Task Force. Sponsors include Mon Health Medical Center, WVU Medicine Children’s and Cardinal Pediatrics.

The event kicks off as doors open at 4:30 p.m. There will be a Diaper Derby at 5 p.m., a walk around the Erickson Alumni Center grounds at 5:30 p.m, refreshments, storytime, presentations and prize drawings at 6 p.m.

MCHD WIC has breastfeeding counselors to help expectant and new mothers who are WIC clients learn about breastfeeding, noted Lynne Ryan, breastfeeding coordinator. In 1991, less than 20 percent of MCHD WIC moms tried breastfeeding. Since expanding the Breastfeeding Promotion Program and adding breastfeeding counselors, that number “has continued to rise to 54 percent” Ryan said.
The Breastfeeding Awareness Walk is held in conjunction with August’s National Breastfeeding Month (usbreastfeeding.org) and World Breastfeeding Week (worldbreastfeedingweek.org), which this year is Aug. 1-7. Both observances encourage the promotion of breastfeeding as a healthy and natural way for mothers to feed their infants. In fact, this year’s theme for World Breastfeeding Week is Foundation of Life.

Breastfeeding not only helps infants by providing nutrition and helping the immune system, which cultivates a healthier gut, but it also is good for the moms as well, Ryan said.

“Breastfeeding helps normalize a new mother’s weight, and the state of lactating releases hormones that are relaxing, which helps her body readjust after going through a pregnancy,” she noted.

The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends breastfeeding because breast milk contains antibodies that can help the baby fight off bacterial and viral infections, Breast milk contributes to proper weight gain and has been linked to higher IQ scores in later childhood.

MCHD WIC breastfeeding counselors provide advice and handy tips for new mothers, which not only include how to get the baby to latch on to mom’s breast, but also how to feel comfortable doing it in public.

“It’s a learned skill, to nurse in public,” Ryan said. “The more confident a woman gets, the less people notice her.”

MCHD WIC, which encompasses Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison, Doddridge and Taylor counties, also holds breastfeeding classes that are free and open to the public. In Monongalia County, those classes are held at 4 p.m. the first and third Wednesday of the month and at 10 a.m. the second Wednesday of the month at WIC’s location at 1000 Elmer Prince Drive, Morgantown. The Breastfeeding Awareness Walk is also open to the public. Raffle prizes include a car seat, jogging stroller, Pack ‘n Play and much more. There is plenty of free parking on-site.

The media is invited to attend the walk to provide coverage. Call Mary Wade Triplett at 304-598-5152 to set up an interview or to coordinate a visit. For more information about the Breastfeeding Awareness Walk, call MCHD WIC at 304-598-5181.

Check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD for up-to-date information on health and safety.

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