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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Washtenaw County WIC Launches “I Promise Campaign” *New Breastfeeding Initiative Wins March of Dimes Mini Grant*

YPSILANTI, Mich., May 1, 2013 – Washtenaw County WIC is pleased to announce a new breastfeeding initiative called “I Promise.” The initiative offers new moms breastfeeding support, education and assistance and asks the new moms to exclusively breastfeed their newborns for at least 10 days. A March of Dimes Community Mini Grant will help I Promise support 250 WIC clients that will become new moms this summer and fall.

“The vast majority of WIC moms know that breastfeeding is the best way to feed their baby, however, they quit within a week,” says Gayathri Akella, Washtenaw County WIC Breastfeeding Coordinator. “I Promise will equip new moms with practical information and emotional support from peer counselors and certified lactation consultants, thereby helping them build confidence and continue breastfeeding.”

According to Akella, lack of confidence is one of the major barriers to breastfeeding. “Moms perceive that they do not produce enough milk to meet their baby’s needs,” she says. The goal of the 10-day promise is to cross the first barrier to breastfeeding and build confidence in mothers. Once this happens, new moms are more likely to continue breastfeeding. Ultimately, the I Promise initiative aims to increase the percentage of WIC moms who breastfeed for at least six months to the Health People 2020 goal of 25.5%. Currently, the breastfeeding initiation rate among Washtenaw County WIC moms has met the Healthy People 2020 goal of 83%, but less than 21% continue breastfeeding for at least six months.

Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months after birth with continued breastfeeding for at least twelve months of life assures that both mothers and infants receive maximum health benefits. Breast milk is physiologically tailored to meet infants' maturing digestive systems,

ensuring proper growth and development. According to an article published in the May 2010 issue of [Pediatrics](#), statistics show if 90% of families breastfed exclusively for six months, the United States would save \$13 billion per year and prevent over 900 deaths, nearly all in infants.

WIC is a health and nutrition program that has demonstrated a positive effect on pregnancy outcomes, child growth and development. A family of four may earn \$42,643 per year and qualify for WIC. WIC is an equal opportunity provider. For more information, please contact Gayathri Akella, MS, RD, IBCLC, Washtenaw County WIC Coordinator at 734-545-3139.

Washtenaw County Public Health promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Visit us online at <http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>.

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