



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## AUGUST IS BREASTFEEDING AWARENESS MONTH IN MICHIGAN

### Mothers Urged to Learn the Facts, Benefits of Breastfeeding Their Infants

YPSILANTI, Mich., August 13, 2007—Which infant formula can boost your baby’s immune system, increase his or her chance for success in school, and reduce the risk of allergies, diabetes, and heart problems? (Hint: It’s made close to home, costs relatively nothing to produce, and is readily available.) Which related activity helps mothers lose weight, delay pregnancy, and decrease their risk of breast, ovarian, and uterine cancer?

If you guessed mother’s milk (and breastfeeding), then you are already aware of the optimal health benefits breastfeeding provides to both mother and baby. These benefits—and many more—are acknowledged by the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, the American Academy of Pediatrics, and health organizations worldwide. In an effort to promote greater awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding, Governor Jennifer Granholm proclaimed August 2007 as Breastfeeding Awareness Month in Michigan.

While Washtenaw County ranks second in Michigan in breastfeeding initiation rates among Women, Infant, and Children (WIC)-enrolled mothers, recent data also reveals that a significant number of these mothers discontinue breastfeeding shortly thereafter. Recent Michigan Department of Community Health (MDCH)/WIC data shows that 61.2% of Washtenaw County WIC mothers initiate breastfeeding, 17.35% continue to breastfeed at six months and only 2.2% still breastfeed at 11 months. “Healthy People 2010,” a national prevention initiative whose goal is to improve the health of all Americans, wants to see 75% of woman initiate breastfeeding, 50% of woman continue to breastfeed their babies at 6 months, and 25% of woman continue to breastfeed their babies at 11 months or longer.

To improve breastfeeding rates countywide, the Washtenaw County WIC program and other community members formed the Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition (WCBC) in June 2005. This group meets quarterly and consists of doctors, dieticians, nurses, lactation consultants/educators, nurse midwives, doulas (non-medical assistants in prenatal care, childbirth and during the postpartum period) and other health

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professionals. Their mission is to educate, protect, and promote breastfeeding in the community and to increase public support and acceptance of public breastfeeding as the infant feeding norm.

“We’re encouraging individuals who are seeking more information about the benefits of breastfeeding to visit or call the Health Department during the month of August,” said Gayathri Akella, WCBC Chair and Breastfeeding Coordinator for the Washtenaw County Public Health Department. “Our theme this month is “Michigan Families...Breastfeed with Pride.” During the month, WIC mothers can pick up a gift bag, and women who have breastfed for more than six months can register to win a gift package,” she said. “We hope that any woman in our community who is pregnant or planning a pregnancy will disregard the formula at the grocery store. The best gift you can give your child is inside of you.”

Additional breastfeeding information is available at:

**Washtenaw County Public Health**

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>

(734) 544-6700

**American Academy of Pediatrics**

[www.aap.org/healthtopics/breastfeeding.cfm](http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/breastfeeding.cfm)

**Centers for Disease Control & Prevention**

[www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.cdc.gov/breastfeeding)

**LaLeche League International**

[www.lalecheleague.org](http://www.lalecheleague.org)

**National Women’s Health Information Center**

[www.4woman.gov/Breastfeeding/index.cfm?page=home](http://www.4woman.gov/Breastfeeding/index.cfm?page=home)

**World Alliance for Breastfeeding**

[www.waba.org.my](http://www.waba.org.my)

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