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WASHTENAW COUNTY PUBLIC HEALTH RECOGNIZES ‘BREASTFEEDING FRIENDLY EMPLOYERS’

Ypsilanti, August 22, 2008 ---Twelve local companies were recognized for their “Breastfeeding Friendly” policies at a ceremony held August 15 at the Washtenaw County Public Health campus. Changing demographics in the workplace and increasing demand for more balanced lifestyles have helped these businesses offer family-oriented services that support lactating mothers and their families.

The Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition (WCBC), in conjunction with the Washtenaw County Public Health Department, acknowledged the following organizations:

Bronze Awards

Menlo Innovations; American Heart Association of Washtenaw County;
Comerica Bank, Toyota Technical Center; The Ark; Zing Train;
Inter-university Consortium for Political and social Research

Silver Awards

Abbott’s Landscape & Nursery; Generations Together;
St. Joseph Mercy Hospital-Ann Arbor

Gold Awards

Tree City Diapers;
Washtenaw County Public Health Department

The WCBC recognizes exemplary efforts of these companies that demonstrate an understanding of the importance of a supportive environment for employees seeking a better, healthier balance of work and family life. These efforts include providing private rooms for expressing breast milk, providing equipment to express milk, childcare close to the worksite, flexible schedules, and breastfeeding support resources for their employees.

In order to help create a culture in which breastfeeding is once again the norm, the WCBC is working to support the women who choose to breastfeed in all settings. “And this means wherever babies and mothers must be - from the hospitals when the babies are born to the work sites when mothers return to work,” said Gayathri Akeela, WCBC chairperson.

Breastfeeding friendly workplaces have been shown to decrease employee absenteeism by up to 57% due to the health benefits for both mother and baby, while increasing employee retention and enhancing employee productivity, loyalty, and morale.

Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition (WCBC) was formed in 2005 with a mission to increase local efforts in improving infant health by making breastfeeding the societal norm. Since one of the major perceived obstacles to breastfeeding is working outside the home, WCBC has paid special attention to the needs and challenges of these women. This was the WCBC’s first annual initiative to find, and recognize Washtenaw County’s “Breastfeeding Friendly” companies and organizations.

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