



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: May 16, 2008
Contact: **Gayathri Akella,** WIC Service Coordinator, Washtenaw County Public Health Department
E-mail: akellag@ewashtenaw.org
Phone: (734) 544-6794

Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition Launches Program

To Honor Employers with Lactation Support in the Workplace

Nominations being solicited from all breastfeeding employees.

YPSILANTI, Mich., May 16, 2008— At the April quarterly meeting of the Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition (WCBC), a new initiative was launched: Annual Washtenaw County Breastfeeding-Friendly Employer Awards. The first winners of these awards will be announced at a public celebration on August 15th.

Choosing to breastfeed is one of the earliest and most important decisions a mother makes regarding her child’s health. Health professionals agree that breastfeeding is the norm for infant feeding and should be supported by all members of the community. The American Academy of Pediatrics in their 2005 Statement on Breastfeeding and the Use of Human Milk encouraged “employers to provide appropriate facilities and adequate time in the workplace for breastfeeding and/or milk expression.” Despite the importance of breastfeeding for the health of all children, some women believe that continuing to breastfeed is not compatible with returning to work. Many are faced with insurmountable obstacles in their workplaces and wean before they want to.

The Washtenaw County Breastfeeding Coalition, a group organizations, businesses and individuals working together to support, promote and protect breastfeeding in Washtenaw County, recognizes that many employers currently support their breastfeeding employees. Our goal, with this initiative, is to publicly honor these employers and to let other employers know how they can develop lactation support programs in their workplaces.

Fax: (734) 544-6706
Communicable Disease

Fax: (734) 544-6704
Administration

Fax: (734) 544-6705
Public Health

HEARING IMPAIRED: (734) 994-1733

WEB ADDRESSES: <http://www.ewashtenaw.org>

<http://publichealth.ewashtenaw.org>



Breastfeeding support programs can be successful in a wide range of businesses, from small retail establishments to large corporations. The size and services of the programs are dependent on the number and needs of employees, and the space and resources available. Simple programs, providing 30-minute unpaid breaks, use of an office or private room to nurse or pump, and space in the break room refrigerator for storing the pumped milk, are beneficial and require little investment from the employer. More comprehensive programs may include specially furnished rooms (with pumps, sinks, and a refrigerator exclusively for breast milk), breastfeeding education, and access to a lactation consultant. These programs cost more to initiate, but have proven cost-effective overall. For example, CIGNA has reported annual savings of \$240,000 per year in health care costs and \$60,000 per year through reduced absenteeism due to their extensive lactation support program. Other employers report improved employee productivity, higher morale and greater loyalty. Support for breastfeeding lets the community know that the employer is family-friendly.

Nominations for these awards will be accepted until July 7th. The nominee must be an employer located within Washtenaw County. Nomination forms are available online at: publichealth.ewashtenaw.org/wic or from Barbara Robertson at 975-6626.