For Immediate Release

Breastfeeding Awareness Walk to be held Wednesday, Aug. 7

MORGANTOWN, WV (July 31, 2019) — The Breastfeeding Awareness Walk will take place at the West Virginia University Erickson Alumni Center from 5 to 7 p.m. Aug. 7 as part of National Breastfeeding Month and World Breastfeeding Week, which takes place Aug. 1-8. Doors open at 4:30.

The walk is presented by the Monongalia County Breastfeeding Task Force. Sponsors include Monongalia County Health Department’s Women, Infants & Children (WIC) program, Mon Health Medical Center, WVU Medicine Children’s, Cardinal Pediatrics and West Virginia Healthy Start’s HAPI Project.

The event begins with an awareness walk around the grounds of the WVU Erickson Alumni Center with banners and signs and ends up with refreshments inside. The event will still proceed if it rains. Plenty of activities will take place for all participants, including children, and there also will be chances to win prizes. Dr. Emily Nease, a pediatrician and an IBCLC at WVU Medicine’s Pediatric Clinic, will be the speaker for this year’s walk.

According to Lynne Ryan, breastfeeding coordinator for MCHD WIC, activities will include a baby crawl, face painting, drawings for gifts and visits from both Monti Bear, WVU Medicine Children’s mascot, and Cooper, West Virginia Black Bear’s mascot. Some of the larger prizes will include two jogging strollers, a car seat and a pack-and-play.

For the first time, a Daddy Olympics will be held as dads use dolls to perform a series of baby-oriented tasks. The winning dad will get a prize.

“Dad’s support with breastfeeding is so important,” said Ryan, who is also an International Board Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC).
The Breastfeeding Awareness Task Force consists of lactation consultants, midwives, obstetricians and pediatricians from MCHD WIC, WVU Medicine Children’s, Mon Health Medical Center, Cardinal Pediatrics, West Virginia Healthy Start’s HAPI Project and the OBGYN department at WVU Medicine.

“The task force has been around for at least as long as the walk,” Ryan said. “They are there to provide better breastfeeding support for Monongalia County.”

The Breastfeeding Awareness Walk began after a woman was approached in public while she was breastfeeding and someone made an issue out of it. After the incident, proponents decided to raise awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding as well as the need to breastfeed in public.

“Breastfeeding is encouraged for everyone and is the natural way to feed a baby,” Ryan said. “Although some women are unable to breastfeed, most women are able to with good support, because it is a learned skill.”

Many locations provide services to help breastfeeding women. These include hospitals, pediatric offices, support groups, lactation groups and WIC programs. Ryan noted that local rates of breastfeeding have increased since support has increased throughout the community.

Breastfeeding has many benefits for both mother and child. Babies get nutrition they need and have fewer illnesses, breast milk is easily digested, and it helps with oral and facial development. Breastfeeding helps the mother get back to pre-pregnancy weight faster, increases calming hormones and reduces the risk for breast, ovarian and uterine cancer later in life.

When it comes to breastfeeding in public, the West Virginia Child Right to Nurse Act “seeks to protect a child’s right to be breastfed in any location where the mother-child pair are otherwise authorized to be,” according to language in the act. The mother and child are legally protected and should not be asked to leave a public area just because a baby is nursing.

Everyone is welcome to the Breastfeeding Awareness Walk, which is an event to support nursing mothers. There will be free parking on-site.

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