



COMMUNITY HEALTH
& THE ENVIRONMENT

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 13, 2014

PEER COUNSELORS SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING

New WIC Program Offers Counseling, Training and Support to Growing Families

St. Charles County, Missouri – Research shows that breast milk is the optimal food for infants and that breastfeeding establishes a lasting bond between a mom and her baby. However, because there is nearly an entire generation of women who did not experience breastfeeding, many new mothers have no one to answer questions or concerns.

To provide accurate information and support to families who wish to breastfeed their children, the St. Charles County Women, Infants and Children (WIC) program has introduced a Breastfeeding Peer Counseling program. Trained staff and women in the community with personal breastfeeding experience lead this innovative program. Peer counselors have breastfed their own babies and have undergone essential training to help assist others. Through regular contact throughout the pregnancy and after the birth of the child, counselors will assist families with resources, questions and support, as well as referrals to additional agencies offering assistance.

The WIC Breastfeeding Peer Counselors have also begun a Parenting Support Group for families. The group is open to the entire community, not exclusive to WIC participants, and all parties are invited to join — including spouses, partners, family (including children) and friends. The group will share successes and discuss common parenting topics in an open-forum setting. The free group will meet at 10 a.m., on the fourth Saturday of each month (next meeting is November 22), at the Kathryn Linneman branch of the St. Charles City-County Library District (2323 Elm Street in St. Charles). Interested participants may call Breastfeeding Peer Counselors Emily Hancock or Ally Stuhlman at (636) 949-7402, ext. 6250.

Doctors consider a mother's milk to be the ideal food for her baby since it provides all of the essential nutrients a baby needs to grow and to enhance brain development. As the nutritional composition of breast milk changes over time along with a baby's nutritional needs and provides necessary antibodies that protect against infection, breastfed babies have a lower rate of sickness, which results in fewer expensive doctors' visits and less lost work for parents. Mothers also gain the benefits of bonding more closely with their child, improved bone density, and a reduced risk for breast, uterine and ovarian cancers. For more benefits of breastfeeding, please visit <http://www.sccmo.org/570/Breastfeeding-Lactation>.

Funded through the U.S. Department of Agriculture and based at the Division of Public Health office (1650 Boones Lick Road), the St. Charles County WIC Program presents pregnant and breastfeeding women, postpartum women, infants, and children up to age five with specific supplemental foods, nutrition education and counseling, health screening, and referrals to health care for qualifying participants. Statistics show that women who participate in the WIC Program have fewer low birth weight babies, experience fewer infant deaths, and eat healthier. For information on applying for WIC, please call (636) 949-7402.

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