Breastfeeding Awareness Walk to be held 10 a.m. to noon Thursday, Aug. 2

CLARKSBURG, WV (July 31, 2018) — In the not so distant past, breastfeeding mothers have been asked to leave establishments when they were performing one of the most natural tasks in the world.

Even with the enactment of West Virginia state legislation in June 2014 that affirmed a woman’s right to breastfeed anywhere in public, there is still some confusion and discomfort around the practice.

To help educate the public and make expectant and breastfeeding moms feel more confident, the 8th Annual Baby Buggy Stroll will be held from 10 a.m. to noon Thursday, at the Freedom Shelter at Veteran’s Memorial (VA).

The walk is presented by Monongalia County Health Department’s WIC program in Harrison County along with the North Central West Virginia Breastfeeding Coalition, the Helping Appalachian Parents and Infants Project (HAPI), Right from the Start and Café A La Mom.

If it is not raining, participants will begin the event with a walk around the grounds to promote breastfeeding awareness. Refreshments will be offered, along with goodie bags for the first 30 people to arrive. Door prizes will include a Pack ‘n Play, Baby Bullet blender, a backpack, candles and other items. There will also be a prize given for the stroller decorated with the best breastfeeding theme, said Harrison County WIC breastfeeding counselor Angie Rebrook. UPC Pediatrics in Bridgeport will be recognized for its efforts in promoting breastfeeding.

MCHD WIC has breastfeeding counselors to help expectant and new mothers who are WIC clients learn about breastfeeding, noted Lynne Ryan, breastfeeding coordinator. In 1991, less than 20 percent of MCHD WIC moms tried breastfeeding. Since expanding the
program and adding breastfeeding counselors, that number “has continued to rise to 54 percent,” Ryan said.

The Baby Buggy Stroll is held in conjunction with August’s National Breastfeeding Month and World Breastfeeding Week, which this year is Aug. 1-7. Both observances encourage the promotion of breastfeeding as a healthy and natural way for mothers to feed their infants. This year’s theme for World Breastfeeding Week is Foundation of Life.

Breastfeeding not only helps infants by providing nutrition and helping the immune system, which cultivates a healthier gut, but it is also good for the moms as well.

“Breastfeeding helps normalize a new mother’s weight, and the state of lactating releases hormones that are relaxing, which helps her body readjust after going through a pregnancy,” Ryan noted.

The American Academy of Pediatrics also recommends breastfeeding because breast milk contains antibodies that can help the baby fight off bacterial and viral infections, Breast milk contributes to proper weight gain and has been linked to higher IQ scores.

MCHD WIC breastfeeding counselors provide advice and handy tips for new mothers, which not only include how to get the baby to latch on to mom’s breast, but also how to feel comfortable doing it in public.

“It’s a learned skill, to nurse in public,” Ryan said. “The more confident a woman gets, the less people notice her.”

MCHD WIC, which encompasses Monongalia, Preston, Marion, Harrison, Doddridge and Taylor counties, also holds breastfeeding classes that are free and open to the public. In Harrison County, those classes are held at 3 p.m. the first and fourth Wednesday of the month and at 10 a.m. the third Wednesday of the month at WIC’s Harrison County location at 104 E. Main St., #2C, Clarksburg.

The media is invited to attend the stroll to provide coverage. Call Mary Wade Triplett for interviews or to coordinate a visit. For more information about the Breastfeeding Awareness Walk, call MCHD WIC at 304-623-1147.

Check out monchd.org and follow us on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD for up-to-date information on health and safety.

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