

February 6, 2018

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IN SANTA ROSA COUNTY TO HOST BREASTFEEDING SUPPORT GROUP



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Milton, FL – The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County WIC (Women, Infants and Children) program is excited to announce the start of our new breastfeeding support group, *The Milky Way!* The group will meet in the WIC office at the health department's Milton location, 5527 Stewart Street, at 5:00 p.m. the 4th Thursday of each month. The gathering is not limited to WIC clientele. All pregnant and/or breastfeeding mothers in the community are welcome, as well as nursing babies and toddlers. Lis Jordan, the WIC Breastfeeding Program Coordinator, and Alicia Kirchoff, Breastfeeding Peer Counselor will host.

Lis and Alicia are eager to host this monthly get together, in efforts to unify nursing mothers from all walks of life. "As women, we have the need to fit in somewhere. We all desire a sense of belonging," Lis says. She and Alicia hope to cultivate a mother-to-mother support network, as well as to foster friendships among breastfeeding moms in the area.

Lis reveals, "The original idea of *The Milky Way* came to me when I began counseling breastfeeding mothers a few years ago. I realized that we as moms not only need to talk, we need to be heard. We need to feel like someone is listening and that we are not alone on this mothering journey. Our goal is to offer a comfortable environment for moms to come and relax and to feel empowered. We know it takes a village to mother a child. And we hope mothers feel like they are a vital part of our village when they join *The Milky Way.*"

The WIC program provides supplemental, nutritious foods for low to moderate income pregnant, breastfeeding and postpartum women, infants, and children from birth to the age of five who are at nutritional risk. Breastfeeding promotion and support are integral parts of the program. Figures for the last reporting quarter (October 2017-December 2017) show an increase in Santa Rosa County's initiation of breastfeeding from 76.3 percent to 78 percent, well on the way to achieving the WIC program's goal of an initiation rate of 79.2 percent by the year 2020. The rate of infants who are breastfed for

the first 26 weeks of life are not as impressive; only increasing from 35.3 percent to 35.4 percent over the same reporting period. It is hoped that the support mothers receive through their association with The Milky Way will help to raise that number.

For more information on *The Milky Way*, contact Lis Jordan at 850-564-2272 or Elisabeth.Jordan@flhealth.gov. For information on The Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County WIC Program, go to: <http://santarosa.floridahealth.gov/programs-and-services/wellness-programs/wic/index.html>

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