THE MILKY WAY CELEBRATES THE GIFT OF BREASTFEEDING

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Milton, FL — The Santa Rosa WIC program's breastfeeding support group, The Milky Way, celebrated the holidays with a party at their monthly meeting on December 5. The event was a family affair attended by nursing mothers and babies, as well as older siblings and even a dad. Some were new members joining in for the first time, while others have been attending regularly since the group's first meeting in January 2018.

The Milky Way is the brainchild of Elisabeth (Lis) Jordan, International Board-Certified Lactation Consultant (IBCLC) with the Florida Department of Health in Santa Rosa County (DOH-Santa Rosa) WIC program. Drawing on her own experience as a nursing mother, Lis wanted to provide other young mothers with a place where they could find support, share their concerns, and help each other cope with the challenges all new parents face. No one attended the group's first meeting in January 2018, but Lis continued to encourage new mothers and membership increased. Soon, she was hosting an average of six to eight mothers and their babies each month.

Lis said, "Spending time with these mommas and babies warms my heart every month but especially during this Christmas season. I couldn't be more proud to watch them share in their breastfeeding journeys. The love in this room is abundant and I am honored to be a part of such beautiful empowerment for women in our community."

Tricia Rodgers, mother of Asher (3 years) and Kelby (18 months), joined The Milky Way in November 2018. Tricia said, "Our friends in The Milky Way have truly become some of our closest, more like family. My boys and I look forward to the group each month. We appreciate the loving and judgement free space created by our favorite lactation consultant and peer counselors."

The group is open to all nursing mothers in the community, whether they participate in WIC or not. Meetings are informal, there is no agenda and no minutes. The women meet to support each other, talk about whatever interests them, and enjoy refreshments while admiring babies and watching toddlers play.

Following the success of the Milton group, a second Milky Way will begin meeting at the South end of the county in the new year.
"I am thrilled to announce that The Milky Way will be expanding to the Gulf Breeze/Navarre area. We launched the Milton Group in 2018. It seemed appropriate to celebrate our second anniversary by adding a new location for our families in the south end of the county. We can't wait to see this new group take off in 2020," Lis said.

The first meeting will be January 31 at 10:00 a.m. at the Midway WIC location, 5840 Gulf Breeze Parkway. For more information, contact Lis Jordan in the Milton office at 850-564-2272.

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