



PEOPLE'S HEALTH

Cayuga County Health Dept.: Community efforts strengthen breastfeeding support

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It takes a community working together to make the right changes, and we are doing just that here in Cayuga County for our breastfeeding families.

How is this getting done? The Cayuga County Health Department, Auburn Community Hospital and the Cayuga County Breastfeeding Connection group have

partnered together to better support mothers who choose the preferred and most natural method of feeding their infants: breastfeeding.

Included in the Community Health Improvement Plan is a goal to increase breastfeeding rates in Cayuga County. This plan, written by the Cayuga County Health Department, works to identify women who are breastfeeding newborn babies and offer those mothers support to assist them with continuing to breastfeed.

The health department has partnered with Auburn Community Hospital to identify women who, after delivering their baby, would like to be contacted by the health department. If the mom wants to be contacted, a form would be completed and given to health department staff. Phone calls are made to families and, if needed, support is offered. Families can be referred to other programs and agencies for assistance. The health department has two certified lactation counselors who are registered nurses that can assist mothers with breastfeeding and, in some cases, can come directly to your home.

The Cayuga County Breastfeeding Connection Group, which started in 2011, is comprised of members from Cayuga County Health Department, including the Women, Infants and Children program and Nurse Family Partnership program, Cayuga/Seneca Community Action Agency's Healthy Families and Head Start programs, ABC Cayuga, Auburn Community Hospital and the Pregnancy Care Center. This group includes nine certified lactation counselors and three international board-certified lactation consultants. These professionals work with our local pediatricians to offer help to mom and baby in the early days of breastfeeding through a referral system. A local Breastfeeding Resource Guide was created to list the names and contact information of people willing to assist a breastfeeding mother. To view the guide, visit cayugacounty.us/health and click "mothers and children."

In addition, the WIC program offers breast pumps and after-hours peer support at night and on weekends through our breastfeeding peer counselor program for families who qualify.

This year, in support of World Breastfeeding Week Aug. 1 to 8, the Cayuga County WIC Program, along with support from the Breastfeeding Connection Group partners and area vendors, including Walmart, Cheesecake Factory, Applebee's, Dunkin Donuts, Momzelle and Medela, participated in the global Big Latch On, which occurred from 10 a.m. to noon Saturday, Aug. 1, at Hoopes Park. The Big Latch On set a new record with 14,889 children that latched on Friday and Saturday, with 17,081 people in attendance. Locally, we had 18 infants/children latch with over 50 mothers, fathers, grandparents and children in attendance! After the event there were raffles, crafts and healthy snacks for families to enjoy along with the opportunity for children to feed the ducks and enjoy the beautiful sunshine. Also, the Breastfeeding Connection Group put together a breastfeeding gift basket that was awarded to the first breastfeeding mother to deliver at ACH for the week.

All of these changes happened when our community saw the challenge and came together to keep breastfeeding successful. We may have many miles to go, but small steps will get you there when you have a team working together.