



2023 Breastfeeding Friendly Places Award Winners

PITTSBURGH – August is National Breastfeeding Month. To celebrate National Breastfeeding Month and recognize organizations who are committed to supporting breastfeeding in the area, the Allegheny County Health Department’s (ACHD) WIC Program, along with the Allegheny County Breastfeeding Coalition, hosted its 27th Annual Breastfeeding Friendly Place Awards on August 7.

The awards recognize workplaces, public spaces and other sites that make an extra effort to support breastfeeding in the community.

Allegheny Health Network’s (AHN) Wexford Hospital was selected for this year’s workplace award. The winner of the public space category was Hello Neighbor. The small business category was won by Wildman Chalmers Design. The University of Pittsburgh’s School of Nursing and the Jewish Federation of Greater Pittsburgh were recipients of honorable mentions.

“Breast milk is the best source of nutrition for all babies and fosters positive growth and development,” explained ACHD Community and Child Health Deputy Director Dannai Wilson. “For far too long, it was difficult for mothers and babies to find private, comfortable breastfeeding spaces. Through the Breastfeeding Friendly Place Awards, residents can see that that trend is changing for the better.”

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- The **AHN Wexford Hospital** offers break times for their employees to express milk in private rooms. These rooms have an electrical outlet for a breast pump, table, comfortable chair and offer a place where users can wash equipment. The hospital provides a freezer for milk storage. As a health care provider, AHN Wexford Hospital also makes its lactation staff available to support parents, as well as encouraged children to come during lunch breaks for feeding.
- **Hello Neighbor** offers a calm, quiet space for all parents, visitors and employees, to nurse or express milk. Uniquely, the space dually serves as both a lactation and prayer room, with rugs and mats inside, to accommodate cultural norms for many of Pittsburgh’s immigrant communities. The space offers a side table, a dresser with lactation supplies (burping cloths, nipple cream, nursing pads), as well as local breastfeeding helplines and contacts, and pictures of common lactation holds and positioning.
- **Wildman Chalmers Design** offers a private space to express milk with access to an electrical unit, sink, chair and small sofa. Employees are provided a flexible schedule for lactation breaks and their breastfeeding policy is noted in their employee handout.

Breastfeeding rates have been rising in the United States for over two decades. However, the duration of breastfeeding rates among older infants 6-12 months remains lower than national goals. With supportive employers

and communities, the ACHD hopes to see more infants exclusively breastfed for the first six months and continued breastfeeding with the addition of solid foods for at least the first year of life.

Supporting and expanding breastfeeding in Allegheny County is one of the primary tenants of the Plan for a Healthier Allegheny, 2023-2027, the county's community health improvement plan. The plan aims to increase human breastmilk feeding from 81.7 percent to 84 percent, as well as grow the proportion of infants who receive human breastmilk for eight or more weeks.

"Breastfeeding benefits both the mother and baby, so the further we can expand the practice in Allegheny County, the better the over public health of the area," declared Wilson. "Therefore, increasing the number of spaces and supports available to families who choose to breastfeed is a win for communities across our region and creates access to healthier, more inclusive options for everyone."

The Allegheny County WIC Program promotes breastfeeding as the gold standard of infant nutrition and continually strives to increase breastfeeding incidence and exclusivity rates within its program. The WIC Program supports its participants by offering prenatal and postpartum breastfeeding education, resources/referrals, and breast pumps to eligible WIC mothers.

The ACHD's Office of Family and Child Health offers services aimed at ensuring that Allegheny County's youngest residents grow up healthy, including breastfeeding resources. Their Breastfeeding Help Line was established to increase the number of infants receiving human milk in Allegheny County. The Help Line is staffed by registered nurse-certified lactation counselors and internationally board-certified lactation consultants. Families can call the Help Line Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Outside of those hours, residents can leave a message and a representative will call them back the next day.

The Breastfeeding Help Line can be reached by calling 412-687-2243.

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