

August 15, 2024

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Mercy Hospital Opens Baby Café Providing Support for Breastfeeding Mothers

Buffalo, NY. – August 15, 2024: In conjunction with World Breastfeeding Awareness Month in August, Mercy Hospital held a grand opening and blessing ceremony on August 12 for its new Mercy Baby Café, a breastfeeding support program, located in the Mother-Baby Unit on the hospital's fourth floor.

The Mercy Baby Café, which now offers in-person meetings on the first and third Monday of every month, is a space where pregnant and nursing parents can share tips and techniques, find support and assistance, and socialize with other parents. One-on-one feeding assistance is also available from certified lactation specialists. Catholic Health additionally offers the Baby Café virtually through Sisters of Charity Hospital. Both Baby Cafés offer online support meetings on Tuesdays from 11 am to 1 pm and Thursdays from 5 pm to 6:30 pm. **The program is free of charge and open to the community at large; no registration or appointments are required.**

"An onsite Baby Café has been a longstanding goal of Mercy Hospital's prenatal team and now is a key part of our Catholic Health System's Women's Health Equity Initiative," said Christina Lewis, Manager of Clinical Education at Catholic Health. "Together we want to change statistics and this ribbon cutting marks an important step in making breastfeeding support accessible to everyone, regardless of their location or transportation options."

The Catholic Health Baby Cafés are made possible through support from the United Way of Buffalo & Erie County which received a grant from the Breastfeeding, Chestfeeding, Lactation Friendly New York (BFFNY) program funded by the New York State Department of Health (DOH). United Way aims to establish a Breastfeeding Friendly care continuum through a coordinated community network to build and expand community-based feeding partnerships, as well as to reduce the racial and ethnic community disparities in the prevalence of feeding.

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Mercy Baby Café Opens, page 2

“We know Black women are twice as likely to die in childbirth as white women and 2.5 times less likely to breastfeed,” said Trina Burruss, President and CEO of United Way of Buffalo & Erie County, “United Way seeks to close these gaps and open opportunities at every stage of life, and that begins with ensuring every baby gets the best start possible.”

“The vision of Baby Café is to surround more people with professional and peer support as a critical element of successful breastfeeding practices. By making more spaces breastfeeding-friendly, we hope to normalize and equalize breastfeeding, allowing families to make the right choice for them and their children,” she added.

New mom Stephanie Stroud, who had a baby in December 2023, knows from experience how helpful it is to have the support of the lactation consultants at Mercy Hospital. “When you’re a first-time mom like I was you don’t have a handbook to follow, and I had a lot of questions,” said Stroud. “I didn’t know that milk flow can change a lot when breastfeeding and when it took a dip after I was home for few days, I wanted to know if that was normal and what I should do. Whenever I called with questions, the lactation consultants at Mercy Hospital were very helpful and supportive.”

Stephanie, who is also now a NYS milk bank donor, said she is looking forward to using the new onsite Baby Café to reconnect with everyone. “The onsite café will be very helpful for moms since not everything can be answered on a phone call. Maybe the mom is having trouble with the baby latching or she is not sure if her baby is getting enough milk. Knowing there is a place to come that is open to all mothers in the community regardless of where they had their baby is a very valuable service—you can’t put a price tag on it.”

Walk-ins are welcome to one of the scheduled on-site meetings held at Mercy Hospital at 565 Abbott Road in Buffalo in the Mother Baby Unit, 4th floor, on first Mondays of the month from 5:30 pm to 7:30 pm and third Mondays from 11 am to 1 pm. Pregnant individuals, breastfeeding individuals, partners, and siblings are welcome at all Baby Cafés.

To access the virtual Baby Café held weekly on Tuesdays from 11 am to 1 pm and Thursdays from 5 pm to 6:30 pm or for more information, please send your name, e-mail address and phone number to familyclasses@chsbuffalo.org or call (716) 862-1939. For virtual Baby Café meetings, details and a link for secure access will be sent to the e-mail provided.

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