World Breastfeeding Week (WBW) is celebrated every year from August 1 - 7 in more than 170 countries to encourage breastfeeding and improve the health of babies around the world. It commemorates the Innocenti Declaration signed in August 1990 by government policymakers, World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other organizations to protect, promote and support breastfeeding. Breastfeeding is the best way to provide infants with the nutrients they need. WHO recommends exclusive breastfeeding starting within one hour after birth until a baby is six months old. Nutritious complementary foods should then be added while continuing to breastfeed for up to two years or beyond.

This year's theme is Breastfeeding: a key to Sustainable Development! 2016 commemorates the start of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This is a broad approach using the sustainability theme. It will enable the breastfeeding movement to connect with a variety of development issues over the next 15 years (2030) for maximum impact. Breastfeeding is linked to the SDGs along 5 broad themes (1) nutrition/food security, 2) health, well-being and survival, 3) environment and climate change, 4) work productivity, empowerment, social protection, and 5) sustainable partnerships and rule of law.

It is important to remember that not only moms, but the entire community needs to be aware of the importance of breastfeeding during the first year of life. Many medical authorities, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, strongly recommend breastfeeding because breast milk provides several benefits for infants. Breast milk contains antibodies that can help the baby fight off viral and bacterial infections, contributes to proper weight gain and has been linked to higher IQ scores in later childhood. There are also benefits for a mother who is breastfeeding. Breastfeeding mothers have a lower risk of breast and ovarian cancer and tend to lose the weight gained during pregnancy faster because of the calories burned when they breastfeed.

Monongalia County will be celebrating World Breastfeeding Week at the WVU Erickson Alumni Center, Morgantown WV with a "Breastfeeding Awareness Walk" Thursday, August 4, 2016. A schedule of events follows:

- 4:30 pm doors open
- 5:00 pm diaper derby
- 5:30 pm awareness walk in the park adjoining the Alumni center
• 6:00 pm refreshments, story time and drawings
• This event is open to the public and the media and will be held rain or shine

This year’s sponsors are:

- WVU Medicine Children’s
- West Virginia WIC / Monongalia County Health Department
- HAPI Project
- Mon General Hospital
- Cardinal Pediatrics
- United Way Family Resource Network

For more information about the event contact the MCHD WIC office at 304-598-5181 or go to: www.monchd.org

For more information about breastfeeding and related services contact the MCHD WIC office at 304-598-5181 or WVU Medicine Children's lactation specialists at 304-598-4647.

This is the 9th year for this event and we hope that you will join us to show your support for a stronger, healthier and smarter community by supporting breastfeeding families.

WIC is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

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