



FAMILY NEWSLETTER



As we welcome August,

we welcome World Breastfeeding Month. We know not every feeding journey includes breastfeeding, but we do also want to acknowledge the work and dedication it takes to breastfeed a child. Thank you to Gloria Sorem, Lead Public Health Nurse & IBCLC at Sherburne County, for submitting the following article for this month's newsletter. We are grateful to have her expertise on staff and for our dedicated home visitors--many of which who have also pursued additional lactation education and certification to support home visiting families.



This year's theme is "Breastfeeding for a Sustainable Start in Life: Strengthen What Works." It focuses on helping families use the tools and supports that already make a positive difference. Breastfeeding is one of the best ways to give babies a healthy start. It provides the perfect balance of nutrients, protects babies from many illnesses, and helps them grow and develop. Benefits for the person doing the feeding include a lower risk of certain cancers and health conditions and helps the body recover after childbirth. Breastfeeding strengthens the bond between parent and child. For families, it can reduce medical costs and help ease stress during the early months. It also supports a healthier planet, because breastfeeding uses no packaging, produces no waste, and requires no manufacturing or transportation.

Many families want to breastfeed but face challenges along the way. Some may need more information before the baby arrives. Others may need help learning feeding techniques or figuring out pumping when they go back to work. The 2026 theme reminds us to "strengthen what works" by growing practices that are helpful.

Supportive breastfeeding practices include:

- Taking a breastfeeding class or asking your First Steps nurse to provide additional breastfeeding education during pregnancy
- Connect with other trained helpers like lactation specialists at your healthcare or WIC clinic.
- Tour your birthing hospital and ask about their breastfeeding-friendly hospital policies, such as keeping parents and babies together and encouraging early feeding.
- Ask your workplace how they will support pumping, with private spaces and flexible break times. It's the law. <https://www.dli.mn.gov/newparents>
- Attend a Baby Cafe, or similar infant feeding support group, near you (see page 3 for details) These groups help parents feel encouraged and connected to other breastfeeding parents and knowledgeable experts.
- Your First Steps nurse will continue to support your breastfeeding journey and goals.

When communities strengthen their supports, more families feel confident and comfortable with breastfeeding. This leads to healthier babies, less stress for parents, and stronger, more resilient communities.



As we celebrate World Breastfeeding Week 2026, we encourage everyone—families, healthcare workers, employers, and community members—to play a role in supporting breastfeeding. By building on what already works, we can help every child begin life with a healthy, sustainable start.



Learn more about...



In addition to offering free in-home lactation support from our First Steps home visitors, WIC is another no-cost nutrition and breastfeeding resource for families. WIC provides nutrition education and counseling, nutritious foods, and referrals to health and other social services.

Program Eligibility

WIC is available to pregnant women, new mothers (up to 6 months postpartum), infants, and children until they turn 5. Some benefits are also available for women who have experienced an infant loss or stillbirth (up to 6 months after the end of the pregnancy). You do not need to be a US citizen to receive WIC benefits.

How to Get Started

Families can learn more and apply at <https://www.health.state.mn.us/people/wic/index.html>



Locations

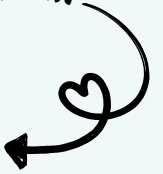
- Benton County: locations in Foley and newly at the St. Cloud Salem Community Outpost on certain days of the month
- Sherburne County: locations in Elk River and weekly at the St. Cloud 1010 Community OutPost
- Stearns County: locations in Waite Park, and additional Neighborhood clinics in Melrose, Sauk Centre, Paynesville, and St. Cloud on certain days of the month.
- Wright County: serviced by Wright County Community Action with their main clinic in Monticello, and occasional clinics in Buffalo and Maple Lake.



If you are not already a WIC participant, ask your First Steps home visitor to help you see if you're eligible and get connected.

First Steps Fun Facts

While our home visitors provide families education, families also teach our home visitors. Read what our home visitors shared when asked to name something a client taught them.



- "Success" can have many different meanings, and looks different for all.
- See the positive, even when things are hard.
- Each day gives you another opportunity to try again with your kids.
- Pregnancy, postpartum, and parenting practices can look different based on a family's culture.
- "Goals" can mean different things for different families.
- We can come from different cultures, but build a relationship, support, and display love in similar ways.
- How much mindset impacts life--both positively and negatively.
- How much patience and resiliency a parent can have.
- Being open to learning new things every day.
- Resilience
- That our families have to teach us and share with us about their cultures and what is important to them in their parenting journey.
- Strength and the ability to overcome many challenges.





Activities of the Month



Stick Ladder Outdoor Activity

<https://happytoddlerplaytime.com/stick-ladder-outdoor-gross-motor-activity/>

Also try using stuffed animals, towels, or pool noodles instead of sticks. Invite your child to walk, run, or crawl over the items.



Pom Pom Whisk Activity

<https://myboredtoddler.com/pom-pom-whisk-activity-for-toddlers/>

Talk about colors, textures, sizes, taking turns

Drop-In Feeding Support

Tuesdays

- 9:30a-11:30a, Monticello Community Center
- 9:30a-11:30a, St. Cloud YMCA 

Wednesdays

- 9:30a-11:30a, Wright County Historical Society, Buffalo 
- 1:30p-3p, Maple Grove Hospital

Thursdays

- 11a-12:30p, Cambridge-Isanti Adult Enrichment Center

Fridays

- 10a-12p, Options for Women -Cornerstone, St. Michael



=First Steps staff present



Vroom's 5 Brain Building Basics

Your child's brain develops most rapidly in the first five years of life. The interactions you share with your child during this time can help build their brain. Vroom encourages these simple steps to include in your day to day interactions:

- **Look:** use eye contact and notice what catches your child's eyes
- **Follow:** let your child lead the way and respond to their words, actions, and ideas
- **Chat:** your child communicates by sounds and gestures. Talk out loud together, even before they can talk, to help engage in the world around them.
- **Take turns:** when talking, playing, and exploring to help their brain develop.
- **Stretch:** build upon what your child says or ask follow up questions to stretch the conversation

Learn more at: <https://www.vroom.org/science>

Mindfulness Moment



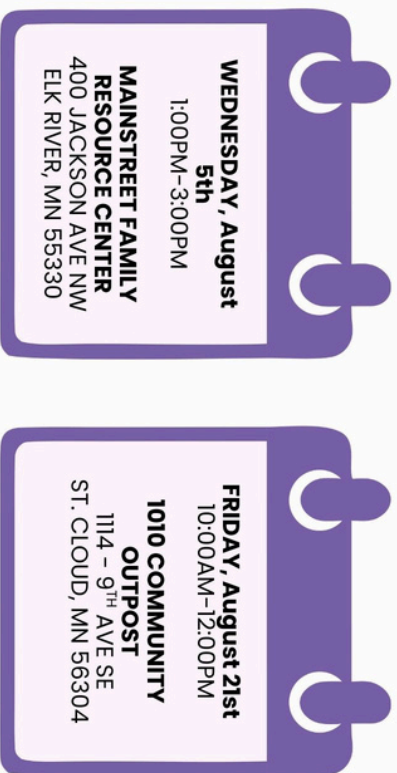
Mindful breathing is a key element of mindfulness that focuses on reducing stress, increasing focus, and promoting a sense of well-being. It can be added to your daily routine.

- Begin by finding a comfortable position
- Sit with a relaxed yet straight posture, and allowing your shoulders to drop
- Focus on the natural flow of your breath at the nostrils, chest, or abdomen.
- You can count breaths to maintain focus.
- Redirect your attention gently when the mind wanders



CRAFTS | ACTIVITIES | CONNECTIONS

Caregivers and little ones are invited to join First Steps for a fun morning of crafts designed to build connection, creativity, and community!



THESE EVENTS ARE FREE AND OPEN TO ALL!



PARK PALS

Bringing families together through play, laughter, and friendship.

Are you looking for new ways to connect and make new friends at the park this summer?

Join us for Park Pals Playdates!

Bring your kids for fun, friendship, and outdoor play in a welcoming, inclusive environment for all children, including those with special needs!



Stroller Moms



What to expect

Meet new people, enjoy the outdoors, and support mental wellbeing together.

Everyone welcome - bring a friend!

Move Your Body. Lift Your Spirit. Build Your Village.

Monday, June 15th 9:00am-10:00am
Mississippi County Park 2801
Broadway W, Monticello, MN 55362

Monday, July 13th 9:00am-10:00am
Woodland Trails Regional Park
20135 Elk Lake Rd NW, Elk River, MN
55330

Monday, August 10th 9:00am-10:00am
Otsego County Park
15198 96th St NE, Otsego, MN 55330



Celebrate

World Breastfeeding Week

with us!

AUGUST 5 | 1:30-3:30 P.M.



Goodie bags
for the first
100 attendees



Mommy &
Me support
group



Breastfeeding
photos



Door prizes



Vendor
booths



Enter to win a
baby wagon!



NORTH | **MAPLE GROVE**
MEMORIAL HEALTH HOSPITAL

THE BABY & TODDLER

EXPO

Learn,
Grow &
Shine
Together

St. Cloud Area
School District **7421**
Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

presents

Saturday, Sept. 19

9:00 — 12:00

Quarryview Education Center

FREE
Admission
& Light Snacks



Join us for a fun-filled event where little ones and their families can learn, grow and shine bright together!



Experience

Play & Discover ECCE
Children's Concert
Touch-a-Truck
Coffee Truck



Learn

Parenting Tips & Tricks:
"Thriving in Your Baby's First Year"
"Big Feelings & Calm Solutions"



Discover

ECCE & District 742 Programs
Education Resources
Health & Wellness Resources
Parenting & Family Support

GRAND PRIZE DRAWINGS - 4-person membership to the Great River Children's Museum and a Car Seat Stroller Travel System donated by D.J. Bitzen.

GIFT BAGS FOR THE FIRST 300 FAMILIES

More Info: isd742.org/BabyToddlerExpo

FREE

SPORTS PHYSIOLOGALS



SALEM COMMUNITY
OUTPOST CLINIC
DOOR-C
90 RIVERSIDE SE, ST.
CLOUD, MN

**4TH AND 11TH
AUGUST 2026
3PM TO 7PM**

NO COST

ALL ARE WELCOME, WALK-INS ONLY!

CHILDREN'S DENTAL SERVICES



Accepting
new patients
of all ages!



Cleanings



Exams



Fluoride and
Sealants

Call to make an appointment!



612-746-1530
866-543-6009



Salem Community Outpost
90 Riverside Dr SE, St. Cloud, MN 56304



August 25, 2026



9am - 5pm

For more information visit: www.childrensdentalservices.org