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## Peer breastfeeding/LC experience

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To: boardclerk@multco.us

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To whom it may concern,

7 years ago I was expecting my first baby. I was newly 23 and came from a family where breastfeeding had not happened for generations and was also very shamed. I really wanted to breastfeed. It was very important to me and as a young, scared mom I was so worried I might fail. I began receiving WIC and learned of a pilot project for breastfeeding education and support. I joined and met Lea and the other facilitators. I attended the educational classes and soon after my son was born.

He was a little guy (still is) at 5lbs 11 ounces. I knew, because of the educational classes, he should weigh his birth weight by 2 weeks. He would cry and fuss at times and I couldn't figure out why. I'd sing and rock him and offer him the breast often. I received a call from the WIC peer support counselor to check up on how things were going. They reminded me of love and weigh. My baby was around 2 weeks and I decided to go. He did not weigh his birth weight. I felt immediately terrible. My fears confirmed. My baby had been hungry. He wasn't getting enough. He wasn't transferring the milk. Lea sat with me as huge tears ran down my face. They immediately made an action plan. I was rented a hospital grade pump and shown how to cup and syringe feed him. The next week there were so many tears and milk everywhere. But he gained. And they continued to check in. And he gained and gained a pound a week for quite sometime. I felt immense pride in myself and such gratitude.

Without WIC I would NOT have had access to these services. Without WIC I wouldn't of been given any formal education on breastfeeding. Without WIC I wouldn't of addressed his needs so soon. I have said many times over the years, as I've told this story, this program SAVED my breastfeeding relationship. I run into to Lea from time to time and I introduce her to my son as the woman who helped him be able to have my milk. This program is invaluable, innovative, and desperately needed for mamas who do not have the means to hire an L/C, take a breastfeeding class, or pay for a hospital grade pump.

I went on to breastfeed through my second pregnancy, tandem breastfed, and collectively breastfed my two children for almost 5 years straight. None of this would of been possible without Lea and the peer support program. I later joined a peer breastfeeding support organization to give back because I felt so grateful for the support I received. With this organization I tabled WIC events. And saw Lea offering that same loving, open hearted, non-judgmental support to mamas. Without this program and access to L/C's it is my opinion we will take leaps and bounds backwards in supporting mamas in low socio-economic statuses reaching their breastfeeding goals. This is wanted. This is needed for our community.

Thank you for taking the time to read my experience and story.

- Megan Bergstrom

Sent from my iPhone