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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Health Department promotes World Breastfeeding Week at Druid Hill Park

BALTIMORE, MD (Aug. 6, 2011) – In celebration of World Breastfeeding Week, Deputy Chief of Staff Thomasina Hiers of the Baltimore City Mayor’s Office announced the city’s commitment to the protection, support and promotion of breastfeeding at the 2nd annual Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Breastfeeding 3K Walk/Run and Community Health Fair at Druid Hill Park.

The theme of the World Breastfeeding Week (Aug. 1-7), in which more than 170 countries participated, was “Talk to Me! Breastfeeding, a 3D Experience,” and addressed cross-generation, cross-sector, cross-gender, and cross-culture sharing of knowledge and experience about breastfeeding, stressing the need for increased communication about breastfeeding.

Breastfeeding is a low-cost means of feeding babies and prevents and reduces chronic and acute health problems, including obesity, in both mothers and babies. Yet the percentage of women reporting breastfeeding initiation in Baltimore City was 66% from 2001 to 2009, compared to 78% in the state of Maryland, according to data from the Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS).

“We need to not only implement methods to encourage and promote breastfeeding, but to increase awareness about the benefits of breastfeeding,” said Hiers, who also chairs the steering committee of the B’more for Healthy Babies campaign to reduce infant mortality.

[The Baltimore City WIC program](#) and [B’more for Healthy Babies](#) campaign are addressing one of the barriers to breastfeeding _ access to adequate workplace facilities _ by facilitating Workplace Lactation Support Programs across city agencies. At the Health Department, working mothers have a private space to pump and store milk and access to hospital-grade pumping equipment. The goal is for all city agencies to offer the same support to their employees.

“Women must receive the support and resources needed to breastfeed,” said Dr. Oxiris Barbot, Baltimore City Health Commissioner. “We shouldn’t be confining our discussion about breastfeeding to health professionals; a comprehensive approach to promoting breastfeeding is the best way to ensure the health of today’s babies as well as generations to come.”

The 2nd Annual WIC Breastfeeding Walk/Run is supported by the Baltimore City Health Department’s Bureau of Maternal and Child Health, the Baltimore City WIC Program, B’more for Health Babies campaign to reduce infant mortality, and other partners.

For more information, contact: JoAnn Smith, director of the Baltimore City WIC Program, at 410-396-9423.

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