

La Leche League International starts new affiliation in Auburn

By Viv Rosswurm, vivianr@kpcnews.net

AUBURN - When seven breastfeeding mothers in Illinois met in 1956 to offer each other support and encouragement, it was unacceptable to use the word "breast-feed," so the women dubbed themselves the La Leche League.

Leche - pronounced "lech-ee" - is Spanish for milk.

Today, the non-profit La Leche League International - a breastfeeding support organization - has chapters in 60 countries and across the United States, including the newly formed La Leche League of Auburn (LLL).

Leta True of Auburn and Lora Horn of Garrett serve as leaders for the Auburn group, which meets on the third Thursday morning of each month at DeKalb Memorial Hospital.

In addition to providing support and education to help new mothers breast-feed their babies, different subjects of interest are introduced and discussed each month.

Upcoming meeting topics include: Sept. 21, "Avoiding Common Difficulties;" Oct. 19, "Introducing Solids;" Nov. 16, "Advantages of Breastfeeding," and; Dec. 21, "Getting Off to a Good Start."

Leaders also offer tips on how to breast-feed discreetly and how to prepare for breastfeeding during pregnancy.

Next year, Horn and True hope to add an evening meeting to accommodate working mothers.

Horn, a certified LLL leader, has served most of the past seven years as a leader with the Fort Wayne affiliation.

She hooked up with True, who has been certified for about four months, and they decided to offer a second location in northeast Indiana, so participants would not have to drive as far to attend meetings.

Certification with LLL takes just over a year and leaders are required to have some experience at breastfeeding their own infants.

"La Leche League operates off of the premise that the best support comes from mother-to-mother contact," Horn said.

It's apparently a premise that works. The group has had only two meetings, but both were very well attended, Horn said.

"I've also had several counseling calls in the last month," she said.

DeKalb Memorial Hospital has been very supportive of LLL, giving referrals and information to new mothers, True said.

Both women got involved with LLL when they had their first children - True three years ago and Horn 10 years ago.

"I called my leader over and over again to make sure I was doing everything right," True said. "I needed that constant reassurance."

"In our culture, many mothers want to breast-feed, but they don't know where or who to go to for advice or help," Horn said. "Their mothers didn't do it, so many times they are not encouraged to breast-feed by their own families."

According to LLL, 71.5 percent of white mothers and 50.8 percent of black mothers were breastfeeding their babies at the hospital in 2000 - up from the all-time low of just 24.7 percent in 1971.

The league promotes breastfeeding as one of the best things a new mother can do for her child. LLL brochures cite the American Academy of Pediatrics, which recommends breast-feeding exclusively for the first six months and continued breastfeeding for the first year.

Studies have shown that breastfeeding promotes mother-infant bonding; reduces a baby's risk of illness and infection; helps mothers burn an extra 500 to 1,000 calories a day; reduces the mother's chance of breast and ovarian cancers and osteoporosis; and helps prevent post-partum hemorrhaging.

Best of all, LLL leaders say, it's free.

Earlier this year, the Breastfeeding Task Force of Greater Los Angeles estimated that if all of the women who participated in the WIC (Welfare Women's Infants and Children's) program breast-fed for one month, \$30 million in formula costs would be saved by the U.S. government.

LLL believes that any type of breastfeeding benefits babies. Therefore, True said, they will tailor parental support according to the mother's request.

"If they want to breast-feed full-time, part-time or just a short time, we can help them," True said. "Every drop of breast milk they give their baby is good."

La Leche League

What: La Leche League of Auburn - a mother-to-mother breastfeeding support organization. Meetings are free and children are welcome to attend with their parents.

When: Third Thursday of each month at 10 a.m. through the end of 2006. In 2007, meetings will change to the third Tuesday of each month.

Where: DeKalb Memorial Hospital, 1314 E. Seventh St., Auburn; third floor of the Medical Arts building; Room 303A or 303C. Watch for signs.

Who: For information, call local leaders Leta True at 925-4826 or Lora Horn at 357-3537.