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More than 60 “Mother-Baby Friendly Workplaces” in California to be Honored

Statewide Effort Culminates in Award Ceremonies

Sacramento-October 26, 2007 -- In recognition of businesses that have made important strides in improving conditions for working mothers, during October, regional breastfeeding coalitions, the statewide California Breastfeeding Coalition and the California WIC Association are honoring more than 60 businesses throughout the state as “Mother-Baby Friendly Workplaces.” These businesses provide support for mothers wishing to breastfeed their babies after they return to work. The businesses vary in size from 3 to over 1500 employees and include retail, restaurants, professional firms, hospitals, government agencies, and media stations. Special statewide honors are also being given by the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness to Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce (Monterey County), Memorial Hospital Los Banos, a Sutter affiliate (Merced County) and Johnson and Johnson, Pharmaceutical Research and Development (San Diego County) for their exemplary efforts in supporting breastfeeding employees.

In 2002, lawmakers passed the California Lactation Accommodation Law, AB 1025 (Frommer) requiring employers to provide unpaid break time and use of a private space, other than a toilet stall, for mothers to express milk during work hours. Many California companies have gone above and beyond what the law requires, providing space and equipment to express milk, childcare close to the worksite, flexible schedules, and parenting education for their employees. More employers are writing company policies to ensure lactation support for mothers returning to work. Support for breastfeeding employees has paid off for companies, providing \$1.50 to \$4.50 profit for

each dollar spent as a result of improved employee morale and productivity and reduced employee turnover and absenteeism.

Breastfeeding support programs have been successful in a wide range of businesses, from small retail establishments to large corporations. The size and services of the programs are dependent on the number and needs of employees, and the space and resources available. Simple programs providing 30 minute unpaid breaks, use of an office or private room and space in the break room refrigerator, are beneficial and require little investment from the employer. More comprehensive programs may include specially furnished rooms (with pumps, sinks, and a refrigerator exclusively for breast milk) breastfeeding education, and access to a lactation consultant. These programs cost more to initiate, but have proven cost-effective overall. For example, CIGNA has reported annual savings of \$240,000 per year in health care costs and \$60,000 per year through reduced absenteeism due to their extensive lactation support program.

“Businesses have an obligation to the health and welfare of their employees, including satisfying the needs of a lactating mother and baby.” says Moe Ammar, President, Pacific Grove Chamber of Commerce. “ It makes for a better employee and demonstrates to the employee that the employer cares. It comes back to the employer in loyalty and productivity.” Another example of a business supporting working mothers who are lactating is the Mother and Baby Source store in Davis which has received local recognition for a number of years. Besides supporting its own employees who breastfeed, the store invites any mother to use the separate room with couch, rocking chair and changing table. This past year, Michele Blansett, postal carrier for the downtown area, used the store during her route to pump her milk rather than cross town to the main post office. Michelle says, "If it hadn't been for this store, I honestly don't think I could have breastfed for as long as I did. It allowed me to have a quiet, comfortable place to pump and store my milk during my route."

Choosing to breastfeed is one of the earliest and most important decisions a mother makes regarding her child's health. Health professionals agree that breastfeeding provides numerous benefits for both the mother and infant. Governor Schwarzenegger has acknowledged the importance of breastfeeding, recently releasing a proclamation declaring August as “Breastfeeding Awareness Month”, and signing into law SB 22

(Migden) which includes several provisions for improved breastfeeding support. Despite the important benefits of breastfeeding, some mothers believe that continuing to breastfeed is not compatible with returning to work. With improved employer support continuing to breastfeed while working is more feasible.

“Breastfeeding has been consistently associated with better health outcomes among mothers and babies.” said Jane Heinig, PhD, IBCLC, a researcher at UC Davis, Executive Director of the UC Davis Human Lactation Center, and Editor-in-Chief of the Journal of Human Lactation. “By providing accommodation for breastfeeding employees, employers remove one of the most common barriers mentioned by mothers who wean their infants sooner than they planned. In return, employers improve their bottom line by lowering costs for health care and absenteeism. It’s a win-win situation.”

To learn more about the workplace awards, or the California Breastfeeding Coalition, visit www.californiabreastfeeding.org .

For information on the California Task Force on Youth and Workplace Wellness visit: www.wellnesstaskforce.org

For information on the California Lactation Accommodation Law: <http://www.dhs.ca.gov/pcfh/WIC/breastfeeding/BFResources.html>

For information on the California WIC Association: www.calwic.org

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