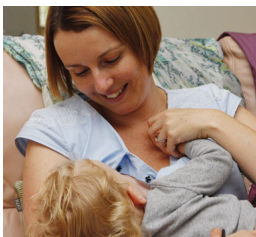


By RACHEL COLEMAN

• Leader & Times

Amid the noise and activity of the upcoming Seward County Five State Fair, mothers and babies have a quiet corner to recuperate and rehydrate. That's because the newly-formed Breastfeeding Friends Coalition will sponsor a booth for nursing mothers.

"It will be a quiet, private spot for moms and babes to stop and rest," said Elizabeth Irby, nurse and nutrition counselor for the Seward County Health Department's WIC (Women Infants and Children) program, and a coalition member. "We want to provide support and encouragement for mothers who want to breastfeed their babies."



The booth, located immediately adjacent to the one operated by Southwest Medical Center, will feature a curtain for privacy and refrigerated water bottles.

According to Irby, the goal of the booth is two-fold: to encourage mothers who are currently breastfeeding, and to publicize the importance of doing so.

“The coalition’s goal is to promote breastfeeding to all pregnant women,” she said. “The hospital is working on starting a program called ‘High 5 for Mom & Baby,’ there’s a LaLeche League in town, and this is just the next step in getting the word out to the public that breastfeeding is ideal for mothers and for babies.”

Women who opt to feed their children need support and encouragement, she said, “so our idea was to make a comfortable resting area for mothers who have come to the fair can stop and care for themselves and their babies.”

Nursing mothers need to make a point of drinking extra water, said Irby, as breastfeeding can leave a woman dehydrated.

“That’s why we’re stocking the booth with cold water,” she said. “That means one less thing for a busy mother to remember.”

“We just want nursing mums to have a place at the fair,” added coalition member Susan Lukwago, a nutritionist and WIC consultant.

For more information about the local breastfeeding coalition, contact Lukwago at 626-3262.