

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:** March 22, 2016

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## **Brookings Community Pilots Breastfeeding Business Initiative**

PIERRE, S.D. – A Brookings group is encouraging local businesses to take an online pledge to support breastfeeding customers and employees.

Brookings was selected as the pilot community for the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative. Brookings Supports Breastfeeding is a group of health professionals and educators who are working with the department to reach out to Brookings businesses to take the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge and support breastfeeding mothers in the workplace, whether they are employees or customers.

The initiative supports the Department of Health's 2015-2020 Strategic Plan goal to increase the proportion of mothers who breastfeed their babies at least six months.

"Breastfeeding has numerous health benefits to mothers and babies, but it is also good for businesses. Breastfeeding mothers are more likely to patronize businesses where they feel comfortable and businesses with breastfeeding programs have higher employee retention rates," said Megan Hlavacek, healthy foods coordinator for the department. "Breastfeeding moms also miss work less often and report higher work satisfaction and productivity."

Brookings Health System, South Dakota State University and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce were the primary partners represented by the Brookings Supports Breastfeeding team and the first to sign the pledge. The City of Brookings, Brookings County, 3M, Children's Museum of South Dakota and Hy-Vee also took the pledge to support breastfeeding.

In early April, SDSU students will begin visiting many Brookings businesses, asking them to support their customers and employees by taking the pledge as well.

"The Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge commits a business to providing an environment where mothers can enjoy a welcoming attitude from staff, management and other patrons while breastfeeding and accommodating employees to allow appropriate time and space necessary to pump. Businesses will also hang a *Breastfeeding Welcome Here* window cling in each public entrance to the business establishment. The pledge demonstrates a commitment to mothers, children and families in Brookings," said Brookings Health System's Obstetrics Director Mary Schwaegerl.

Businesses that sign the pledge will receive a Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Kit which includes the *Breastfeeding Welcome Here* window cling, information on the benefits to mothers, babies and businesses, staff education tips, model policy language and more.

After completing the Brookings pilot, the department will assess outcomes and discuss opportunities to expand the initiative to other communities statewide.

Visit [www.healthysd.gov/breastfeeding](http://www.healthysd.gov/breastfeeding) to learn more about the initiative or take the pledge.

BRING YOUR DREAMS.



**Tim Reed**

**Office of the Mayor**

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Dear Brookings Business Owner:

On behalf of the city of Brookings, I would like to convey my support for the Brookings Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative. The South Dakota Department of Health created this initiative and chose Brookings as the inaugural implementation community. This initiative will collaborate with businesses to build comprehensive support for breastfeeding mothers, both as business customers and employees.

Brookings Health System, South Dakota State University and Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce have formed a partnership and teamed up to inform Brookings business owners on ways to support employees and customers through a breastfeeding-friendly business environment. As a business owner, I encourage you to take the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge at: [www.healthySD.gov/Breastfeeding](http://www.healthySD.gov/Breastfeeding) and help make Brookings the first Breastfeeding-Friendly Business community in the state. Your commitment will provide a positive environment where mothers can enjoy a welcoming attitude from staff, management and other patrons while breastfeeding.

To quote the African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child." Breastfeeding is one of the most beneficial forms of nutrition as well as preventative medicine a mother can provide her child. This initiative helps mothers give their children the best start in life as well as empowers them to meet their breastfeeding goals. By supporting these mothers as they nurture their babies, Brookings will be one step closer to procuring the village.

Sincerely,  
CITY OF BROOKINGS

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tim Reed". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

Tim Reed  
Mayor

## Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Pledge Background

- Breastfeeding is the nutritional gold standard for infant feeding and nutrition. Scientific evidence overwhelmingly indicates that breastfeeding is the optimal method of infant feeding and should be promoted and supported to ensure not only the health of the child, but also the health of the mother. According to the World Health Organization and the United Nations Children’s Fund, breastfeeding is the single most powerful modality available to health care providers to reduce the risk of common causes of infant morbidity.
- The South Dakota Department of Health has developed the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative to educate and encourage businesses to support both breastfeeding customers and employees. Our goal is to make breastfeeding in public a **non-event** and making pumping at work a **non-event**.
- In April 2015 the Department of Health selected Brookings to pilot the Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Initiative due to the work already underway to improve breastfeeding support in the local business community.
  - In November of 2014, the Brookings Supports Breastfeeding project brought together community members and business owners to have an open community conversation about breastfeeding in Brookings businesses.
  - Community surveys and focus group studies were done to determine barriers specific to Brookings as well as action steps and various approaches to address those concerns.
  - At the same time, the Brookings Health System was working diligently to obtain status as a Baby-Friendly Hospital. The average time for a hospital to achieve this designation is 4-5 years; Brookings achieved after just 2 years, and on October 19, 2015 became the first non-Indian Health Services hospital in the state designated as a Baby-Friendly Hospital!
- The Brookings Supports Breastfeeding team members represent the Brookings Health System, South Dakota State University, and the Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce and they are the primary partners for this initiative.
- Businesses who sign are pledging to:
  - Provide a welcoming environment where breastfeeding mothers are able to breastfeed in public spaces within the business.
  - Encourage a welcoming attitude from staff, management, and to the fullest extent possible, other customers.
  - Place the *Breastfeeding Welcome Here* window cling in each public entrance to the business establishment.
  - Accommodate breastfeeding employees to allow appropriate time and space necessary to pump, to best of their ability.
- Each business that pledges will receive a Breastfeeding-Friendly Business Kit that includes information on current best practices and provides businesses with the resources needed for success. Businesses that pledge will also be promoted on the Healthy South Dakota website and through various social media venues.
- On March 21, 2016 the following businesses took the pledge as a Breastfeeding-Friendly Business:
  - **South Dakota State University:** President David Chicoine
  - **Brookings Health System:** Jason Merkley, CEO and President
  - **Brookings Area Chamber of Commerce:** Director of Membership, Joni Frolek
  - **3M:** Janet Ambur, Occupational Health Nurse
  - **City of Brookings:** Jeff Weldon, City Manager
  - **Brookings County:** Lee Ann Pierce, County Commissioner
  - **Children’s Museum of South Dakota:** Kate Treiber, Executive Director
  - **HyVee:** Curt Osmanski, Store Manager