Focusing on nutrition for women, infants and children

HAYDEN, ID – As moms, we can all relate to the struggles, stress and pure joy of pregnancy and child rearing. While we are pregnant we are bombarded with “don’t eat that” or “make sure you are eating enough of this.”

Then once your little bundle of joy arrives, the real fun begins. Should I breastfeed or give formula? When should I start giving solids? What should I feed my child first? These are questions every first-time mother faces.

At Panhandle Health District we provide a supplemental nutrition program for Women, Infants & Children, (WIC), that offers the answers and support new mothers need during and after their pregnancy. WIC is here to provide individualized nutrition education and counseling, breastfeeding support, referrals to health and community resources and nutritious food packages. With these tools we hope to instill a lifetime of healthy choices for both mother and baby.

“Panhandle Health District has the highest breastfeeding rates in Idaho at 72% of our moms breastfeeding for at least six months,” said Kim Young, WIC coordinator at Panhandle Health District Region 1. “WIC provides mothers with a support system that gives them the confidence they need during times when their personal lives aren’t so perfect.”

Stephanie Goss is currently a clinical assistant and breastfeeding peer counselor at Panhandle Health District’s WIC office, but she was once a WIC client too.

“I was first introduced to WIC as a client after I found out that I was pregnant,” said Goss. “The WIC staff provided so much support and nutrition education throughout my pregnancy and provided breastfeeding support after I had my daughter.”
Goss and her then fiancé found out they were expecting when she was 22 and had recently graduated from college. Even though both Goss and her fiancé had jobs, they were still living paycheck to paycheck.

“I graduated in May and we found out we were pregnant in August,” said Goss. “To say it was a surprise would be an understatement! I was working at a smoothie bar in a gym when one of my customers told me about resources available for pregnant women. At my first visit, they set me up with a social worker, and she came to my house and helped me get signed up for Medicaid, and suggested that I go sign up for WIC as well. WIC helped us ensure that we had at least the staple foods in the house. The program was a lifesaver for us while I was pregnant and after I had my daughter.”

With WIC, Goss was able to keep her family healthy and began a career in a field she is passionate about. Through her work with WIC, Goss helps women just like her make it through tough times in their lives.

“I know what these women are going through and I can tell them my story,” said Goss. “I’m able to let them know that what they are going through isn’t going to last forever, and this program helps make that happen.”

Goss and other WIC clients can expect the following major benefits from WIC.

• Nutrition education based on your family’s needs, provided in a safe one-on-one environment.

• Food vouchers to purchase nutritionally based foods to supplement you and your family’s diet.

• Access to Registered Dietitians that offer personalized care plans based on specific nutritional needs.

• Access to Breastfeeding Specialists and Breastfeeding Peer Counselors that offer support and encouragement to prolong your breastfeeding experience.

• Breastfeeding classes, free of charge, to you and your family members to help you get ready for your baby’s arrival.

• Referrals to other services and programs in our community.

WIC also has an economic benefit that positively impacts local communities. Not only does WIC ensure children get a strong, healthy start in life, it brings money and nutritious food into communities. There are six WIC locations throughout North Idaho to serve you including, Hayden, Sandpoint, Kellogg, Bonners Ferry, St. Maries and Post Falls.
If you would like to learn more about WIC, please visit www.panhandlehealthdistrict.org/wic.

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Panhandle Health District provides over 40 different public health programs to families, individuals and organizations in northern Idaho. From food and drinking water safety to health education and disease control, public health services are critical to ensure our community is a safe and healthy place to live, work and play.

The PHD team is made up of nurses, nutritionists, environmental health specialists, health educators and many other dedicated professionals with a common goal to deliver vital public health services.

Panhandle Health District is one of seven health districts in the state of Idaho.