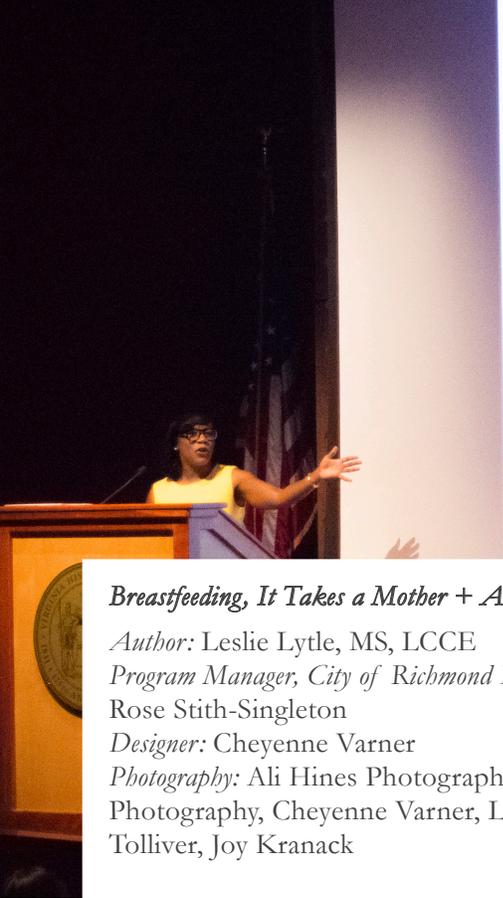


BREASTFEEDING

IT TAKES A MOTHER + A VILLAGE



Whatever the question, the answer is in the community.



Breastfeeding, It Takes a Mother + A Village

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Promoting a breastfeeding-friendly environment is an enormous undertaking that has involved the aligned effort of multiple organizations and hundreds of people over the course of the eight years this document covers. Any attempt at acknowledgement will inevitably leave some names out: for this we apologize in advance.

We are indebted to past and present #RVAbreastfeeds grant partners and the countless volunteers who have contributed to our activities. Their passion, creativity, and commitment are evident in these pages.

We are especially grateful to representatives from the following organizations, who have shaped #RVAbreastfeeds activities through informal conversations, formal meetings,

and by contributing institutional knowledge and/or resources: Anthem Healthkeepers Plus, Bon Secours Richmond, Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute, cBe Consulting, HCA Richmond, Healthy Hearts Plus II, Institute for Public Health Innovation, the National Association of City and County Health Officials, Nurture, Richmond City Health District, Richmond City WIC, the Mayor's Breastfeeding Commission, The Spark Mill, VCU Health, VCU Institute for Women's Health, Virginia Breastfeeding Task Force, the Virginia Department of Health, and William Byrd Community House.

In addition, we thank the following individuals for their contributions to improving the breastfeeding environment in Richmond: Ana Edwards, Angel Smith, Ann Creighton-Zollar, BJ Northington-Winston, Cecilia Barbosa, Claire Sadegzadeh, Daytriel McQuinn, Delores McQuinn, Elizabeth Gray Bayne, Glencora Gudger, Jarene Fleming, Jennifer McClellan, Kate Noon, Kimberly Seals Allers, Lauren Winston, Rashad Lewis, Saba Masho, Shakeya Lewis, Sylvia Rosario, Tasha Dixon, Tiana Smith and the members of the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative Community Advisory Board.

In memory of Saba Masho, MD, MPH, DrPH.

Timeline 2011

JANUARY

The Surgeon General's Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding is issued.

JULY

Mayor Dwight C. Jones launches the Mayor's Breastfeeding Commission.

2012

The Mayor's Breastfeeding Commission continues to meet regularly through July 2012.

APRIL The VCU Department of Epidemiology and Community Health and Richmond Healthy Start Initiative receive a \$15,975 VCU Community Engagement grant to understand the infant feeding experiences of first time African-American mothers who are recipients of WIC.

INTRODUCTION

Breastmilk is universally recommended as the best first food for infants, and feeding at the breast has benefits for both the breastfeeding parent and child. The health and economic impacts of breastfeeding are well established, and could help diminish the burden of disease, particularly within African-American and Hispanic communities, which experience higher infant mortality rates and more chronic illnesses than their white counterparts. Yet in our culture a majority of breastfeeding parents struggle to meet their own breastfeeding goals, let alone achieve the medically recommended milestone of six months of exclusive breastfeeding followed by continued breastfeeding to at least one year.

This report summarizes the history and activities of #RVAbreastfeeds, a Healthy Community Action Team that seeks to reduce childhood obesity in the City of Richmond through policy, infrastructure, and environmental changes that promote a breastfeeding friendly community. In the pages that follow we highlight the health and economic impacts of breastfeeding, identify common breastfeeding obstacles, chronicle the historical roots of #RVAbreastfeeds, and describe our activities to improve the breastfeeding environment in the City of Richmond.

This report was made possible through funding from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth and Richmond Healthy Start Initiative.

“Women don’t breastfeed, cultures do.”

Kimberly Seals Allers



2013

JULY Richmond Healthy Start Initiative receives a \$53,131 Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT) grant to support the creation of the Richmond Health Action Alliance (RHAA).

FEBRUARY Part-time Coordinator is hired to lead formation and implementation of the RHAA.

MARCH Mayor’s Breastfeeding Commission members and other community stakeholders are invited to inaugural meeting of the RHAA.

WHY SUPPORT BREASTFEEDING?



Breastfeeding is...

Universally Recommended

Multiple national and international health organizations identify breastfeeding as infants' best first food. In the United States, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends babies be exclusively breastfed* for the first 6 months of life and continue to breastfeed for a year or as long as is mutually desired by the mother and baby.

Breastfeeding...

Significantly Impacts Children's Health

Breastfed babies have lower risks of asthma, leukemia, obesity, ear infections, eczema, diarrhea and vomiting, lower respiratory infections, necrotizing enterocolitis (a disease that affects the gastrointestinal tract in premature babies), sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS), and Type 2 diabetes.^{2,3}

*Exclusive breastfeeding means baby needs no additional foods or fluids except Vitamin D unless medically indicated.

Breastfeeding...

Impacts Parents' Health Too

Breastfeeding is associated with less postpartum depression, anxiety, and "feeling blue," and lowered lifetime risk of heart disease, breast and ovarian cancer, and Type 2 diabetes.^{4,5}

Breastfeeding...

Has Economic Value

If 90% of US mothers could achieve optimal breastfeeding,* we could prevent 2619 premature maternal deaths and 721 child deaths, and save \$17.4 billion in maternal health costs and \$13 billion in child health costs each year.^{6,7,8}

Breastfeeding...

Impacts Our Communities

Breastfeeding results in healthier, more resilient families, lowered health care costs, fewer work days lost to illness, and less environmental waste.⁹

*Exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of followed by continued breastfeeding for one year.

Timeline 2013

JULY The Breastfeeding Commission presents final recommendations to the Mayor and is formally dissolved.

AUGUST RHAA hosts the Big Latch On RVA at the Virginia State Capitol, attracting 227 attendees.

MARCH Rose Stith-Singleton presents "Forging Partnerships for Breastfeeding in Richmond, Virginia," at the 2014 Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference.

BARRIERS TO BREASTFEEDING

While breastfeeding rates have been increasing in the US, 60% of mothers do not breastfeed for as long as they intend to.¹⁰ Breastfeeding barriers include:

Lack of paid family leave

Nationally, 25% of mothers return to work at less than two weeks postpartum, disproportionately affecting communities of color.¹¹

Cultural norms/Lack of family support¹²

Lack of workplace support

Insufficient education of care providers

Lack of culturally relevant lactation support



“I work for a nonprofit organization and we don’t have a destination place for breastfeeding or pumping.”

Local breastfeeding mother

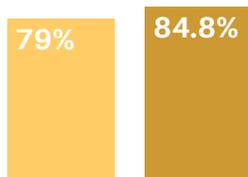
Formula advertising

MAY RHAA and RHSI support participation of eleven African-American and Hispanic community members in a 20-hour lactation educator training.

JUNE RHAA launches *Let’s Talk Breastfeeding: First Food and Next Foods*, first of a series of mini-festivals bringing families together to explore, celebrate and learn about breastfeeding and early nutrition.

BREASTFEEDING DISPARITIES

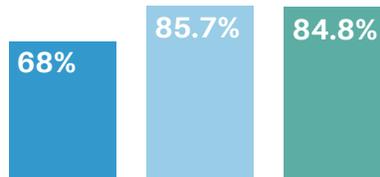
Mothers' Age



- mothers 20-29 years old
- mothers 30+ years old

Younger mothers (aged 20 to 29 years) are less likely to ever breastfeed (79.0%) than mothers aged 30 years or older (84.8%).

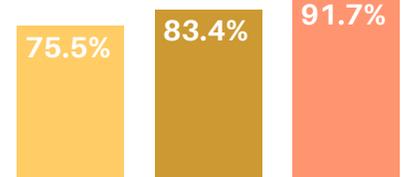
Race



- non-Hispanic Black infants
- non-Hispanic White infants
- Hispanic infants

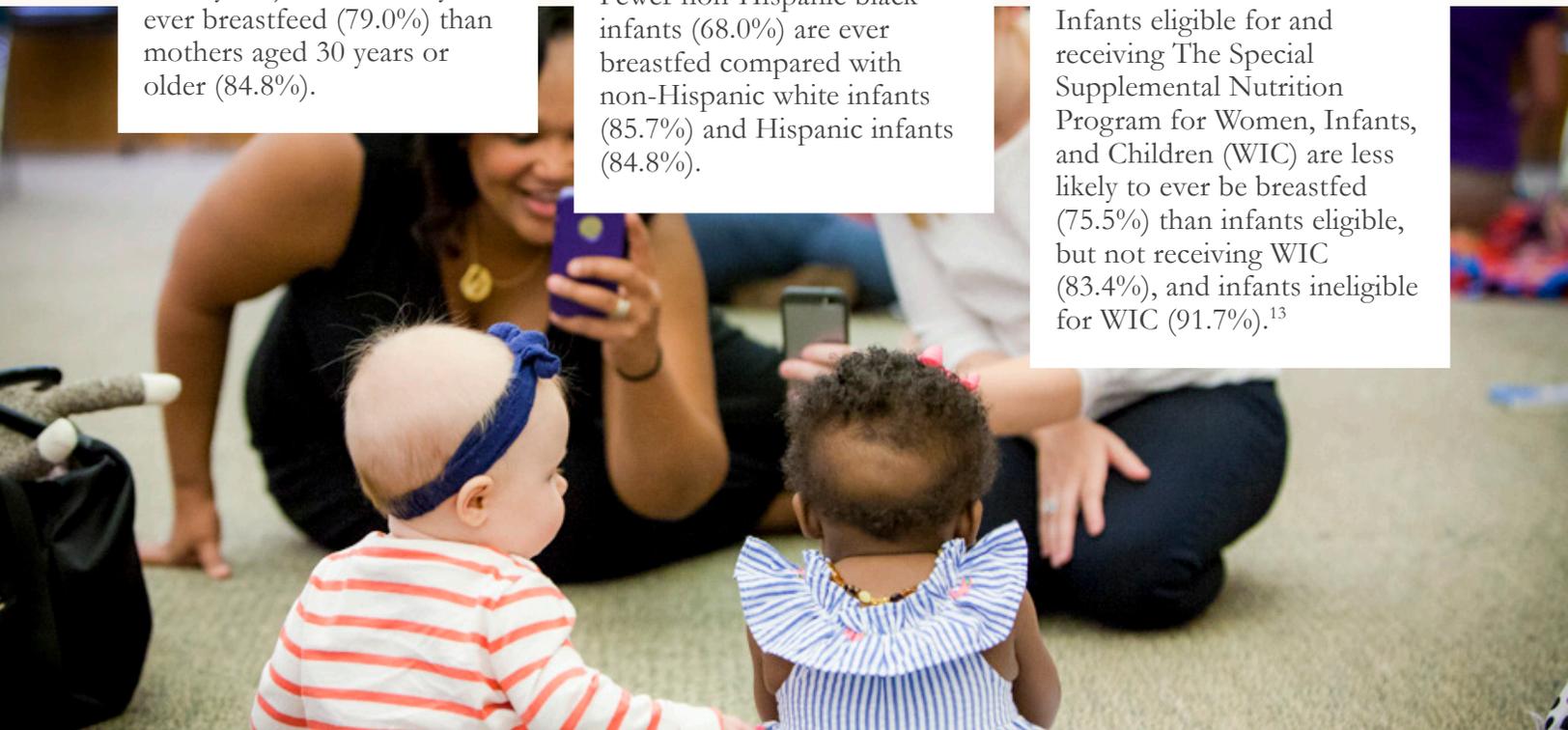
Fewer non-Hispanic black infants (68.0%) are ever breastfed compared with non-Hispanic white infants (85.7%) and Hispanic infants (84.8%).

WIC



- infants eligible for WIC
- infants eligible for WIC, but not receiving WIC
- infants ineligible for WIC

Infants eligible for and receiving The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) are less likely to ever be breastfed (75.5%) than infants eligible, but not receiving WIC (83.4%), and infants ineligible for WIC (91.7%).¹³



Timeline 2014

JULY The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth awards a second \$63,000 HCAT grant to support the work of the Richmond Health Action Alliance.

AUGUST RHAA hosts RVA Latches On! at the Virginia State Capitol, with 58 attendees including 32 breastfeeding parents.

DECEMBER RHSI receives a \$48,000 grant from the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) to support a community breastfeeding program.

LOCAL BREASTFEEDING ENVIRONMENT



More than one out of four (25.4) Richmond residents live at or below the poverty line.



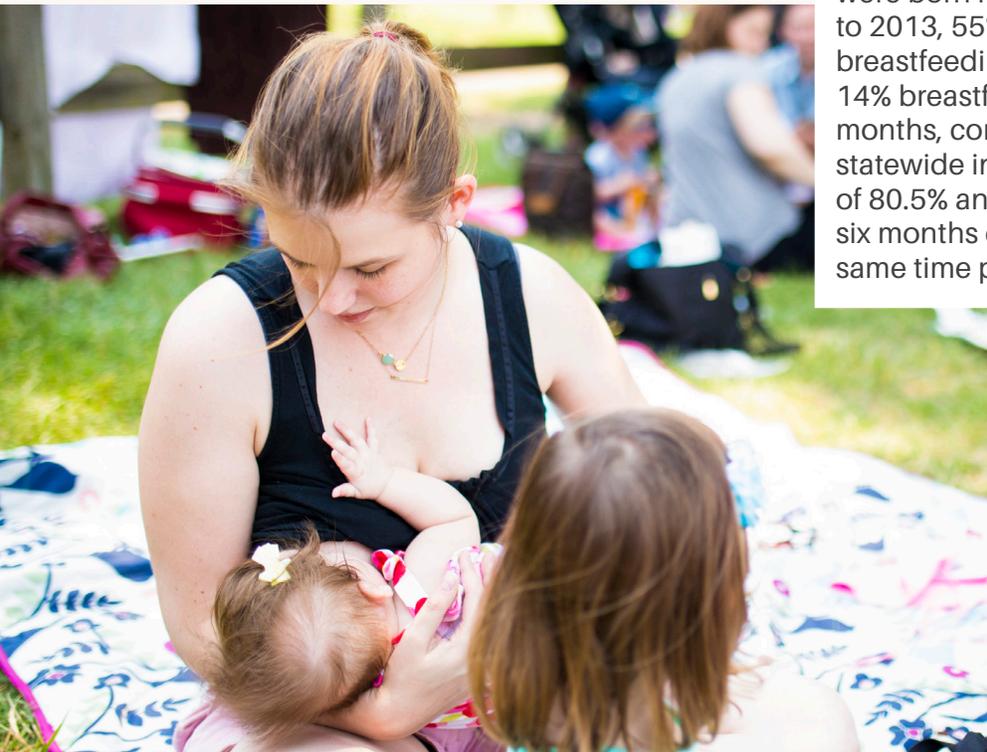
In 2015, there were 3107 live births to city residents. Of these, 1719 (55%) were to African-American mothers.



In a survey of African-American first-time mothers who were recipients of Richmond City WIC and whose infants were born from 2010 to 2013, 55% initiated breastfeeding and only 14% breastfed at six months, compared to a statewide initiation rate of 80.5% and 53.7% at six months during that same time period.¹⁴



Statewide breastfeeding rates are rising, but there is substantial room for improvement: in 2014 82% of Virginia mothers started out breastfeeding. By 6 months only 22% were breastfeeding exclusively (the recommended milestone).¹⁵



2015

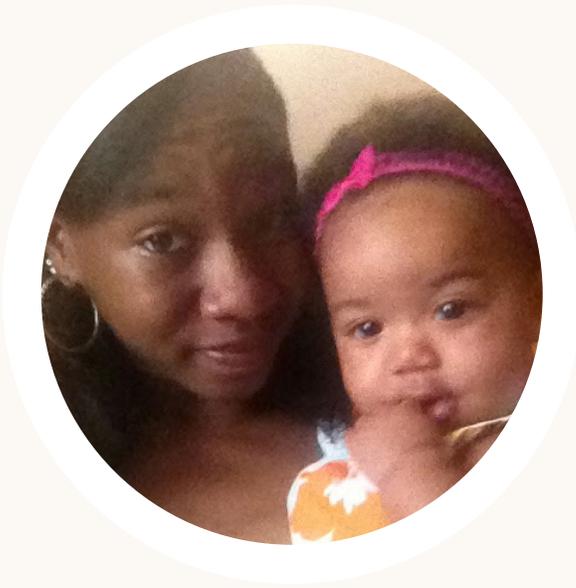
JANUARY RHAA Coordinator conducts the *RVA Breastfeeding Asset Mapping Survey*, an electronic survey of local care providers and community stakeholders.

MARCH *RVA Breastfeeding Asset Mapping Survey* results are analysed and presented by VCU MPH student Sylvia Rosario, resulting in a dialogue between Richmond City WIC, hospital representatives, and community stakeholders on ways to collaborate to improve the local breastfeeding environment.



SHAKEYA & RASHAD LEWIS: ONE FAMILY'S STORY

A member of #RVAbreastfeeds since its inception, Shakeya Lewis is a resident of Richmond's East End and a mother of two. As a teen mother, she overcame multiple obstacles to successfully breastfeed her daughter till nearly three years of age, and is currently breastfeeding her son, who just turned one. Her experiences have inspired Shakeya and her husband Rashad to become breastfeeding advocates. Quotes from Shakeya, Rashad, and other Richmond residents are highlighted throughout this document to provide real-life illustrations of local breastfeeding challenges and triumphs.



“As a teen mother, trying to breastfeed was hard because, outside of my Resource Mother, I had nobody to turn to for my concerns, which contributed to it taking me a bit longer to overcome the obstacles, overlook the myths, and have an enjoyable breastfeeding experience.”

Shakeya Lewis

Timeline 2015

RHAA partner Cecilia Barbosa presents *Valuing Women's Perspectives: Using a Positive Deviance Mixed Methods Approach to Assess Barriers and Facilitators to Infant Feeding among Low-Income African American Women* at the Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference 2015.

JUNE VCU faculty and Richmond City officials present *Leadership, Expertise, and Creativity: The Right Mix* at the Seventh Annual Summit on Breastfeeding, Washington DC, highlighting efforts to improve the breastfeeding environment in Richmond.

#RVABREASTFEEDS' ROOTS

THE 2011 MAYOR'S BREASTFEEDING COMMISSION



Mayor's Breastfeeding Commission Recommendations

Recognizing breastfeeding as a key strategy for improving the health of children, mothers, and families, on July 12, 2011 Richmond Mayor Dwight C. Jones formed a Breastfeeding Commission and charged it with improving breastfeeding rates and eliminating ethnic and socio-economic disparities in implementation of breastfeeding initiatives. Richmond Healthy Start Initiative (RHSI) Program Manager Rose Stith-Singleton was appointed to organize the Commission. Ms. Stith-Singleton purposefully recruited a diverse membership operating in multiple spheres of influence, including community members and representatives from public health, business, health systems, academia, faith communities, and community programs. The Commission met from July 2011 to July 2012 to develop recommendations for action. Feedback from community forums resulted in four

Encourage

Richmond health systems to adopt the 10 Steps of the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative

Support

and encourage Richmond City businesses to develop and implement comprehensive lactation support programs for their employees and patrons

Promote

partnerships and education among care providers who come into contact with mothers, fathers, partners, and families before, during, and after childbirth, and during the infant's first year of life

Develop

an Education/Marketing strategy [to promote breastfeeding]

2016

AUGUST RHAA launches #RVAbreastfeeds, a week-long public awareness campaign utilizing strategically placed larger than life images of local breastfeeding women that generates 100,000 social media impressions.

OCTOBER RHAA partners and community volunteers provide breastfeeding information to approximately 2000 Richmond families at Jennifer McClellan's Annual Harvest Festival.

MARCH RHAA Coordinator Leslie Lytle presents *RVAbreastfeeds: Cultivating a Breastfeeding Friendly Community* as part of a Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference plenary entitled City-Wide Efforts to Advance Public Support for Breastfeeding in Public Spaces.

comprehensive recommendations, which were incorporated into a final report presented to the Mayor on July 23, 2013.¹⁶

As Commission members worked to complete their report, RHSI sought funding to implement their preliminary recommendations. On July 1, 2012, RHSI received a two-year \$53,161 Healthy Communities Action Team (HCAT) grant from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth. The Richmond Health Action Alliance - HCAT was formed through this grant and began building on the Commission's work. RHSI received a second two-year HCAT grant of \$63,000 on July 1, 2014, and a third \$58,000 HCAT grant was awarded July 1, 2016. In September of 2016, Richmond Health Action Alliance members voted to change the coalition's name to #RVAbreastfeeds.

Leveraging input and support from multiple partners, #RVAbreastfeeds has made significant progress in capacity building, planning, and community outreach. Our work has received attention in multiple publications, at national and international conferences, and is featured in the 2018 Journal of Human Lactation special issue on Social Justice.¹⁷

COLLECTIVE IMPACT FRAMEWORK

#RVAbreastfeeds has historically utilized a Collective Impact approach, bringing multiple stakeholders together to address the complex



social, demographic, and structural challenges that surround breastfeeding. The development of shared agendas, mutually reinforcing activities, and ongoing communication and feedback has shaped our goals. Working collaboratively with grassroots partners, nonprofits, the City, the State, and our community has allowed us to make better use of time, resources and skills, and to multiply opportunities for novel approaches for improving the breastfeeding environment. Stakeholders have leveraged participation in #RVAbreastfeeds to gather information, use the information to inform policies and practice, connect with community partners that serve pregnant and postpartum families, and increase public awareness of breastfeeding issues and resources. Additional funding, staffing, and in-kind support from Richmond Healthy Start Initiative, Richmond City Health District, Richmond City WIC, and Nurture have vastly expanded our capacity to implement grant workplan strategies.

Timeline 2016

APRIL RHAA Coordinator conducts messaging exercise with members of the Richmond Healthy Start Initiative Community Advisory Board, soliciting input to inform the 2016 #RVAbreastfeeds campaign.

RHAA hosts the first RVA Breastfeeding Symposium, training 110 care providers across 35 local organizations in use of Ready-Set-Baby, a research based breastfeeding prenatal education tool.

JULY The Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth awards a third \$58,000 HCAT grant to support the continuation of RHAA.

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED

An academic-community engagement partnership

studying barriers and facilitators to infant feeding among low-income African-American women (2012 and 2013).

Coordination of events designed to raise public awareness about breastfeeding

, including Latch-On events at the Virginia State Capitol (2013 and 2014).

Implementation of an online survey of stakeholders

from public health, hospital, nonprofit, social service, and private sectors to identify gaps, barriers, and opportunities in local lactation resources, and analysis of survey results (2015).

Planning and execution of city-wide public awareness campaigns

utilizing strategically placed larger-than-life cutouts of local breastfeeding women, which generated approximately 100,000 social media impressions, provided opportunities for direct interaction with the public, and resulted in data to inform future initiatives (2015 and 2016).

A symposium that trained 110 providers from 35 organizations

on Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute's Ready-Set-Baby curriculum, a research-based prenatal breastfeeding education tool (2016).

A second symposium that explored the impact of structural racism on breastfeeding

and engaged citizens, care providers, and policy makers in facilitated dialogue and problem-solving (2017).

Creation of interior and exterior signage

for Greater Richmond Transit Company buses; creation of a public service announcement regarding Virginia's public breastfeeding law broadcast on buses 30x a day for three months; production and distribution of a handout to 450 bus operators outlining appropriate ways to respond to complaints about breastfeeding (2016).

AUGUST The 2016 #RVAbreastfeeds campaign expands to include signage in and on Greater Richmond Transit Company busses, education of 450 bus operators, an audio PSA about Virginia's public breastfeeding law, and a billboard along I-95.

Ready-Set-Baby curriculum is incorporated into Richmond City WIC's classes for pregnant and breastfeeding parents.

SEPTEMBER RHAA member Claire Sadegzadeh presents *Community Partnerships to Normalize Breastfeeding & Standardize Prenatal Breastfeeding Education in Richmond City* at the 2016 National WIC Association Nutrition Education & Breastfeeding Promotion Conference.



Timeline 2016

SEPTEMBER Richmond Health Action Alliance is re-branded as #RVAbreastfeeds.

DECEMBER #RVAbreastfeeds' breastfeeding promotion activities are highlighted in a NACCHO webinar broadcast nationally. A National WIC Association representative encourages us to submit abstracts for their upcoming conference.

2017

JANUARY #RVAbreastfeeds members submit three abstracts to the National WIC Association Annual 2017 Education and Training Conference: "*Building a Better Breastfeeding Pie: One City's Approach*" by Leslie Lytle and Rose Stith-Singleton; "*Barriers and Facilitators to Infant Feeding Among Low-Income African American Women in*

WHAT WE ACCOMPLISHED CONT.

Placement of campaign images on a digital billboard along a high-traffic corridor resulting in over 500,000 impressions (2016).

Outreach utilizing community volunteers and Richmond City WIC staff resulting in **over 100 businesses displaying a Breastfeeding Welcome Here decal.**

#RVAbreastfeeds' activities have been highlighted at the Breastfeeding and Feminism International Conference in Chapel Hill, NC and other national conferences, published in conference proceedings, and in the Journal of Human Lactation (2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018).

Creation and distribution of over 30,000 collateral pieces designed to convey consistent messaging about infant stomach capacity to area hospitals, clinics, and community centers.



Richmond,” by Cecilia Barbosa; and “*Creating Continuity: Collaborating with Community Partners to Increase Knowledge of WIC Breastfeeding Services and Promote Unified Breastfeeding Messaging*,” by Glencora Gudger and Leslie Lytle. All three are accepted.

APRIL
#RVAbreastfeeds members present at the National WIC Association 2017 Annual Education and Training Conference in Philadelphia, PA.

AUGUST #RVAbreastfeeds hosts the 2nd Annual RVA Breastfeeding Symposium, *First Food: The Intersection of Health, Race, Policy and Practice*, which explores the impact of systemic racism on breastfeeding with 206 attendees.

BARRIERS WE TACKLED

Promoting Breastfeeding as the Cultural Norm: *The #RVAbreastfeeds Campaigns*

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention suggests that displaying positive images of breastfeeding may help normalize breastfeeding as a viable option for infant feeding. Acting on the Mayor's Breastfeeding Commission recommendation to "develop an education/marketing strategy to promote breastfeeding", in 2015 #RVAbreastfeeds conducted a weeklong public awareness campaign during World Breastfeeding Week. Campaign goals were to 1) promote breastfeeding as the cultural norm, 2) highlight the importance of community support for breastfeeding parents, and 3) raise awareness about Virginia's new law protecting parents' right to breastfeed in public.

Campaign components included eleven larger than life sized cutouts of culturally diverse breastfeeding women drawn from our community, including several depicting family



Exterior signage for GRTC bus, #RVAbreastfeeds 2016.

members to illustrate support for breastfeeding. Cutouts were strategically placed in 30 locations throughout the city. A colorful logo was created to brand the campaign, along with collateral in the form of a fan and "Guide to the Newborn Stomach" postcards, a "Breastfeeding Welcome Here" decal, and a website where all campaign elements were highlighted. Community leaders and key organizations were recruited in advance to help promote the campaign. Volunteers and staff accompanied the cutouts at specific venues, sharing information about breastfeeding and local infant-feeding resources.

The 2015 campaign and a second one in 2016 each

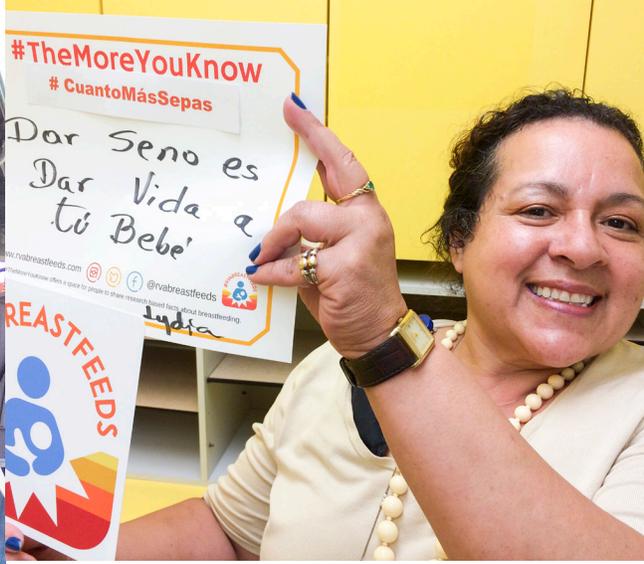
generated 100,000 unique engagements on social media, opening a space for community dialogue about breastfeeding. Conversations with citizens provided a wealth of information about public attitudes toward breastfeeding that continue to inform our activities. Materials developed for the campaigns have an ongoing "shelf life" through placement in WIC offices, city health clinics and public venues, where they continue to spark dialogue about breastfeeding, its role in the health of our community, and the complex barriers which prevent women from achieving their breastfeeding goals.

Timeline 2018

JANUARY The Journal of Human Lactation notifies #RVAbreastfeeds member Cecilia Barbosa that her article, "Factors Distinguishing Positive Deviance Among Low-Income African American Women: A Qualitative Study on Infant Feeding," was one of the top ten most accessed articles of 2017.

FEBRUARY #RVAbreastfeeds Coordinator presents a webinar, *Cultivating a Breastfeeding Friendly Environment: One City's Approach*, to members of the statewide Virginia Chronic Disease Collaborative Network.

APRIL A poster highlighting #RVAbreastfeeds activities is accepted for the 14th Annual Women's Health Research Day at Virginia Commonwealth University.



“Now, breastfeeding is becoming more prominent and I get questions from friends and see more interest piqued, but that comes from them seeing it now, breaking down the barriers of it being taboo, and more research being done beyond the ads we see.”

Shakeya Lewis,
local mother and CLC



TODAY

MAY

#RVAbreastfeeds activities are highlighted in a special issue of International Journal of Human Lactation devoted to Social Justice.

To date, over 30,000 Guides to the Newborn Stomach in English and Spanish have been distributed to area healthcare systems for inclusion in patient packets. Over 100 local businesses display a “Breastfeeding Welcome Here” decal and have informed staff about breastfeeding friendly practices.

BARRIERS WE TACKLED CONT.

Care Provider Education, Network Development, and Systems Change:

The RVA Breastfeeding Symposia

Lack of consistent and/or inaccurate information among care providers is a common breastfeeding barrier. To address this, in 2016 #RVAbreastfeeds invited multiple organizations that provide prenatal and/or postpartum services to participate in the first RVA Breastfeeding Symposium. This resulted in 110 care providers from 35 local organizations being trained in Ready-Set-Baby, a prenatal breastfeeding education tool developed by the Carolina Global Breastfeeding Institute. In 2017 a second Symposium brought 206 community members, care providers, and policy makers together to examine the impact of institutional racism on breastfeeding. Both RVA Breastfeeding Symposia included facilitated sessions focused on building bridges



2nd Annual RVA Breastfeeding Symposium

First Foods and Next Foods:
The Intersection of Health, Race, Policy, and Practice

Featuring:

Kimberly Semis-Allen



Elizabeth Gray Bayne



Save the date
August 4, 2017
8:15 am - 12:30 pm
Virginia Historical Society
rvabreastfeeds.com



between organizations and identifying opportunities to adopt breastfeeding supportive practices and policies. These and other outreach activities have contributed to the following:

- In a follow-up survey conducted two months after the 2017 RVA Breastfeeding Symposium, 69% of respondents indicated they'd changed a behavior or practice as a result of attending this event.
- #RVAbreastfeeds meetings are regularly attended by interested community members and representatives from multiple organizations,

enabling us to leverage a deep pool of knowledge and resources to support our activities, while also fostering an outward flow of information and ideas.

- Four Richmond City WIC staff members have become Certified Lactation Consultants - an achievement their director feels resulted from WIC's participation in #RVAbreastfeeds activities.
- The #RVAbreastfeeds newsletter mailing list has grown to 237 subscribers, with an average open rate of 33.5%



“I truly enjoyed the symposium. It gave me a wealth of knowledge about breastfeeding, as well as ideas about how to support and encourage prenatal and postnatal mothers.”

2016 RVA Breastfeeding Symposium participant

Promoting Consistent, Evidence-based Messaging: *The Guide to the Newborn Stomach*

One of the most common reasons mothers stop breastfeeding or begin supplementing with formula in the first two weeks is that they (or their family members) believe their baby is not getting enough milk.¹⁹ To address this breastfeeding barrier, #RVAbreastfeeds produced postcard sized “Guides to the Newborn Stomach” in English and Spanish, providing evidence-based information on infant stomach capacity at birth, 3 days, 1 week, and 1 month of age. The goal of this initiative is to increase public awareness about a key breastfeeding myth by providing consistent messaging to multiple audiences over an extended period of time. To date, over 30,000 Guides have been distributed to local clinics, community centers, at outreach events, and to the three major local hospital systems, where they have been incorporated into patient education packets.



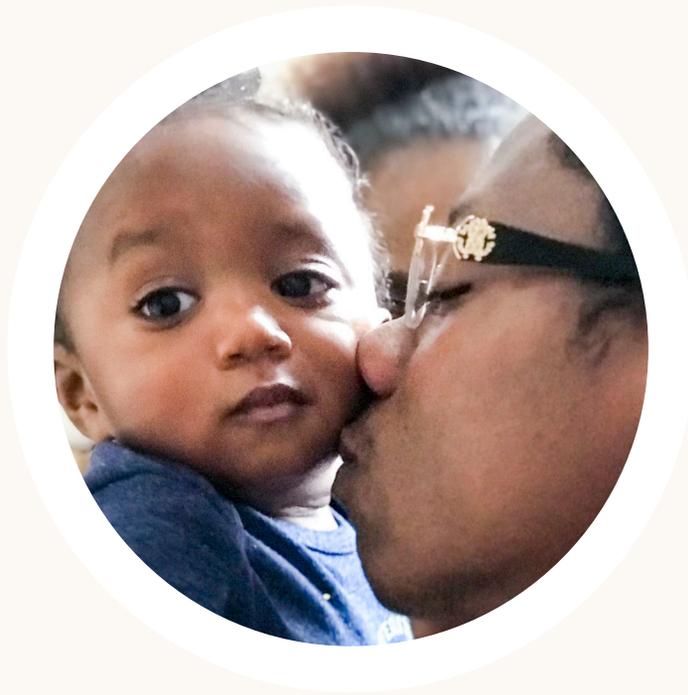
While focused on breastfeeding, the Guide also provides accurate information about infant stomach capacity for families that formula feed, which will hopefully help reduce inadvertent over-feeding with formula.

Formula has become our normal because we think it is simple and healthy, which I came to learn was simply marketing tactics, not much truth.

Shakeya Lewis,
local mother and CLC

“The brainstorming session really helps us understand what things we are doing well, and what we need to improve upon to promote breastfeeding in our community.”

2017 RVA Breastfeeding Symposium participant



“My whole life, I never knew how I could make a positive impact on the world that would last longer than my lifetime, but through breastfeeding advocacy, I can support healthy babies and families from day one.”

Rashad Lewis

THE WAY FORWARD

As Kimberly Seals Allers states, “Women don’t breastfeed, cultures do.”²⁰ Cultivating a supportive environment for breastfeeding is a complex and long-term endeavor that involves interaction and intervention at multiple levels, including raising public support, influencing systems and policies that enable people to breastfeed, and building capacity within organizations that serve pregnant and postpartum families.

Guided by the recommendations of the 2011 Surgeon General’s Call to Action to Support Breastfeeding and the Mayor’s Breastfeeding

Commission, #RVAbreastfeeds has engaged in collaborative activities designed to create a culture of support for breastfeeding. Through these activities, we have established an extensive web of relationships that includes individuals from diverse sectors of our community, as well as local and national organizations. This positions us well as a leader for community inspired action to support breastfeeding in the greater Richmond area. We welcome your input, stories, and assistance as we continue to grow our community’s capacity to promote the health and wellbeing of our newest families.

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“I feel not only do all babies need to be breastfed, but all mothers and families should be taught the true importance of it.”

Shakeya Lewis



RICHMOND CITY
HEALTH DISTRICT

#RVAbreastfeeds is a Healthy Communities Action Team that seeks to reduce childhood obesity through policy, infrastructure, and environmental changes that promote a breastfeeding friendly community. Our work is supported by funding and in-kind assistance from the Virginia Foundation for Healthy Youth, Richmond Healthy Start Initiative, Richmond City Health District, cBe Consulting, and Shakeya Lewis. For further information or to join our mailing list please visit www.rvabreastfeeds.com.

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