



CRAVING CHICKEN?
Have some tenders at Guthrie's Chicken in South Point, Ohio
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— WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2024 —

The Herald-Dispatch

SERVING THE TRI-STATE FOR 115 YEARS

Hospital participates in program to encourage breastfeeding



PHOTOS BY RYAN FISCHER | The Herald-Dispatch

Lactation consultant Charlotte Dillon, RN, MSN, IBCLC, hands maternity patient Taylor Wells her newborn baby Margo Layne while inside Cabell Huntington Hospital's Maternity Center on Monday, Aug. 26, 2024, in Huntington.

By **MAGGIE SUSA**
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HUNTINGTON — Breastmilk is preventative health care for both mothers and babies; it's literally considered medicine.

West Virginia has the lowest breastfeeding rate in the United States, but the CHAMPS (Communities and Hospitals Advancing Maternity Practices) National program run through CHEER (Center for Health Equity, Education and Research) is working to change that.

CHAMPS is a three-year, CDC-funded program to help hospitals increase exclusive breastfeeding rates, improve maternity care and decrease racial disparities. The training is done through videos, workshops and seminars. There are 101 hospitals enrolled in the program that will receive free expert training and support to safely implement the "Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding."

Jessica Buerck, M.D., a Marshall Health obstetrician/gynecologist



Newborn baby Margo Layne spends time next to her mother Taylor Wells inside Cabell Huntington Hospital's Maternity Center on Monday, Aug. 26, 2024, in Huntington.

and an assistant professor for the Marshall University Joan C. Edwards School of Medicine, is one of the physician liaisons for the CHAMPS program at Cabell Huntington Hospital.

"As an academic medical center that serves not only Huntington but

a lot of our rural communities, we have the opportunity here to reach a very, very large number of patients and help educate, promote and encourage breastfeeding," Buerck said.

SEE **BABIES | 7A**

LABOR DAY WEEKEND

WV Turnpike gears up for heavy traffic over holiday

Numbers traveling by air, car expected to increase

By **DESTINEY DINGESS**
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HUNTINGTON — Friday, Aug. 30, and Monday, Sept. 2, are expected to be the busiest travel days as the West Virginia Parkways Authority prepares for about 415,000 vehicles to pass through toll booths over this Labor Day weekend.

"Labor Day weekend typically marks the end of the busy summer travel season for the West Virginia Turnpike, and we expect Friday and Monday to be busy travel days compared to just a usual weekend," Jeff Miller, executive director of the West Virginia Parkways Authority, said in a news release.

An estimated 140,000 transactions will take place at the three toll booths along the turnpike on Friday, the highest predicted total of the four days. Another 90,000 transactions are expected on Saturday; 75,000 transactions on Sunday; and 110,000 transactions are expected on Labor Day, Monday, Sept. 2, the news release states.

According to national motor club AAA and INRIX, a provider of transportation data and insights, people traveling by car should avoid the afternoon and early evening hours of Thursday and Friday, as those times will be the most congested.

Drivers should hit the road in the morning unless they're leaving on Saturday, when the best time to travel by car is in the afternoon, AAA advised in a news release. Travelers returning on Sunday and on Monday, which is Labor Day, should leave as early as possible to avoid heavy traffic in the afternoon.

"Drivers should expect the most severe traffic jams before the holiday weekend as commuters mix with travelers," Bob Pishue, transportation analyst at INRIX, said in the release. "Monitoring traffic apps, local news stations, and 511 traveler information services may help drivers navigate congestion and reduce driver frustration this Labor Day."

Even though vehicle traffic on the road is expected to increase this Labor Day weekend,

SEE **HOLIDAY | 7A**

Southside traffic study to evaluate issues at two schools

By **DESTINEY DINGESS**
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HUNTINGTON — While Huntington Middle School has not had safety issues over the years, its administration says the possibility of safety issues is greater than other schools'.

That's due to its boxed-in layout, which causes congestion from student drop-offs and pick-ups spanning an

entire block and little parking and room surrounding the school.

Huntington Middle School Principal Justina White said congestion around the school during mornings and evenings is an issue the school hopes to resolve. If 10th Avenue and the remaining area are too backed up, people will move to 3rd Street because it is less congested, White said;

however, that area is designated for buses.

"That is a safety issue," White said.

The KYOVA Interstate Planning Commission in collaboration with the Cabell County Board of Education has initiated the beginning stages of a traffic study that will evaluate traffic congestion, safety and mobility surrounding Huntington Middle School and

Motorists wait to pass through the intersection at 10th Avenue and 2nd Street near Southside Elementary and Huntington Middle Schools on Tuesday, Aug. 27, 2024, in Huntington.

RYAN FISCHER | The Herald-Dispatch

Southside Elementary School. Chris Chiles, executive director of KYOVA, said

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TRI-STATE WEATHER

HOT

HIGH 101
LOW 72

Sunny and hot

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STUDY

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the study area will examine patterns from 8th Avenue to 11th Avenue and 1st Street to 4th Street.

"I'm a huge supporter of neighborhood schools and schools that are walkable for the students, such as Southside and Huntington Middle," Chiles said. "But when you have a lot of students that are walking to and from the school, some of them may be crossing 1st Street, which has a lot of traffic. Some of them may be walking 5th Street, which has even more traffic. And for the residents of the Southside community, it's imperative to make sure our students have safe routes to school and can get to school safely, efficiently and get home as well."

A consultant will evaluate safety and circulation issues and determine the best approach to meet those needs. Chiles said possible outcomes could be anything from crosswalks to improved signage with blinking lights and better

"I'm a huge supporter of neighborhood schools and schools that are walkable for the students, such as Southside and Huntington Middle. But when you have a lot of students that are walking to and from the school, some of them may be crossing 1st Street, which has a lot of traffic. Some of them may be walking 5th Street, which has even more traffic. And for the residents of the Southside community, it's imperative to make sure our students have safe routes to school and can get to school safely, efficiently and get home as well,"

CHRIS CHILES

Executive director of KYOVA

indicators of a school zone.

Chiles said the study will also identify safer and more efficient ways to attract the attention of people who are not driving in the area for school purposes and may not be aware of the schools.

"We want to identify ways to bring to drivers' attention that it is a school zone, that there are school-aged children walking to and from the school," Chiles said. "And just reinforce the idea that you're driving through a neighborhood, and you need to make sure that you are always on the lookout for children."

Chiles said KYOVA will review consultants' propos-

als in the next few weeks, and the study will begin throughout this fiscal year, ending June 30, 2025. Chiles adds that he hopes the study will officially start before Thanksgiving, and he expects a final report within six months of the study beginning.

The traffic study was formed after a prior partnership between KYOVA and the Cabell County Board of Education when the entities collaborated on a similar traffic study in Milton for the area around the future Milton Elementary School.

Huntington Middle School and Southside Ele-

mentary School were identified as other ideal target areas for the study. Chiles said KYOVA is interested in conducting similar studies at other Cabell County schools and the Tri-State area.

Chiles said the study will cost \$25,000. The Cabell County Board of Education will provide \$2,500 for the project, and KYOVA will provide the rest of the funding through its grant funds.

Chiles said a public meeting will be conducted in the spring of 2025 to will allow residents to provide input and offer comments before the report is finalized.

HOLIDAY

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gasoline prices are expected to be lower than last year. AAA reported a 41-cent decrease in gas prices compared to Labor Day weekend in 2023.

The national average over Labor Day weekend in 2023 was \$3.81 per gallon. In recent weeks, gas prices have remained steady, hovering around \$3.40 per gallon.

AAA expects more people to take advantage of the unofficial end of summer by traveling abroad for the long weekend. International travel over Labor Day weekend is 11% higher than last year, per AAA data. Eight out of the top 10 international destinations booked through AAA are European cities.

The Transportation Security Administration

(TSA) is prepared to screen more than 17 million people between Thursday, Aug. 29, and Wednesday, Sept. 4, making for what is expected to be the busiest Labor Day travel period on record, according to a TSA news release.

The peak travel day is projected to be Friday, Aug. 30, when TSA expects to screen 2.86 million people.

TSA recommends airline travelers to ease the stress of traveling by enrolling in the TSA Pre-Check Trusted Traveler Program, the release states, where members do not need to remove shoes, belts, 3-1-1 liquids, laptops, food items and light jackets at the checkpoint.

TSA also advises travelers to pack smart, arrive early and bring an acceptable ID. A full list of tips can be found at tsa.gov/travel/travel-tips/2024.



Courtesy of the West Virginia Department of Transportation
Vehicles pass through West Virginia Turnpike toll booths in this undated photo.

BABIES

FROM PAGE 1A

Breastfeeding can not only have a significant impact on infant health, but maternal health as well, she added, as it can decrease mothers' risk of postpartum depression, breast cancer and cardiovascular disease.

The ultimate goal is to get more mothers to want to choose breastfeeding before they have their baby.

"It really has been effective so far because I see within our immediate organization where we have increased our physicians in practice, really encouraged better prenatal counseling services, promotion of our lactation support services at Cabell. We've just seen a huge increase in staff who really want to be supportive and who are not only providing that support to their patients, but really increasing their own knowledge to be able to provide better support," she said.

Cabell Huntington Hospital is one of the 101 program participants; in total, seven West Virginia hospitals are participating.

There are 36 nurses at CHH who have a certification in breastfeeding, and soon there will be more than 60. The highest level of certification is International Board Certified Lactation Consultant, or IBCLC. Charlotte Dillon is one of four IBCLC-certified health care providers in the Mother/Baby Unit at Cabell Huntington.

"We always have moms that perhaps have some medical issues and they may not be able to fully breastfeed, but they can still give their baby some (breastmilk). And we do encourage that because we consider breastmilk like medicine," Dillon said.

Dillon provides consultation services at the hospital and at an outpatient office. She also teaches free classes before birth and holds an online support group the first Monday of every month from 6 to 8 p.m. In addition to assisting patients, she trains resident physicians and works with other health care providers on breastfeeding education.

Confidence is a key part of the education she offers.

"A new mommy always says, 'I can't see anything coming out. So nothing must be coming out.' So we have to reassure them and help them to get a really good latch. That's very important for mom to be comfortable and for baby to get a lot of the first milk colostrum," Dillon said.

She said almost every first-time mother struggles with breastfeeding in some way, so a support system at home is essential.

"Once they (moms) make a choice they want to, then we do encourage them to talk to other people, to research good websites and to take a breastfeeding class so that knowledge is preparation. So it won't be something so unusual for them once they get here. So it's the prep work, it's doctors encouraging, it's family. The significant other is huge. Grandparents are huge in this too,



Courtesy of Marshall Health Network

Breastfeeding specialists at Cabell Huntington Hospital are, from left to right, Abigail Adams, Monica Schletter, Tara Woodrum, Talisha Franklin, Courtney Cornette, Bethany Ramey, Tanya Taylor, Paige Marsh. In the second row, left to right, are Krista Appgar, Courtney Ballard, Shelby Heaberlin, Amanda Hale, Dawn Kinser, Alyssa Foster, Kacie O'Neal, Charlotte Dillon, Sarah Damron, Amy Smith and Emily Stacy.

it (support) makes a difference," Dillon said.

It's not clear why West Virginia has the lowest rate of breastfeeding but there is a correlation between breastfeeding and race, socioeconomic status and level of education. People who are white, wealthy and college-educated are more likely to breastfeed.

"I have gotten a lot of support from the administration here at the hospital. So that has really helped encourage me and push the program forward, get more people involved with the help of the administration," Dillon said.

According to the most recent U.S. Breastfeeding Committee's report, West Virginia's breastfeeding initiation rate is 64.8% and the national rate is 84.1%. Only 13.8% of West Virginia babies were exclusively breastfeeding at six months, while the national rate is 24.9%. The target set by Healthy People 2030 is 42.4%.

Breastfed babies have a lowered risk of asthma, childhood leukemia, childhood obesity, ear infections, eczema (atopic dermatitis), diarrhea and vomiting, lower respiratory infections and sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). Additionally, formula and feeding supplies can cost well over \$1,500 each year.

As Cabell Huntington's nurses move through the CHAMPS training, Dillon tracks monthly data about breastfeeding at CHH and submits it to CHEER.

Jordan and Taylor Wells knew they wanted to breastfeed their daughter, Margo Layne Wells, before she was born because they knew about the benefits breastfeeding has for babies. They both took Dillon's class and said the experience and support from staff at the hospital have been helpful.

"For us, you have to have full buy in. We signed up and took the class," said Jordan Wells, Margo's father.

"We took it (Dillon's class) together. He took the notes for me," new mom Taylor Wells said. "I'm so busy doing other things. ... The fact that he's on it and knows how to help me prep and is keeping me hydrated and is keeping food near and asking what he can do ... It makes it so much more manageable. So the partnership makes it feel not as overwhelming."

Margo was born around 7:30 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 25. She is their first child.

"I've been told that she's an aggressive eater. So that's a good problem to have, she's made it pretty easy on me," Taylor Wells added.

While breastfeeding initially was among Taylor

Wells' fears as a first-time parent, she said she's been relieved and less stressed about it after receiving education from the hospital.

"We're still getting to know each other through breastfeeding," she said of new motherhood.

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