

Cape Coral Hospital Receives Prestigious International Award

(Cape Coral, Fla. – Mar. 13, 2018) --- Cape Coral Hospital is the first facility in Southwest Florida to receive prestigious international recognition as a Designated Baby-Friendly birth facility from Baby-Friendly USA. Currently there are 493 active Baby-Friendly hospitals and birth centers in the United States, and more than 20,000 worldwide.

“The obstetrics team at Cape Coral Hospital has worked diligently to meet the challenges of attaining this recognition,” says Scott Kashman, Lee Health Chief Acute Care officer. “They have been the first in the state to complete each level, and now achieving the Baby-Friendly Hospital designation, setting an example for other hospitals. This is another example of following the Lee Health vision to be a national leader for the advancement of health and healing.”

Baby-Friendly USA, Inc. is the U.S. authority for the implementation of the Baby-Friendly Hospital initiative (“BFHI”), a global program sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF). The initiative encourages and recognizes hospitals and birthing centers that offer an optimal level of care for breastfeeding mothers and their babies. Based on the *Ten Steps to Successful Breastfeeding*, this prestigious international award recognizes birth facilities that offer breastfeeding mothers the information, confidence, and skills needed to successfully initiate and continue breastfeeding their babies.

“We want to support mothers and encourage them to maximize breastfeeding benefits by continuing for as long as possible. We are proud of the initiative the team has taken to support women in their decision to breastfeed,” says Nancy Travis, RN, BSN, MS, Nursing Director, Women’s Care Center at Cape Coral Hospital. The hospital delivers over 1,500 babies a year.

The Baby-Friendly Hospital project uses hospital policy as a strategy to reduce obesity and other chronic diseases by improving optimal infant feeding practices through implementing evidence-based maternity care. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), for women who intend to breastfeed, the hospital experience is critical, and to give infants the best start in achieving a healthy life, including reduced obesity, mothers must be supported immediately after birth to establish breastfeeding.

More mothers in Florida are choosing to breastfeed their newborns but few breastfeed long enough to gain the maximum benefits for both mother and infant. According to the CDC National Immunization Survey, 77% of mothers in Florida choose to breastfeed their babies but less than 13% continue to breastfeed exclusively to the recommended six months.

Studies published by the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) indicate that hospitals practicing evidence-based maternity care, as outlined by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) Ten Steps have more patients breastfeeding in the hospital with longer durations outside of the hospital.

The designation is maintained by continuing to practice the Ten Steps as demonstrated by quality processes, and successful completion of an onsite survey.

About Lee Health

Since the opening of the first hospital in 1916, Lee Health has been a health care leader in Southwest Florida, constantly evolving to meet the needs of the community. A non-profit, integrated health care services organization, Lee Health is committed to the well-being of every individual served, focused on healthy living and maintaining good health. Staffed by caring people, inspiring health, services are conveniently located throughout the community in four acute care hospitals, two specialty hospitals, outpatient centers, walk-in medical centers, primary care and specialty physician practices and other services across the continuum of care. Formerly known as Lee Memorial Health System, the organization began its second century of service with a new name in 2016. Learn more at www.LeeHealth.org.

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