

For Immediate Release

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**Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC)
Honors National Breastfeeding Month By Bringing
Topic to the Forefront in Coachella Valley**

(PALM DESERT, CA) - August 14, 2014... According to 2013 HARC data, results show that of the women who were asked when their child, (below 5 years of age) completely stopped breastfeeding, 37.7% breastfed for 7 to 12 months which is over the recommended 6 months. “Breastfeeding provides both physical and emotional benefits to mother and baby. Breast milk provides essential vitamins, minerals and nutrients to allow optimal growth as well as protection against certain infections. Breastfeeding also allows the mother and infant to create a bond which is essential to the emotional development of the infant,” said HARC’s CEO Eileen Packer.

While the majority of children were breastfed, 81.7% (22,253) approximately 18.3% (4,996) were never breastfed. The reason for these infants not getting breastfed in the Coachella Valley is unknown, but the National Institution of Child Health and Human Development suggest some possible reasons; including lack of

education on the benefits of breastfeeding, feeling uncomfortable with the act of breastfeeding, immigration status and ethnicity.¹

To raise awareness on the benefits of breastfeeding and supporting the women who do, the U.S. Breastfeeding Committee declared the month of August National Breastfeeding month in 2011. The Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) included data on breastfeeding in their 2013 Community Health Monitor demonstrating the breastfeeding trends in the Coachella Valley.

The benefits of breast milk go far beyond infancy, according to the World Health Organization, people who were breastfed as babies often have lower blood pressure and lower cholesterol, as well as lower rates of obesity and type-2 diabetes.²

Overall, breastfeeding counseling, education and support are essential for mothers to initiate and maintain recommended breastfeeding practices.

¹National Breastfeeding Month and NICHD Research: NICHD Research Addresses Many Aspects of Breastfeeding. (2013) National Institute of Health.

http://www.nichd.nih.gov/news/resources/spotlight/Pages/080813_breastfeeding_month.aspx

²Health Topics: Breastfeeding. (2013). World Health Organization.

<http://www.who.int/topics/breastfeeding/en/>

About HARC

Formed in 2006 by a consortium of more than 35 public and private healthcare agencies, the Health Assessment Resource Center (HARC) conducts a confidential community health status assessment in the Coachella Valley every 3 years to identify major health and quality of life issues. The nonprofit 501(c)(3) organization is funded in part by contributions from community partners, as well as entities that contract with the agency for customized public health research. More information can be obtained by calling HARC at (760) 404-1945, or visiting the organization's website at www.HARCDATA.org.