

Breastfeeder Goes Into the Shark Tank

By Kate Frederick

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Back in July, when I dove in to pitch a news story about breastfeeding to the editorial staff, I felt intimidated and almost didn't go through with it. Walking into our meeting was like going in front of the Shark Tank panel on that TV show where entrepreneurs pitch their great product to rich business moguls, hoping to get financing. I had to convince Editor Mark Guerringue that breastfeeding issues are relevant to all their readers, not just their lactating ones. I had just heard Guerringue deliver a sermon at the Unitarian Universalists about small town newspapers and thought he seemed reasonable and had a sense of humor, but I was still scared of him. I guess I scare easily these days. I personally have been attacked with the chomp of breastfeeding discrimination, but it's been local community support that has helped me and my family survive.



Photo: RustikEvents.com

Kate and Devon at the New England Aquarium

Shark and Ray Touch Tank

Pitching the Politics of Pizza

When I first moved to North Conway over 20 years ago, I was a recent college graduate from Plymouth State. I lived in a shared apartment for \$250 a month next to IME and the former Elvio's Pizza location, while I earned \$10 hr. working for EMS. There was an old joke about local climbing guides.



Me with my dog Luke in North Conway, circa 1994

“What’s the difference between a climbing guide and a large pizza?”

A pizza can feed a family of four.”

Today, it’s no joke and it’s not just climbing guides. Most of us are toiling, sweating and barely scraping by. We live here for the idyllic lifestyle, but then it’s inevitably unaffordable and just out of reach. There’s a term for these kinds of issues in the political scene – Family Economic Security or as us locals say sarcastically after working a clopening shift, (closing shift followed by opening shift) “living the dream.” Politics may have given our reality a fancy name, but it’s really a knot of interrelated issues. These include paid maternity and paternity leave, affordable and quality child care and health insurance, paid sick leave, raising the minimum wage and equal pay and employment opportunities - which includes pregnancy, lactation and disability rights in the workplace. The latter of which I’m intimately aware. Even men without kids care strongly about breastfeeding rights.

Local climbing guide and kiteboarding instructor, Zeb Jakub helped calm my nerves at Frontside Grind last fall, just before my radio interview about lactation rights on NHPR, that included a panelist from the NY Times. Zeb wrote, "Well done regarding the NPR interview and for standing up for what you need !!! Makes me glad to know you!!!" Whether one is standing up for environmental issues, women’s rights or who to elect, understanding the politics involved is key. Let’s not forget about that pizza? Food is political too. Healthy infant feeding alternatives like donor breastmilk from another mother or from the Mother’s Milk Bank Northeast, school farm to table lunch programs and local agriculture and production, etc. are also strands in the rope too. Measuring family economic security – is as easy to predict as the weather on Mount Washington and the reality is frigid, according to the data.

New Hampshire’s Data

Workplace Policies that Support New Families (National Partnership for Women & Families)	D	D
Exclusive Breastfeeding at 6 months (Center for Disease Control and Prevention)	27%	F
National Rank for Infrastructure – including basic social services such as schools and hospitals (CNBC Business Network)	48th	F
Workforce (CNBC Business Network)	41st	F
Cost of Doing Business (CNBC Business Network)	32nd	F
Attracting Business (CNBC Business Network)	30th	F
Least affordable childcare (Childcare Aware America)	20th	F

The annual cost of daycare for an infant in NH costs almost as much as in-state college tuition! Perhaps if NH businesses were more family and worker friendly, including providing for breastfeeding accommodations, NH's economy would be better off, NH citizens would be in better physical and financial health and our businesses would be thriving with a grade of A. So how are local employers doing in our neck of the woods with supporting the needs of new families? There are some good examples.

The Good News.

Ragged Mountain Equipment's, Rob Nadler told me recently that they have offered a childcare benefit in the past to their staff, with the company paying 50 cents on the dollar. For the last 25+years, Storyland has allowed their employees to bring their babies to work and breastfeed on site. SOLO, a backcountry emergency medical school in Conway, also have let staff bring their infants and children to work. Local organizations that have specifically supported breastfeeding awareness recently include the Community Health and Obesity Prevention team and Carroll County Granite United Way, who have had presentations about breastfeeding resources. This is a good start, but there's more we can do.

USBC National Breastfeeding Month

August was the 3rd annual National Breastfeeding Month. I voluntarily work on breastfeeding advocacy year round, but August was full of events to help raise awareness here at home and at the Capitol. It was with the support from my local community and from Breastfeeding USA that my son and I were able to participate in three major events in the D.C. area during the holi-month.

The Big Latch On and The Milky Way

The first two events were hosted by M. Eve Burns, a breastfeeding Naval Flight Officer and included The Big Latch On followed by a screening of The Milky Way movie. The Big Latch On is an event where women all over the world, latch their babies on at the exact same time to be counted.



The Big Latch On: A local D.C. Doula with us in the background and a Fellow who works at a local health lab



Moviegoers at the D.C. screening of The Milky Way, with the Milky Way Producers, Molnar and Davidson and Host, M.Eve Burns

I went to my first one in North Conway in 2013. It's something that Rosalba Ruiz, MD, who is Co-Chair of the Binational Breastfeeding Coalition (US and Mexico border,) recommends families go to each year, even after they've stopped breastfeeding, so that kids can grow up seeing breastfeeding as normal. I met her at the next event I attended.

The United States Breastfeeding Committee

The third celebration we took part in was the United States Breastfeeding Committee's National Conference. I delivered my presentation titled, "The Breastfeeding Police – Who to Turn To When You're the Target of Discrimination," and discussed breastfeeding law on the Federal and State levels. I also got the chance to be included in a poster exhibit about my presentation.

FIRED FOR BREASTFEEDING

WHAT I DID TO GET JUSTICE

A poster presentation for the United States Breastfeeding Committee by the founder of the Rustic Baby Project, Kate Diversi-Altra Frederick. Kate became a national spokesperson, advocating for breastfeeding, when she was fired due to discrimination. She planned her own child-friendly wedding and strives to be a positive agent of change and education. She is a member of the IM and MA Breastfeeding Coalition, Breastfeeding USA and Attachment Parenting International. She's a breastfeeding client and is a Certified Breastfeeding Counselor Candidate. Kate has worked with children and families for over 20 years, is a former employee at the Department of Health and Human Services and attended the Breastfeeding Support Group at Memorial Hospital, North Carolina. Kate has a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and has taught at Georgia State College. If you need help or would like to find out more, visit RusticEvents.com, [facebook.com/RusticEvents](https://www.facebook.com/RusticEvents) or call 853.620.6362.

*No solo hablen
Pongam el ejemplo
y apoyen a las
Mamas*
*Rosalba
M.D., MPH
Breastfeeding
Mom*

HELPING BABIES, FAMILIES, AND EMPLOYERS

Poster created by Michael Maloney.

The USBC had me coordinate child care for the event and appointed me Team Leader of New Hampshire for their Advocacy Day, a leadership role I took back to NH for the rest of the month.



At the USBC Conference with Rosalba Ruiz, M.D. and The US. Surgeon General Boris D. Lushniak



College Nannies, Sadaqah Ali provided exceptional child care for Devon

2015 NH Breastfeeding Legislation Open Call

On August 19th, I met with House Rep. Karen Umberger over coffee on my front porch and later that day hosted an open invitation state-wide conference call to discuss 2015 NH Breastfeeding Legislation.* Some of the callers included NH Senator Molly Kelly, House Rep. Susan Ticehurst and fellow breastfeeding mothers Janice Snyder and Kary Jencks, with the NH Citizens Alliance.

Roundtable with Governor Hassan

Days later, on August 21st, I participated in a roundtable discussion with Governor Maggie Hassan at the MWV Career and Tech Center in Conway, where the Governor talked about helping our MWV families and businesses with affordable housing, competitive pay wages, better educational opportunities and friendlier workplaces.



Governor Maggie Hassan after introducing herself to me

Janice Crawford, Executive Director of the MWV Chamber of Commerce spoke about NH legalizing medical marijuana and the benefits it offers to really ill children who need it. Being able to prevent children from becoming ill is what I learned more about as the month came to a close.

Black Breastfeeding Week

What I found to be the most moving of all during August's events, was the First Annual Black Breastfeeding Week, August 25-31. I heard about it from my roommate at the USBC Conference. She shared that one attendee in a session she went to, spoke about her personal experience with the common occurrence of white doctors being absent in the delivery room of black women. The announcement of Black Breastfeeding Week had caused some racist and controversial dialog amongst non-black members of the breastfeeding community and my roommate was privy to some of these. The ignorant argument was inferred in the hostile question, "Why do they need a week?" The answer why is clear and emergent to me, but I wanted to learn more. On August 27th, I participated in a webinar presented by Kiddada Green, the Founding Executive Director of the Black Mothers' Breastfeeding Association in Detroit, MI, who helped launch Black Breastfeeding Week. The webinar topic was a model for breastfeeding support groups led by mothers, as opposed to medical professionals. I was astounded to hear her say,

**“Black babies are dying at twice the rate (in some place, nearly triple)
the rate of white babies.**

This is a fact. The high infant mortality rate among black infants is mostly to their being disproportionately born too small, too sick or too soon. These babies need the immunities and nutritional benefit of breast milk the most. According to the CDC, increased breastfeeding among black women could decrease infant mortality rates by as much as 50%.” She went on to describe her experience with breastfeeding after the birth of her first child.

“Placing a woman in an environment of isolation and expecting for her to independently hurdle roadblocks is unfair. I should not have to be superwoman and put on a cape to breastfeed my child.”

I asked Kiddada how breastfeeding support groups could help mothers who've been discriminated against. She spoke to gaining an understanding around historical and cultural hurdles specific to black women and breastfeeding. The webinar led me to further reading online about these hurdles.

Kimberly Seals Allers, in her MochaManual.com post, DEAR WHITE WOMEN: TOP 5 REASONS WHY WE NEED A BLACK BREASTFEEDING WEEK explains. “From our role as wet nurses in slavery being forced to breastfeed and nurture our slave owners children often to the detriment of our children, to the lack of mainstream role models and multi-generational support, to our own stereotyping within our community—we have a different dialogue around breastfeeding and it needs special attention.” Black Breastfeeding Week made me anticipate hosting my next breastfeeding support group and caused me to think about how this is revealed in NH. In case you're curious like I was, the NH state population that is Black or African American is 1.5%. Addressing the racial inequity is something the USBC is dedicated to and something I'm following closely. Black or not,

breastfeeding mothers need support from each other. This mother to mother support is something I found somewhere unusual, in the US Senate.

US Senator Kelly Ayotte

To conclude the month's events, I was personally invited by one breastfeeding supporter and mother I know, US Senator Kelly Ayotte, to attend her town hall meeting on Aug. 28th. I asked her about the bills she sponsored to protect the rights of women and children, like the ones that prevent child abuse and sexual assault on college campuses. I asked about her work to ensure equal pay and her efforts in Congress to have September named National Ovarian Cancer Month, which opened the door for my query. Breastfeeding reduces a woman's risk of developing ovarian cancer by two-thirds. The number one obstacle to breastfeeding is lack of support in the workplace.



Devon with US Senator Kelly Ayotte. He was asleep when we first got there. This is the second time I've breastfed Devon with Kelly at my side.

I asked her how she thought employers could be more accommodating of their breastfeeding employees. She talked about the health benefits of breastfeeding, that she breastfed both her children while she worked as the NH Attorney General, who are now 6 and 9 years old. Ayotte also talked about a bill she is sponsoring related to allowing for more flexible work schedules, as well as sponsoring the Support Working Moms Act!! This is huge – it's an expansion of the Affordable Care Act protections for breastfeeding families. She then turned the conversation onto me, pointing out all

the work I've been involved with this last year on the state-level regarding breastfeeding rights in the workplace and that legislation is one thing we can focus on to address these problems. Republican, Democrat, Independent or sub-rock dwelling hermit, investing in breastfeeding is a decent proposal.

Investment Proposal

I invite our community to invest in breastfeeding, not with money or the Shark Tank formula of start-up capital and a percentage of equity, but with a simple sign.



We Encourage and Support Breastfeeding for our customers and for our staff.

If you have any needs or concerns, please ask us.

If a customer wants privacy, let them use your office or put up a screen – don't direct them to a bathroom. If they don't need privacy, don't ask them to cover up. If an employee needs accommodations, find out what resources already exist to meet your business needs. Please invest in the health of our local families and businesses. If we all do this, we'll be on a level and competitive playing field. Even if you don't have kids breastfeeding matters to you if you: have co-workers, go out in public, might have kids or grandkids or if you care about the environment and the amount of plastic bottles in our oceans. This includes most people. Please join the effort in acknowledging breastfeeding as a human rights and public health issue, and not an employee luxury or privileged lifestyle choice.

