
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For additional information contact:

Steve Kelso at (616) 632-7274 or Steve.Kelso@kentcountymi.gov

**Nationally Known Speaker/Photographer Brings a Unique
Male Perspective to Breastfeeding**

GRAND RAPIDS – Bringing home a newborn can be exhilarating and exciting, yet scary. Such was the story when Hector Cruz and his wife brought their baby home. Their newborn daughter, Sophia, had jaundice and was losing too much weight. She just wasn't getting the nutrients she needed.

"I assumed, like every new dad, that breastfeeding was easy. Boy, was I wrong," says Cruz. "My wife and daughter were having latch issues." The experience put him in a position he never anticipated. "I was immediately immersed in a world that I knew nothing about and as a new father I felt hopeless, lost, confused and my natural instinct was to fix the problem," he added.

Cruz, a commercial photographer from Clarksville, Tennessee, decided to combine his talent for photography with his passion for destigmatizing public breastfeeding and founded **Project: Breastfeeding**. Cruz photographs fathers who pose shirtless with their children, as if they were breastfeeding. The artwork features the message *"If I could, I would."* His hope is to educate men while empowering women.

Hector Cruz has appeared on countless television programs and has been featured in USA Today. He will speak at the **Breakfast Break for Breastfeeding** event, December 3rd, 2015 at 8:00 AM, at the Kent County Health Department (700 Fuller NE, Grand Rapids, MI). The Healthy Kent Breastfeeding Coalition is sponsoring his visit in partnership with Strong Beginnings.

"The male perspective is rare and valuable," says Barbara Hawkins Palmer, Executive Director of the Healthy Kent Breastfeeding Coalition. "Research shows that nursing is more successful with the father's support." More information and local resources on breastfeeding can be found at www.kentcountybreastfeeding.org.

Cruz has photographed several Kent County residents who have agreed to have their images used in a billboard campaign that will soon be seen in many West Michigan communities. The billboards will be funded by partners of the Healthy Kent Breastfeeding Coalition. Cruz is available for a limited number of live interviews during the early morning hours of December 3rd. To schedule an interview, please contact Steve Kelso at the Kent County Health Department.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 265 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503