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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



## BREASTFEEDING MOTHERS PLAN TO NURSE TOPLESS AT PICNIC IN COLUMBUS

*The "Hooray for Boobies" nursing picnic to raise public awareness and acceptance of breastfeeding is scheduled to be held at Goodale Park in Columbus, Ohio this June.*

Columbus, Ohio, potentially worldwide - June 10, 2009

Breastfeeding babies, mommies and anyone else who supports breastfeeding are invited to participate in celebrating the wonderfully multi-functional purpose of breasts... especially their perfect ability to nourish and nurture babies! The "Hooray for Boobies!" nursing picnic coordinated by Lauren Damon, will be held in Goodale Park in Columbus, Ohio, on June 26 & 27. While not required, participants will be encouraged to breastfeed topfree, which is legal in the city of Columbus. A sister virtual event is being held online for those on Facebook, asking participants to change their status for the day to "Hooray for Boobies! I am celebrating the wonderfully multi-functional purpose of breasts... especially their perfect ability to nourish and nurture babies! <http://normalizebreastfeeding.info/events.htm>"

Participants will picnic at the playground in Goodale Park on:  
June 26, 2009 12pm - 5pm  
June 27, 2009 10am-1pm, break, 4pm-7pm

The "Hooray for Boobies!" picnic goals are to combat the oversexualization of the breast in Western culture and to bring exposure to the naturalness and beauty of breastfeeding.

About "Hooray for Boobies!":

Lauren Damon, an Ohio mother, had the idea that ComFest would be the perfect place to host a nurse-in to raise breastfeeding awareness and support. She posted her idea on the group discussion board of "Hey Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene!". Group member and fellow lactivist Tiffany Deering responded to the post, offering her assistance, the two proceeded to collaborate and the "Hooray for Boobies!" nursing picnic was born. The picnic is not affiliated with or hosted by ComFest, but hopefully will expand into future events nationwide and next year will have a booth at the community festival.

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## “Hooray for Boobies!” Nurse-in Event Planned for ComFest

*Interview with Event Coordinator Lauren Damon by Tiffany Deering*

As I write this, my six month old son and I are participating in a modern spin on an ancient routine. N.A.K., nursing at keyboard, is something thousands of mothers are doing daily, around the world... many otherwise isolated women are able to communicate with each other online through Facebook, cafemom, myspace and other social networking sites and forums. Members of the group “Hey Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene!” support each other in daily conversations, helping to provide personal advice and resourceful links to help assist others in making informed life decisions.

If you read through the discussion board posts, you will find these members with particular passions. These women are termed lactivists, and find it both sad and irritating when called this in a negative connotation; how could wanting to promote providing babies with perfect nourishment be bad? Some are very adamant in their views about formula and [wage wars against formula manufacturers](#).<sup>1</sup> Others champion the cause of supporting working mothers in [their efforts to pump](#).<sup>2</sup> There are those proclaiming “[The Indiscreet Breastfeeding Manifesto](#)”<sup>3</sup> that desire to normalize nursing in public and battle those who say “Breastfeeding is good, but you should cover up”. And then there is Lauren Damon, who decided to be proactive and organize a nurse-in event to bring awareness to the issues and politics surrounding breastfeeding. It just so happens that at this event, mothers have the option to bare all and go “topfree”, which is allowed in Columbus, Ohio.

I had been active in the group for a few months, regularly participating on the discussion boards, when I noticed Lauren’s post about a nurse-in during ComFest. She asked if anyone would be interested in participating, that she believed we could make quite a statement considering the option to go topfree. While I was a little hesitant about being in public without a shirt, I had been longing to participate in a nurse-in. Contemplating going to college to become a lactation consultant and recently deciding to put my current skills (marketing and web site design) to use for the cause, it just seemed that would be the next logical step. I offered my assistance to help coordinate the event. Knowing we needed a name to brand the event, I asked Lauren to come up with something catchy and she wanted something cute. Her own personal motto was “Hooray for Boobies!”, and it seemed to fit. Going through the pictures on her Facebook profile, I found one where her infant daughter looked like she was cheering, so I used that for the logo and the “Hooray for Boobies!” nursing picnic was born.

[ComFest](#) is the community festival held in Columbus, Ohio, with hopes to change prejudiced attitudes so that all might “conduct their lives in harmony with the environment” and declaring that “the basic necessities of life are a right and not a privilege.”<sup>4</sup> Lauren knew that many women would be celebrating their right to go topfree at the festival, and decided that breastfeeding in public would be a natural extension of that, allowing people to see breasts in their natural function, and believes nursing is a basic necessity of life. However, the picnic is not affiliated with ComFest or hosted by the festival.

Lauren herself had never seen anyone nursing a baby until she was twenty-four years old and pregnant with her first child. She grew up believing it was a private act, just to be shared between mother and baby. One day Lauren’s boss Jenny, owner of the Pattycake Bakery, candidly nursed her baby Dove in front of Lauren. Never having seen it done before, Lauren admits to being embarrassed and not knowing how to respond. But she decided to “take a peek” at the baby, and it felt like Jenny was giving her “a peek into what a special bond that mothers and babies have together, and I looked forward to having that with my own baby.” With

the simple act of feeding her baby, Jenny had made an impression that would help Lauren make the decision to breastfeed her own daughter, Natalie.

This is the whole philosophy behind lactivists goals to normalize breastfeeding. Lauren wants other women to be able to feel more free to breastfeed. “I don’t want the woman who doesn’t feel the need to “be discreet” to be harassed, or any mother to feel the need to nurse her baby in a toilet stall, or force her baby to eat hiding in shame under a blanket. I want there to be more awareness about breastfeeding, and mothers’ rights. I want my daughter to be able to breastfeed her babies without being harassed, or made to feel ashamed or dirty. I want people to know and understand that humans are mammals, and that as such, we were designed to produce milk for our babies and that our breasts sole purpose is not for the sexual gratification of others.”

Nursing, despite being a natural bodily function, does not always come naturally to mothers. Another key aspect to lactivism is creating support networks to help breastfeeding babies. Lauren herself had complications which lactation consultants helped her overcome.

“Breastfeeding has been amazing! I love it, and so does my daughter Natalie (3 ½ months old). It started off a little bumpy. At the hospital, I delivered her and after my husband cut the cord, I went ahead and nursed her for the first time... she was only 5 minutes old. It was the most wonderful feeling I’ve ever had! At the hospital there was at least one lactation consultant in the labor and delivery ward at all times, so I pushed a button any time I had a question about her latch or anything. When we went home, I started panicking because my milk hadn’t come in yet and I was afraid that my daughter was going to starve.” Like many recently delivered moms, Lauren was extremely and painfully engorged, but with the help of a lactation specialist she and Natalie overcame this obstacle, and now they have a successful nursing relationship. Lauren wants this same kind of support to be available to women everywhere, especially since a lot of mothers give up at this point and might think they didn’t make enough milk due to a delay of milk coming in. Most [lactivists](#) feel that knowledge and proactive support systems are key components to increasing breastfeeding rates in America.<sup>5</sup>

Lauren believes that a lack of education in America about the medical advantages of breast versus formula feeding has had a negative impact. “There usually is not a support network for women, or they don’t know how to find organizations like Le Leche League. In addition, I think that there should be legislation to protect the lactator’s rights, and one of those rights needs to be pumping breaks at work. I just find out that my friend was denied breaks to pump at work, so she ended up putting her baby on formula.” The false impression that formula feeding is easier, along with the disdain for nursing in public, also contributes to less mothers choosing to even attempt breastfeeding and more mothers giving up nursing sooner. The situation is not helped when celebrity doctors such as Dr. Phil profess a “[be discreet](#)” mantra on their television shows.<sup>6</sup>

Lauren says, “I would like to direct Dr. Phil to the ‘Indiscreet Breastfeeding Manifesto’, as well as to look at the definition of ‘discreet’- showing or having good judgment. I see nothing but good judgment in one, choosing breastfeeding instead of formula feeding, and two, feeding your baby when he or she is hungry. Way to be on the ball there, Dr. Phil, let’s ‘get real’ here! I would also like to point out that, as a psychologist, he should know what kind of psychological damage can happen when a woman is not being supported in something that medical doctors all agree is the best choice when selecting whether to breast or formula feed.”

Nursing has been an amazing experience for Lauren, boosting her confidence more than ever, even despite a post-baby body. “I have just come into my womanhood, and it feels incredible. My breasts were meant to feed my daughter, and I love knowing that my baby is getting the best possible food. And a little selfishly, I love getting to eat even more than I did when I was

pregnant and still lose weight- I am still eating for two, you know! I also love knowing that I am nourishing more than my daughter- I donate my extra milk to a milk bank called 'Milkin' Mamas'. I couldn't provide those babies with much needed milk if I wasn't breastfeeding."

Endorsing more milk banks in America, so that mothers might have access to the 3rd best food choice according to WHO [when a baby is unable to nurse](#) (formula is actually fourth on the list, with the second being expressed milk from the mother<sup>7</sup>), is yet another reason behind events like "Hooray for Boobies!" and groups like "Hey Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene!" Desexualizing the breast is also something else to advocate. "I get so sick of turning on the television, and the first thing that pops on is a woman's breast. It's on billboards, in magazines, commercials, movies. Everywhere in Western culture breasts are sexualized to the point that women go under the knife to make their breasts look a certain way, wear restrictive and painful garments to force their breasts into the 'perfect' shape. The Topfree Equal Rights Association (TERA, whom also hosts a website featuring all the [breastfeeding pictures banned by Facebook](#)<sup>8</sup>) would be able to expand more on this subject better than I could due to time restraints. But just to try to sum it up quickly, let's just say that there is a man walking down the street without a shirt somewhere in America. What happens? Nothing! Now let's just change that from a man to a woman. It's a huge scandal! The woman is a whore; an exhibitionist... the list goes on. But it is exactly the same! Our culture is just so geared into thinking that women's breasts are sexual that most people can't see a breast with a baby attached to it and not see 'sex' and quite frankly, that sickens me."

One of the purposes of the "Hooray for Boobies!" nursing picnic is to bring exposure to the naturality and beauty of breastfeeding. "Breasts are beautiful, babies are beautiful... but how often do we see the two together in our culture? I went almost 25 years without seeing a mother breastfeed her baby! Even if people choose not to breastfeed for whatever reason, I still think that it is important for people to understand that breasts have many functions, and that feeding babies is one as well. I have yet to see anything more beautiful than that."

The event will be held on June 26 and 27 at Goodale Park in Columbus, Ohio, and anyone who wants to celebrate the wonderfully multi-functional purpose of breasts, especially their perfect ability to nourish and nurture babies, is welcome to participate. You can learn more by visiting the website <http://lactivism.info/events.htm>.

#### Sources:

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