

It's the Breast Thing On Campus

By Kathleen Cospier

"It's a protected right, so even if someone wants to give you a glance, you know you're doing the best for you, for your baby," said Suzanne Thomas, a professor in the Communications Department, on breast feeding in public. "You shouldn't be embarrassed. You're feeding your baby, and that's a good thing."

Thomas, is among a number of women, faculty and students alike, who have to balance the demands of their professional lives with motherhood. Inevitably, there are times when the two worlds collide. This is especially true for mothers who are nursing young infants. Thomas, recently gave birth to her fifth child, Sunny, whom she is nursing.

Fortunately, there is now support for breast feeding mothers at Fayetteville State University. The university recently set up a lactation room for women to nurse their babies or pump at their convenience in a private, comfortable space. "It's about time," said Jessica Hafner, FSU senior and mother of two and expecting. When told there was now a lactation room, Tifinei Lee, senior at FSU and mother of one said "Oh really? That's great. I wish they had that when I was nursing."

Recently many schools around the nation have been opening lactation rooms for the convenience and support of their staff and students. Currently UNC at Chapel Hill has 12 lactation rooms around campus, many of which contain changing tables, pumps, sinks, and/or refrigerators. Harvard has 20 on campus, which are equipped with hospital-grade pumps, along with storage options, changing tables, gliders with ottomans, iPod docks, and privacy areas for those who bring their own pump or child.

The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act signed by President Barack Obama in March of 2010 includes a section geared solely towards mothers and breast feeding. The bill requires companies with 50 employees or more to follow a mandate

offering a private room, which is not a bathroom, for female employees to express milk for a child up to one year of age. While the bill mainly targets businesses, schools are also required to abide the bill.

However, many woman are not familiar with the provisions of the bill or do not know that the lactation room may be available to them. Hafner, the FSU student, was not aware of the existence or location of the lactation room. Professor Thomas said she had heard that the university offered a space for nursing mothers, but "I don't actually know where it is," she said.

The newly opened lactation room is located on the second floor of the Williams Hall Room 215 and is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Although the temporarily designated space does not include tools for pumping or storage, it does have a relaxed setting with multiple plugs and a lock for safety.

Research has shown that lactation support is beneficial to the working, nursing mother and her child, according to the North Carolina State Personnel Manual on Lactation Support. Employers also benefit as well by decreasing medical expenses, reducing absenteeism, increasing employee retention, and improving morale in the workplace.

Although breast feeding is natural, it can sometimes be difficult to do in public. Lactation rooms provide peaceful space and can put an end to unsolicited advice and disapproving stares.

Fayetteville State has gone to great lengths to improve campus facilities and including a room for breastfeeding mothers is very helpful for women trying to balance professional and family responsibilities.

"I think that if a woman is comfortable she should feed her baby wherever she goes," said Professor Thomas. "It's natural, it's normal."

Denise Brown-Hart, FSU associate vice chancellor for Human Resources, has provided the following steps to follow in regards to use of the lactation room. She also added that the lactation room is not monitored, so it is the responsibility of the users to ensure they utilize the space correctly.

FSU Staff and Faculty Access

An FSU employee who wishes to make use of lactation space should:

- Contact the Human Resources Office at ext. 1146 to request access
- Upon approval by HR, visit the Bronco Card Office to obtain 6 month key-card access

- Log in to the visitors kiosk at the Customer Service Desk of Williams Hall
- The lactation space is located on the 2nd floor of Williams Hall in room 215
- Access the room using your Bronco key-card
- After use, please clean up all personal items before exiting the space
- Sign out of the visitors kiosk

Students seeking access to the designated lactation space should contact the Residence Life Office at 910-672-1884 or visit the Customer Service Desk located on the 1st floor of Williams Hall.

Student Access

- Log in to the visitors kiosk at the Custom-

er Service Desk of Williams Hall.

- Provide a valid FSU Bronco Identification Card in exchange for the access key-card to the lactation room.
- The lactation space is located on the 2nd floor of Williams Hall in room 215.
- Only one person can be signed in at a time; therefore a time limit may be applicable.
- Additional guest and visitors are not permitted.
- After use, please clean up all personal items before exiting the space.
- Return access key-card to the Customer Service Desk and retrieve your FSU Bronco Identification.
- Sign out of the visitor's kiosk.