

12 January, 2004

Letter: SCSU project supports moms

Jane Olsen, director, Women's Center

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I appreciated your Dec. 16 article about the new lactation/breastfeeding room at the SCSU Women's Center but wish to clarify and add to the information provided.

The headline stated that a "center" would be opened for female students and employees who are breastfeeding. Actually, a single room is being renovated.

It was also stated that "St. Cloud State University will open a breastfeeding center next year for mothers who want privacy while tending to their babies."

The room will be used mostly by women who need a clean, private space to pump their breastmilk because they are fulfilling the dual roles of motherhood and employment or higher education. Few women have their babies with them on campus, but we look forward to offering the space to them as well.

Why did the Women's Center initiate this project to open the first official lactation room on campus, and why did the CentraCare Health Foundation fund it? Facts about the benefits of breastfeeding and the trends related to women in higher education and the labor force demand it.

Benefits of breastfeeding include less infant illness, reduced employee/student absenteeism and improved morale of employees. Further, with Minnesota women's labor force participation topping the national figures at 70 percent (2000 Census data for all women older than 16), society, including employers, are better understanding the importance of lactation/breast-feeding rooms. In addition, and very important, the majority of students at St. Cloud State University are female; specifically 55 percent of the student body.

As women nourish the world's newest generation through breastfeeding, may the world nourish women through respect, equitable treatment and