

Facebook Riles Nursing Mothers

Written by [Laurel Haring](#) Tuesday, December 23 2008 04:08

A new and rapidly growing Facebook group (62,500+ members) plans to host a virtual nurse-in this Saturday to protest Facebook's seemingly arbitrary removal of breastfeeding pictures.

According to an article appearing [here](#), Facebook spokesman Simon Axten says that the site allows users to share photos of themselves breastfeeding as long as the photos follow the site's Terms of Use. Photos that show a completely exposed breast violate those terms and may be removed. According to Barry Schnitt (in [this article](#)), another Facebook spokesman, "The photos we act upon are almost exclusively brought to our attention by other users who complain."

Stephanie Knapp Muir who began the "[Hey Facebook, Breastfeeding Is Not Obscene](#)" group in 2007, says that she is unsure what specific triggers lead to the removal of a picture showing breastfeeding and describes the decision-making process leading to picture removal "arbitrary and random." Some of the pictures that have been removed, she says, show less skin than is visible in "an evening gown or a bathing suit or a beer ad." Her conclusion is that the objectionable nature may just be because the image shows breastfeeding or because people are more comfortable with a woman's breasts in a sexual context than they are seeing them used for their natural purpose.

The "Hey Facebook..." group is an offshoot of Facebook's Mothers International Lactation Campaign (MILC). The nurse-in will be held from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. and is open to everyone who supports breastfeeding. The group is asking that you change your profile photo for that one day to a picture of a nursing child and add this sentence to your status message: "Hey Facebook, breastfeeding is not obscene!"

Muir says that the photo you post can be of anyone – or anything – nursing. The message that the group wants to convey is that nursing is neither lewd nor sexually explicit, and is protected by law in most parts of Canada and the U.S. If you'd like to participate in this Saturday's virtual nurse in, start by heading over to the "[Hey Facebook...](#)" page or, if you're in the Palo Alto, Calif., area, you could head on over to Facebook's headquarters.

If you're curious about the content of some of the pictures that were removed, go on over to "[Hey Facebook...](#)". Some of the pictures have been taken down again -- again -- but some are still there. You can decide for yourself whether the pictures are appropriate or inappropriate for the readership of and visitors to Facebook.

In other news, Kelly Rutherford, who stars in "Gossip Girl," is causing raised eyebrows by breastfeeding her 2-year-old son, Hermes. Rutherford, 40, is expecting her second

child this summer and says that she intends “to nurse for as long as it feels right” (article [here](#)).

My hat is off to Rutherford for defending her, and every mother’s right, to choose whether or not to nurse and, if so, for how long. “It’s different for every mother. I don’t judge anyone for not breastfeeding and I don’t think people should be judging me.”

All my best to you and your families now and throughout the coming year!

Laurel Haring is a writer. She lives with her family in Wilmington, Delaware, and posts semi-regularly to her blog, [Let Me Say This About That](#) . Although not yet a member of Facebook, Laurel is watching the site with interest as thousands of people join the "Hey Facebook, Breastfeeding Is Not Obscene" group each day.

<http://www.typeamom.net/facebook-riles-nursing-mothers.html>