

Upgrades make Barton's birth center more appealing

By Kathryn Reed



It's not quite the same as giving birth at home, but the improvements to the birthing center at Barton Memorial Hospital make it seem less sterile and more comforting.

A \$200,000 donation by Ethelmae Haldan and matching funds from the South Lake Tahoe hospital transformed the eight-room facility into a more welcoming center.

Gone are the typical blah linoleum floors. In its place is faux wood flooring. Dated, torn and worn wallpaper has been replaced with fresh paint. Window treatments and dividing curtains in the rooms are new. Bathrooms have been overhauled so the fiberglass showers are gone and tile has been installed. Bathtubs have been added to a couple of the rooms.

Impermeable counters are almost everywhere. Gone are the turquoise Formica countertops. Cupboards are new, too.

Pictures still need to be put back on the walls, with some new artwork possible.

The overhaul started in September 2008 and was completed in February. The unit never shutdown so it took a while to finish the project because only one room could be off-limits at a time.

Most of what was replaced was 15 years old and considered more

than well used.

Several of the nurses weighed-in with what they thought would be good for the unit that handles an average of 500 births a year. About 20 percent of new moms are from the Carson Valley.



Glass at the nurses' station adds privacy.

Things like having a salon chair installed in the lactation consulting room allows nurses to save their back muscles by lowering and raising the chair with the new mom in it instead of having to stoop.

Barton has been offering lactation education since 2007 after some of the staff became certified.

Rocking chairs in the rooms are now more functional for moms to nurse in. The seat is higher off the ground and the arms are wider. Just another item the nurses picked.

The department has 15 full-time registered nurses, a full-time unit coordinator, a part-time clerk, a full-time director and three who work per diem.

Pat Okacz, one of the nurses, designed the department's logo. It is placed at the nurses' station in the main hallway.

"We didn't have the glass before. It adds a lot more privacy," Peggy Wright, director of the Barton Family Birthing Center, said. "It's much quieter. We are a small department built

around a central court.”

Behind the glass staff can have more private phone conversations, be a bit more secluded when entering data into the computers and have a little separation from the foot traffic in the hall.

The nursery did not get remodeled. It doesn't get the use like the birthing rooms do. Still, Wright would like to modernize it one day.



Peggy Wright, director of Barton's birthing center, shows off a warming unit.

Photos/Kathryn Reed

A warmer for newborns is in each room. The Barton Foundation donated two of them at a cost of \$16,000 and \$18,000, respectively. Jaundice babies and preemies use them the most. The newer ones weigh the babies, allow for warming lights to be turned on without sterilization issues and allow for medical staff to do everything they need even if the infant is hooked up to other apparatuses.

Though new moms might prefer sleep to television, the new flat screen monitors come with built-in DVD players. Movies about car seat safety, breast feeding and what to expect when the

little one gets home are shown.

Comfort for dads was also considered. The old reclining chairs they slept in are gone. In their place is what looks like a normal couch. With a little manipulation the bottom flips over and turns into a twin bed.

“Dads tell us the mattress is quite good,” Wright said.

Wireless was already in the hospital so sending pictures of the newborn to family and friends can be instantaneous from laptops.