

100 births and counting

■ Baby 1 and Baby 100 on hand to celebrate Yoder birthing center's milestone.

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YODER – They arrived by horse-and-buggy and mini-van.

Some were upscale professionals from Wichita, while others were white-capped rural mothers cradling newborns in homemade gowns.

But their stories were similar as families discussed the positive experiences of having their children born in the homelike setting of the Birth and Women's Health Center on Red Rock Road.

Tuesday night the center, which opened in 2004, celebrated its fifth year in service and its first 100 births.

Elsie Yoder was there for the celebration; she was baby No. 1, born just two weeks after the center opened its doors.

"I was thankful they were open," said Elsie's mother, Rebecca Yoder, who with her husband, Calvin, went on to have Abigail and Evan, who was baby 97, born last fall at the center.

Baby 100, Elsielee Craven, born Dec. 17, 2008, from Goddard, also made an appearance. Since the beginning of the year, 18 more babies have been delivered at the center.

A cooperative project, it began as a way to serve Reno County and surrounding areas by providing an alternative for childbearing families who expect a low-risk pregnancy and delivery.

Momentum gained in the first four years has been significant, according to Angel Schmutz, who with Lois Yoder, serves as the center's certified nurse-midwife.



Courtesy Photo

A photo the center had on display at the celebration shows Rebecca Yoder with her daughter, Elsie, and Jill Craven and her daughter Elsielee. Elsie Yoder was the first child born in the Birth and Women's Health Center on Red Rock Road, while Elsielee Craven was the 100th child born there.

"It was an easy choice," Rebecca Yoder said of having her children at the center: "We're just thankful it's right down the road. Lois and Angel do a good job. I feel safe with them and that's worth a lot."

The center is only one of three in Kansas; the others are in Kansas City and Topeka. Along with Schmutz and Yoder, it is a collaboration between Dr. Tom Simpson, now retired, and Dr. James Decker, Sterling. The birth center also collaborates with neonatologists at Wesley Medical Center, and associates of Women's Health, OB/GYN, in Wichita.

In Kansas, the trend toward the use of midwives was recognized as early as 1997, when the Kansas Department of Health and Environment issued a report on birthing trends. The report indicated that from 1995 to 1998 doctors attended 2 percent fewer births, while midwives attended 1.3 percent more births.

"They don't have a place like this in Wichita," said



Lois Yoder, facing, hugs Jill Craven and her 3-month-old daughter, Elsielee, as they arrive at the celebration for the 100th birth at the Birth and Women's Health Center on Red Rock Road.

Travis
Morisse/The
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Kendra Reynolds, of Wichita, explaining why she had two of her three children at the center.

"I would have been at the birthing center if they had it back then," said Kendra's mother, Annika Stanton, who attended the party.

She came to Yoder with her daughter and son-in-law when Jarek Reynolds recently was born.

"I watched him come out, it was a family affair," Stanton said. "I cried. I just bawled. It was just a sweet miraculous thing. It was heartwarming."



Travis Morisse/The Hutchinson News

Jill Craven tries to get her 3-month-old daughter Elsielee to smile as her husband, Shawn Craven, holds her during the celebration for the 100th birth at the Birth and Women's Health Center on Red Rock Road.

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