Hospital hosts its 'first babies'

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SENECA — When Oconee Medical Center opens its new patient tower later this week, the event will have a very special meaning for at least two community residents.

According to Ann Woolbright Grant's mother, her little girl was either the second or third baby born in the first Oconee hospital in 1939. It was March and the hospital had only accepted its first patient in January.

Grant has kept the family's link to Oconee Medical alive over the years in a variety of ways, first serving as a nurse shortly after completing nursing school and later by giving birth to her first child in the old hospital in 1961 and to her second child in the current hospital in 1963.

"I guess I'll have to wait for my great-grandchildren to be born here," the Townville resident said as she prepared to tour the new birthing facilities at OMC.

Meanwhile, Mary Brock Thomas of Seneca was the only one of five children in her family to be born in a hospital, breaking on the scene at the original hospital on Christmas Day 1939.

"Mommy said she was going to have me at the hospital no matter what," Thomas said as she joined Grant on the tour.

Both women were impressed by what they saw and complimentary of the hospital's leadership.

"I think this is just wonderful, to think we are growing like this," said Thomas.

"It's sure much nicer," Grant added.



Brett McLaughlin/Staff

Ann Woolbright Grant of Townville, right, and Mary Brock Thomas of Seneca, center, listen as Nursing Director Sally Boggs explains the lighting system in the new labor and delivery rooms at Oconee Medical Center. The two women were among the first babies born in the original hospital in 1939. Also listening in are Vice President of Operations Hunter Kome and Marketing Director Heather Goss, not pictured.

The second floor of the new patient tower is dedicated to women's health.

The Birthing Center offers spacious rooms that offer a comfortable stay for the mother and her family. Each room includes a vanity and bureau for the woman's belongings and a recliner and sleeper chair for the husband and family members. The rooms are bathed in natural light and feature beautiful photographs of local wild¬flowers.

In addition to being the newest in the region, the Birthing Center is also the most secure, with restricted access, video surveillance in the corridors and the HUGS electronic infant protection system.

Each room is linked to an electronic monitoring system that allows a woman's doctor to track the progress of labor and the health of the mother and baby from the doctor's office. The system provides the same informa¬tion to staff at the nurses' station.

Because some babies need help getting started, the newborn nursery is equipped to serve babies with a wide range of needs, and includes an isolation room for the most fragile newborns.

When baby arrives, every new mother and father receive a complimentary supper of steak, chicken cordon bleu or the meal of their choice as the hospital's way of helping to celebrate the arrival of a new life.

Also on the second floor is a special unit for women needing hospitalization for obstetric or gynecological care. All of the patient rooms on the floor are dedicated to women. Experienced staff members carry wire¬less phones that are linked to the nurse call buttons, allowing them to respond quickly and quietly at any time of day or night.