

West Valley unveils new ICU for neonatal care

Unit opened doors Sept. 19, features special care nursery

CALDWELL — West Valley Medical Center, one of Caldwell's largest employers, has added a new neonatal intensive care unit — the first of its kind in the city.

The \$1 million, state-of-the-art facility was in planning stages for nearly five years, according to Julie Mills, lead nurse on the project.

Along with the four beds, the unit also has a special isolation room for babies in need.

At 1,985-square-feet, the facility offers several services, including a level II special care nursery and care to babies needing assistance with feeding, breathing, blood glucose levels or weight gain, among other needs.

The unit opened its doors Sept. 19, and within the first three days, all four beds were occupied.

"This just shows how critical the need for such a facility is in Caldwell," Mills said.

Prior to West Valley's own NICU, the medical center transported premature babies to Boise for care. The new unit makes it more convenient for families to stay closer to their newborns, according to Mills.

"We can now keep the babies and moms together," said Denise Dixon, family maternity center director.

Care will be provided by three physicians specializing in neonatology and six neonatal nurse practitioners. The team will provide round-the-clock, on-call coverage for the new unit. The team will also be available to attend high-risk deliveries throughout the day, according to a press release.

Construction began earlier this year, and Meridian-based Beniton Construction was hired to do the project.

Babies born about three weeks premature — at 34 weeks — will be treated for now. Moving forward, the medical center has plans to add to the facility to be able to deliver babies born at 32 weeks, according to Dixon.

The new NICU also includes a lactation room where mothers can store breast milk for their infants.

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