

Covenant Connections

Covenant Health News and Community Events

A Window to a (Socially Distant) Welcome

When expectant parents Jacob and Jessica Sims were told that visitors weren't allowed in Labor and Delivery at Fort Sanders Regional Medical Center, they were devastated. The COVID-19 pandemic forced limits on who could be inside the hospital.

"It was very discouraging," Jessica says. "We both wanted our moms there...this was my mom's first official grandbaby, so it was extremely hard on her."

Then Jessica's mom, Kelly Smith, made a suggestion in a family group chat. Her idea was to go to the top of the parking garage across from the hospital where they could watch the window for a sign the baby was born.

The idea caught on with help from Jessica's cousin. When the time came for Jessica to deliver the baby, they were ready.

Kelly just happened to have some blue balloons that had been put in her car earlier as part of a prank at church. "It's like the Lord knew I would need a couple of balloons in a couple of weeks for that sign," Kelly says, "and He made sure they were blue."

The family headed to the garage with a homemade poster, binoculars and balloons. They were fully prepared for a socially distant welcome.

"Once Denver was almost here, all the nurses came in and started to set up," Jessica says.

"My husband told them about our family being outside and they all got so excited."

Jacob went to the window and waved. "They were with us the whole time! We would air high-five and wave anytime something good was happening!" he says.

Then Jacob disappeared from view for a while. What came next brought gasps and cheers from the top of the Clinch Avenue garage.

OB-GYN Perry Roussis, MD, held the newborn baby up in front of the window for the family to see.

"Screaming, jumping, and crying ensued as we all soaked in one of the most unique and beautiful experiences any of us has ever had," says Jacob's sister-in-law, Savannah Decker.

Kelly adds, "I was probably the most excited I have ever been. I knew Denver had made it into the world safely and I was ecstatic! It almost made up for me not being able to be in the delivery room...one of the happiest days of my life!"

Baby Denver Alan Sims was born on March 24. He's settled in at home now and has met his big sister. Jessica looks back on the birth of her baby with joy.

"It was a really special moment and I'm so thankful that Dr. Roussis and his team helped it happen," Jessica says.

Now Denver's mom and dad have a special story to tell about the baby in the window and the family celebrating from afar. "That day was so special to us in so many ways and the same for our family," Jacob says.

The wait on top of the garage was a long one – about two hours. Savannah says it was worth it and they would gladly do it again.

"We couldn't be more thankful to the hospital staff for giving us that moment," Savannah says. "We are all captivated by Denver and can't stop talking about how we had one the most positive experiences during one of the craziest times in our lives," says Savannah.

Proud grandmother Kelly says she's thankful for Fort Sanders Regional and she's thankful to God.

"Even though I was not able to be in the delivery room, He made up for it by allowing us to have a story to tell and a very amazing day on that parking garage," she says.



Above, top: An overjoyed family welcomes baby Denver into the world from the parking lot.

Above, bottom: Jessica Sims delivered her baby during a time of limited visitation due to COVID-19. Her extended family found a way to celebrate, just the same.

Right: Jacob and Jessica Sims with their new son, Denver

BE IN THE KNOW: Coronavirus (COVID-19)

In response to COVID-19, we have changed several hospital protocols to ensure the health and safety of our patients and employees. Visit our website at FSRegional.com for the most up-to-date information.

Has your visitation policy changed?

Like other hospitals, we instituted a new policy on March 21 that doesn't allow visitors in our hospitals.

Exceptions include:

- Visiting a loved one for end-of-life care
- A visitor vital to the care of the patient
- Patients coming for surgery or testing may have one caregiver accompany them
- Women giving birth may have one birthing partner, doula, or caregiver

Why are some of your hospital entrances closed?

To limit hospital access in order to ensure we are screening all visitors and staff for symptoms of COVID-19, which include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. We are also screening for travel history to high risk areas.

How do I enter the hospital?

Monday – Friday, before 5pm: Use the main entrance on Clinch Avenue, the new Emergency Department entrance on Laurel Avenue, and the Trustees Tower Garage entrance, also on Laurel Avenue.

Monday – Friday, after 5pm: Use the Emergency Department entrance on Laurel Avenue.

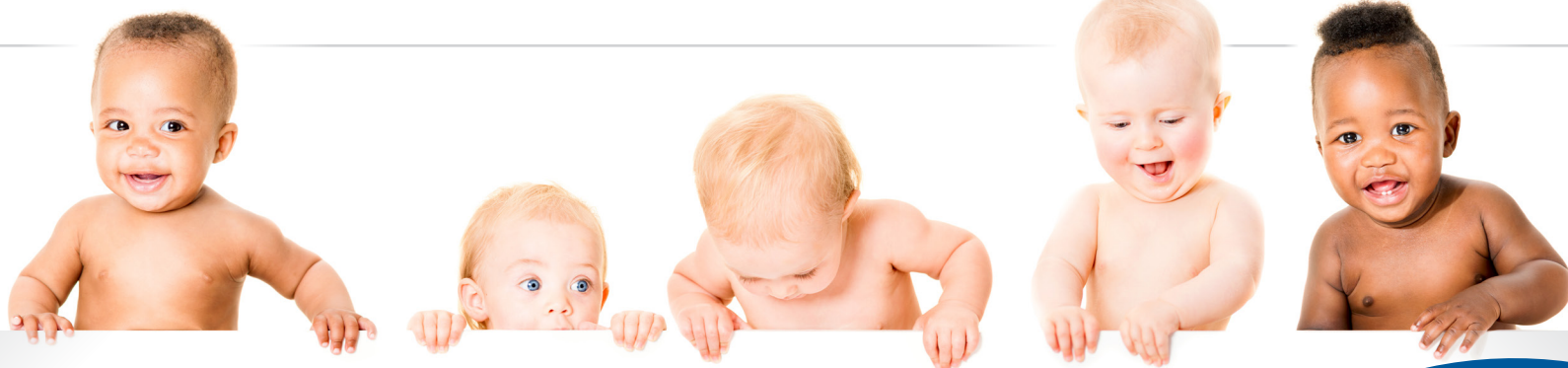
Weekends: Use the main entrance on Clinch Avenue or the new Emergency Department entrance on Laurel Avenue.

Please be prepared to be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and travel history.

If I don't feel well, can I still come to the emergency department?

During this crisis, it's easy to forget that emergencies like heart attacks and strokes still happen. We continue to treat patients with life-threatening conditions every day. All patients and staff who come to our emergency department are screened for COVID-19 symptoms and travel history.

If you are experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19, call your primary care provider for assistance about your specific situation.



At Fort Sanders Regional, we deliver!

- 🏥 Excellent obstetricians
- 🏥 The Fort Sanders Perinatal Center for high risk pregnancies
- 🏥 Direct tunnel access to East Tennessee Children's Hospital

For more information about the outstanding physicians that deliver at Fort Sanders Regional, please call (865) 673-FORT (3678) or visit FSRegional.com



For more information: 865-541-4500 or CovenantHealth.com