### **INSIDE** THE BABY FACTORY

# THEY KEEP DELIVERING **NEW YORK'S CUTEST**



be cleared and remade. "Despite how busy they are,

GOOD MORNING...
LET THE STRESS
BEGIN .....

A knowing sign welcomes staff to labor and delivery room.

## Maimonides has busiest maternity ward in the state

BY HEIDI EVANS

DAILY NEWS STAFF WRITER

WELCOME TO the city that really never sleeps.

Maimonides Medical Center's bustling obstetrics unit is the busiest in New York State - with a record 7,746 New Yorkers born at the Brooklyn hospital last year.

This year shows no sign of letting up.

"It's a little bit like being an airtraffic controller," said nursing director Carol Kidney. "They come, they go, they come again. It never stops."

With 11 labor and delivery rooms and 60 postpartum beds in one hospital, and a state law that says new moms have to be discharged in 48 hours, it's a daily dance of musical beds and babies.

One recent morning there were 90 newborns in the nursery - "a little city of babies," said Dr. Howard Minkoff, the chairman of obstetrics and gynecology. "To be honest, we are overwhelmed," said Minkoff, who oversees a medical team of 100. "We want to give people the most wonderful experience we can in creature comforts - their bagel and baby and two restful days here - but wonderful is second to safety.'

After other area hospitals closed, there are many days when the maternity floor at Maimonides looks more like an overbooked hotel with the entire staff scrambling to handle the overflow. On those days, it's not uncommon for women who just gave birth to be waiting in a hallway for a room to

they do an outstanding job," said a spokesman for FOJP, the hospital's malpractice insurer.

Maimonides' CEO Pamela Brier said the hospital has invested over \$10 million in recent years to assure patient safety.

On the busiest of days, the delicate task of moving moms in and out falls to Malkie Gips, the sunny patient representative.

"You just give them a little noodge, and most people are very sympathetic," she said. "I say, 'Remember two days ago when you were waiting downstairs for a room, how lousy that felt? Maybe your husband can pick you up before lunch? Or your mother?' It's not my favorite part of the job."

Apart from the Orthodox Jewish community, which accounts for about half of the births each year, the hospital serves a large influx of Chinese families now living in Sunset Park. Mothers from Latin America, the Caribbean, Bangladesh and good old Bensonhurst are also plentiful.

An ad campaign bragged Maimonides can say "goo-goo in 68 different languages.

And that's not all it can say.

If there is no interpreter on the spot, labor nurses have a sign they hold up in Chinese that reads: "PUSH!" and "DON'T PUSH!"

"This is a brand-new unit and we are already outgrowing it," said Dr. Susan Shi, standing in Mei Chen's modern room, painted in soothing pastel colors.

Canarsie mom Shana James, 25, and her baby boy were the talk of the maternity floor during her recent stay. Amir Elijah weighed in at 11 pounds, 5 ounces, with a full head of hair. When the bundle of joy arrived via C-section, the pediatrician joked, "That's a man! He's going to be able to walk out of

Pretty babies lie all in a row at Maimonides Medical Center, state's busiest maternity ward. Photos by Jeanne Noonan

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Dr. Howard Minkoff reviews very busy schedule with maternity staff. There are some 645 births a month at Maimonides. Photos by Jeanne Noonan

here!"

"I was crying, 'I'm gonna die! Please get this baby out,'" James said. A day and a half later, James – who works at a Manhattan nonprofit – was beaming, ready to go home early. "Oh, my God," she said, hugging her little man, "I just want to bite his cheeks!"

As James was checking out, the

labor rooms were refilling with a new wave of expectant moms.

"There are days I come home and think there are no pregnant people left in Brooklyn," said physician's assistant Stella Netis. "Then the next day comes, and sure enough, there's another group. But it's a happy place."

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## She was doc & patient — on same day

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NO ONE knows better how crazy it gets at Maimonides Medical Center than Diana Roth, an obstetrician who delivers babies at the hospital and had her four kids there, too.

Because once, she did both on the same day.

"I had given birth just four hours before when my beeper went off and it was one of my patients in active labor," said Roth, 37, remembering the night in August 2005 when her third child, Josh, was born.

"I had gone through her pregnancy with her and felt obligated to help. Plus, I was already there."

She knew the nurses on the postpartum floor where she was dozing in a private room would never rouse her — especially to go back to work.

 $Roth\,had\,other\,ide as.$ 



Diana Roth went right back to work after having son, Josh, in 2005.

She yanked out her IV and called one of the residents to sneak her a pair of scrubs. At about midnight, she slipped down a staircase to her patient's side.

"I felt fine. I delivered my patient, and went back up to my room to go back to sleep," Roth recounted matter-of-factly.

When Roth's doctor checked her the next morning, Roth confessed to her midnight run.

"You have to be kidding me?" Dr. Carmen Llopiz-Valle recalled telling her patient, er, colleague. "Diana is a very young, healthy, go-getter kind of person and very committed to her patients. She knew what it meant to her patient to be there forher."

The 25-year-old Borough Park mom agreed.

"At the time, I thought it was normal. She was so good to me, not tired, nothing! She was ready only for me," said the mom, who asked to be identified only as Leah. "Once I knew she herself had just given birth, I was amazed."

The funniest part? A few hours later, Roth was asked if she wouldn't mind a roomie. "They wheeled in my patient, Leah!" Roth said, laughing.

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