

suburban life



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Expectant moms from Bucks County and beyond choose **St. Mary Medical Center's** maternity department for the comprehensive care needed to welcome new life into the world. page 14



Special Delivery

EXPECTANT MOMS FROM BUCKS COUNTY AND BEYOND CHOOSE **ST. MARY MEDICAL CENTER'S MATERNITY DEPARTMENT** FOR THE COMPREHENSIVE CARE NEEDED TO WELCOME NEW LIFE INTO THE WORLD. **BY PHIL GIANFICARO**

Despite having delivered thousands of babies over the past 15 years, Afua Mintah, M.D., never ceases to be amazed by the miracle of life.

"Seeing a baby come into the world has never gotten tiring, old, or boring for me," says Dr. Mintah, an obstetrician and gynecologist at St. Mary Medical Center in Langhorne. "Every perfect baby is amazing to me. I tell my patients this as I'm handing them their baby. The fact that it still amazes me 15 years later tells me I'm in the right field, and here at St. Mary, I'm in the right place."

The decision to start a family is monumental. In Bucks County, many residents who plan to become pregnant choose the St. Mary maternity department as their "right place" to ensure the utmost level of care before, during, and after the delivery. St. Mary delivers more than 1,600 babies each year, an average of more than four per day.

"St. Mary is comprehensive," Dr. Mintah adds. "We have fertility specialists. Once a woman becomes pregnant, we have office locations throughout the area to provide them services. We employ doctors for high-risk pregnancies. We have trained ultrasound technicians who can do scans on weekends. We have lactation services, dedicated nurses, and midwifery services for patients with low risk who want that service. Nothing is lacking."

If needed, St. Mary also has a fully staffed, six-bed, Level II neonatal intensive care unit, or NICU, with neonatologists from Children's Hospital of Philadelphia (CHOP) on site 24/7. The NICU is a special-care nursery for moderately preterm



Dr. Afua Mintah, an obstetrician and gynecologist at St. Mary Medical Center



Dr. Prem K. Marlapudi, a CHOP neonatologist and medical director of the NICU at St. Mary

babies, usually around 32 weeks, or for babies who are full-term but require close monitoring or intravenous antibiotics after birth. Prem K. Marlapudi, M.D., FAAP, is a CHOP neonatologist and medical director of the NICU at St. Mary.

"Our Level II NICU is staffed with board-certified, well-trained obstetricians and neonatologists 24 hours a day," says Dr. Marlapudi, who has been with St. Mary since 1989, when he established the first NICU in Bucks County. "That gives our patients the

feeling of security that their baby is being taken care of."

The typical situations experienced by most newborns needing care in a NICU involve two primary causes: prematurity and/or infection.

"Any delivery can become complicated in seconds," Dr. Marlapudi adds. "We are readily available to address any situation

and initiate steps to stabilize the baby to make sure [they are] OK. In the neonatal unit, the babies are closely monitored. If they require respiration support or infection support, we provide it immediately. Everybody gets top-level care here."

The mother of the newborn in the NICU is consulted every step of the way so she and her family know exactly what to expect. A secure video feed inside the NICU provides an additional layer of comfort, so the family can view the baby from the mom's hospital room or even from home.

At St. Mary, delivery check-in starts in a private triage room, where a physician and midwife will evaluate dilation and contractions. As labor progresses, the patient is moved to a larger birthing suite. If the patient requests an epidural, an anesthesiologist provider is on site 24 hours a day. Caesarian sections are performed in the operating rooms on the unit. After their procedure, patients recover in a private room.

"There's a lot of anxiety and unknowns for patients, especially first-time moms," says Dr. Mintah, who received her medical degree from the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, in Washington, D.C., and completed her residency at Mount Sinai Beth Israel teaching hospital in New York City. "Part of our role as obstetricians is to provide guidance and answer all of our patients' questions. Some people might do this twice in their life; we do it day after day."

Dr. Marlapudi received his medical degree in his native India. He completed his residency at Kings County Hospital Center in Brooklyn, and his fellowship in neonatal-perinatal medicine at St. Christopher's Hospital for Children/Temple University Hospital in Philadelphia. He is board-certified in neonatal-perinatal medicine and pediatrics by the American Board of Pediatrics.

Like his colleague Dr. Mintah, Dr. Marlapudi still marvels at the miracle of childbirth even though he has witnessed it so many times.

"It is amazing to me every time," he says. "Life itself is amazing, and watching a baby being born is almost magical. I cannot imagine myself doing anything else." ■

➔ St. Mary Medical Center

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