

For the Yanity family of Athens, having babies at O'Bleness Memorial Hospital and its predecessor — Sheltering Arms Hospital — has become a tradition.

With the birth of the first child of Brian Haines and Mary Yanity Haines — Blair Katherine Haines — on Nov. 19, 2008, four generations of the Yanity family of Athens have been born at their community hospital. Kathleen Bertuna, DO, of River Rose Obstetrics and Gynecology, an affiliate of the O'Bleness Health System, delivered the fourth-generation baby in the O'Bleness Birth Center.

Sheltering Arms began as a lying-in hospital for maternity patients in the private home of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Breinig on Clark Street in Athens in 1921. During its 88-year history the hospital has undergone many changes, including moving from the Clark Street building to the current location in 1970, as well as major expansions of facilities, technology and services to ensure safety, convenience and comfort for patients.

But one thing has remained unchanged — O'Bleness healthcare providers continue to offer the highest quality of care and service to their patients.

And that is what has drawn the Yanity family to continue their tradition of having babies at O'Bleness. Mary, who is Office Manager for the Court Street office of Peoples Bank in Athens,

said she wouldn't have considered having her child anywhere else.

"I chose to have my baby at O'Bleness because I knew it was the best place — it was an excellent experience," Mary said. "And I've heard the same sentiments from my grandmother as well as from my mother and father. Dr. Bertuna and my nurse, Andy Gallagher, were just wonderful."

Brian, a graduate assistant at Ohio University (OU), is coaching football and working toward a football coaching degree at OU. He echoes Mary's sentiments. "We were very pleased with the O'Bleness Birth Center and with the professionals who helped during the birth and afterward," Brian said. Mary and Brian both have undergraduate degrees from Marietta College. Mary also attended OU where she earned a master's degree in business. Brian played football and also coached football for Marietta College where he earned a master's degree in education.

Mary, whose parents are Joseph Blair Yanity III and Katherine Edwards Yanity, was born at O'Bleness on July 27, 1983. Mary's father, Joseph, whose parents are Joyce Gilham Yanity and Joseph Blair Yanity Jr., was born at Sheltering Arms on June 11, 1955. Mary's paternal grandmother, Joyce, whose parents were Helen Elizabeth Porter Gilham and George Arthur Gilham, was born at Sheltering Arms on July 27, 1934. Mary loves the fact that she and her grandmother share the same birth date.

Mary's grandmother Joyce was delivered by J. R. Sprague, MD, one of the founding physicians of Sheltering Arms, who began practicing in Athens in 1908. Except for two years during which he was a first lieutenant in World War I, Sprague practiced in Athens until 1966. He is credited for pioneering major surgery in Athens.

Joyce's connection with the Athens hospital remained strong and when she returned to Athens in 1952 after living in Massillon, Ohio, she lived in the hospital's nurses home. She also recalls volunteering at Sheltering Arms.

"We did anything that needed to be done," Joyce said. "Pediatrics was right off the Breinigs' living area. I remember that Dr. Allen Baldwin, who was a pediatrician, would sit there and rock babies at night."

Sheltering Arms owner and physician, T. H. Morgan, MD, delivered Joyce's son Joseph in the Clark Street facility. Morgan and his wife, Betty Gilham Morgan (Anastas), were known and loved by patients and visitors because of their devotion to caring for the health of community members.

Morgan promised to eventually give the hospital to the community, and when he died in 1957, his will transferred ownership to the Sheltering Arms Hospital.

Betty, a sister of Joyce and Mary's great-aunt, became administrator of Sheltering Arms in 1947 and was also Director of Volunteer Services at O'Bleness until her death in 1991.

Joyce recalls that Joseph weighed only 5 pounds, 8 ounces. "Joe was 4 or 5 weeks early and was kept in an incubator for a week," Joyce said. "Of course, in those days, the mothers spent a week in the hospital too, so I was right there with my baby."

Rooms at Sheltering Arms were very attractive, Joyce said, with maple wood beds that cranked up and down and maple wood ladder-back chairs. "I stayed in a single room — it was very nice," she said.

"The delivery room was not very big and was a very sterile-looking place. For anesthesia, the doctor dripped chloroform. There was no separate labor room — mothers just stayed in the room where they delivered."

Mary was delivered at O'Bleness by John Cunningham, MD. Her mother, Katherine, said she remembered that there weren't very many other mothers and babies in the hospital at the time and that the nurses would take baby Mary whenever she needed a break. "The nurses were wonderful — they took Mary and kept her with them while they worked at their desk. The labor and delivery rooms were very different — it was more like an operating room for delivery."

Today, the O'Bleness Birth Center offers four home-like labor/delivery/recovery rooms, where mothers can enjoy the convenience, comfort and safety of experiencing all stages of labor and deliver in a private room. In addition, a fully-equipped cesarean section room is located in the Birth Center.

Jackie Jeffers, RNC, Unit Manager of the Birth Center, said the nursing staff is trained at a high professional level, and is very experienced and caring. Certified obstetrical nurses staff the Birth Center.

"It is not uncommon for our nurses and patients to develop a deep bond," Jeffers said. "We offer services ranging from support care so a mother can have as natural a birth as possible, to providing epidurals to relieve the pain of childbirth," Jeffers said. "A mother can choose whatever is right for her, and as her labor progresses, she can change her mind and ask for more or less pain support."

Physicians who care for mothers and babies at the Birth Center are highly skilled. "We are proud that we can give our patients individualized, speciality care," Jeffers said.

Childbirth classes and prenatal classes are offered on a regular basis and acquaint prospective parents with the stages of labor and delivery, prenatal nutrition, and other aspects of pregnancy and parenthood.

In addition, O'Bleness' internationally board-certified lactation consultant, Michele Biddlestone, BS, IBCLC, visits mothers in the hospital shortly after birth to assist with breastfeeding. Biddlestone offers regular classes on breastfeeding, as well as breastfeeding classes for the working mother and weekly follow-up breastfeeding sessions.

All classes are free and are described on O'Bleness' calendar of educational offerings at www.obleness.org.



Four generations of the Yanity family include, from left, Mary Yanity Haines, Joyce Gilham Yanity with baby Blair Katherine Haines, and Joseph Blair Haines III.