

9 months after brutally cold and snowy winter, Toledo nurseries welcoming blizzard of babies

By Marlene Harris-Taylor, Blade Staff Writer

Adam and Melinda Hernandez introduce their newborn son, Adam, Jr., at ProMedica Flower Hospital in Sylvania.

This past February was one of the coldest on record, and South Toledo residents Adam and Melinda Hernandez, both 32, said it was so frigid they didn't venture outside much. Now, nearly nine months later, the couple just welcomed a new addition, Adam Hernandez, Jr., to their family of five children.

When little Adam, just 5-days-old, grows up his parents plan to tell him, "You were the result of a bad winter. The polar vortex gave me a son," Mr. Hernandez said.



The baby arrived a little early. Ms. Hernandez's original due date was Nov. 18, but her doctor decided to bring Adam into the world ahead of time at ProMedica Flower Hospital to avoid some potential complications.

October, November, and December appear to be the peak months for what some area doctors are calling a small baby boom. Toledo-area obstetricians are expecting to deliver record numbers of babies this fall, because of the Arctic blast experienced in northwest Ohio last winter.

The Weather Channel called Toledo's winter of 2013-14 the worst of any major city in the United States. Toledo broke five daily low temperature records and tied three others, with the coldest reading of -15 on Jan. 6 being the 10th-lowest temperature measured here, according to the National Weather Service.

Those temperatures combined with record levels of snowfall — nearly 40 inches in January alone — were attributed to a large pocket of very cold air sitting over the region.

Dr. Mychelle Owen of Mercy Ob/Gyn Associates in Perrysburg said she delivered nearly 20 babies in one week in October, which is typically the number of babies she delivers in one month.

"I said to [my patients], it's been a busy time because of all the level-three snowstorms, and apparently there was nothing better for people to do," Dr. Owen said. She added the expectant parents usually just laugh when she alludes to their babies being the result of a cold winter.

Officials at Mercy St. Vincent Medical Center said there's been a slew of activity on the maternity floor this fall. The average number of births at the hospital increased from about 20 per week in October, 2013, to about 29 per week in October, 2014.

"Given the increases we've seen this fall, we anticipate total deliveries for 2014 to be about 200 more than we had in 2013," said Sarah Bednarski, a Mercy spokesman.

Mercy St. Charles Hospital has also seen a major uptick in deliveries compared to last year at this time. There were 47 babies delivered there in October, compared to 25 in October, 2013.

Officials at ProMedica said things have not quite picked up yet on the maternity floor at Toledo Hospital. ProMedica St. Luke's Hospital, however, had a big spike in September with 25 additional deliveries when compared to 2013, said hospital spokesman Serena Smith.

While the baby rush started as early as September for some, other local doctors report they are planning for a wave of deliveries in November and December.

"It's gonna get crazy for us in December. We will have the busiest December that we have had in 10 years", said ProMedica physician Dr. Terry Gibbs.

"All that snow that just kept coming last year, so people even in March kept hibernating or something," Dr. Gibbs said.

Dr. Gibbs said he had to turn away some expectant mothers because he knows that he and his midwife are already at capacity for the number of babies they will have to deliver in November and December.

"I will be delivering double the normal numbers," he said.

ProMedica obstetrician Dr. Sarah Puckett said she is also expecting a "50 to 75 percent increase in what we normally see this time of year. I think it is weather-related. People not being able to get out as much. People are inside, and it's cozy and warm."

She also thinks that for some parents having health insurance for the first time through the Affordable Care Act may have encouraged them to start thinking about babies.

Some are wondering what the coming winter might bring, and at least one local doctor is welcoming the same possibility over again.

"Snowstorms are great for business, and I hear it's going to be another bad winter, so I'm probably looking at another busy year next year, Dr. Owen said.

As for the Hernandez family, this will be their last winter baby. Mrs. Hernandez said even though she always wanted a big family, no matter what the weather this winter, six children are enough.

Contact Marlene Harris-Taylor at: mtaylor@theblade.com or 419-724-6091.

[Note: In the early 1800s, the average American woman birthed 7 children; today the average is less than 2. In that same 200 year span, the divorce rate went from essentially zero to 18 per 1000 marriages.]