

ELEVEN IS HEAVEN

Jeanne and Mike Smith are the biggest fans of Mercy's Birthplace that the hospital has ever had – if you measure their enthusiasm by the number of babies born to one family in the Birthplace.

The Smiths have 11 children, ranging from age 20 to newborn. Nine of 11 are Mercy babies.

Formerly from Monticello and now living near Luzerne, the Smiths reside in a large farmhouse with a pond, an indoor skate park in the barn and plenty of room to play. Most of their children are named after saints known for attributes valued by Jeanne and Mike. They say each child is unique – just like each of Jeanne's birth experiences.

"The first time I came to Mercy, I felt spoiled because I had my own tub in my room and had a private room," says Jeanne, who also was born at Mercy. The Smiths like having the comfort of Mercy's Neonatal Intensive Care Unit nearby, although they have only had to use it once when their seventh baby, required a little special care.

"That was a hard thing," remembers Jeanne. "The nurses there were SO awesome. They took a Polaroid picture of him for me so I could see him since he couldn't be in the room with me." Today, that photo would not be necessary as Mercy's NICU features private rooms so parents are able to spend that precious time with their babies.

This baby also was the first one Jeanne opted to breastfeed. While she was an

experienced mother, she was unfamiliar with breastfeeding and appreciated the support of Mercy's team of International Board Certified Lactation Consultants.

Jeanne and Mike didn't set out to have such a large family, but an article Jeanne read about a family with 20 children sparked the idea. Jeanne explains, "I never thought you could have such a big family – most people don't. That article opened my eyes to the possibility. We decided to be open to whatever gifts God wants to send us."

Jeanne says the staff at Mercy is very welcoming when her large family comes to welcome a new family member. "Everyone is so accommodating for all the kids. We are a Catholic family and I like that we are respected. People like to judge – but you don't feel that here."

The Smiths are familiar with many of the nurses when they arrive to deliver another precious bundle. "Mercy has people that really enjoy what they do. When Veronica (the newest baby) was born, one of the nurses stayed until I delivered her, even though her shift was over."

That's *The Mercy Touch*® at work – and it's why families like the Smiths keep coming back.



Take a tour of Mercy's Birthplace on our website to see exactly why the Smiths love the Mercy Birthplace so much!



Parents Mike and Jeanne Smith (holding baby Veronica) are surrounded by their children Stacia, 20, Christian, 18, Jeshua, 15, Solomon, 13, Dominic, 11, Gerard, 9, Marcel, 8, Isadora, 6, Demetrius, 4, and Cassian, 2.