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Baby Wall grows parents' pride

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SAINT JOHN • There's a new way to celebrate babies born at Saint John Regional Hospital.

Infants can now forever be part of the Enchanted Forest Baby Wall, Christine Gilliland said, the hospital foundation's spokeswoman.

"It's neat because families get to show their pride in their hospital and it's open to anyone born here - past, present or future," she said.

The recently-finished mural stretches down the third-floor corridor of the hospital and depicts a story-book forest full of trees, flowers and magical creatures.

Parents can have a vinyl leaf encrypted with their baby's name and birth date and placed among the two most prominent trees on the wall.

Angélique Simpson and her husband Kevin have already got a leaf for their newborn, Amelia, who arrived early in September.

"It's a beautiful way to honour the arrival of a little one and through the expansion of the wall show just how many lives are being cared for at Saint John Regional Hospital," said Angélique Simpson.

Local mural artist Andrea Arbour said she used plants, wildlife and birds found in Saint John so it ties into the city.

"The mural ties you into the hospital and it ties the hospital into the community. It will be fun (once more) leaves are up so people can read the names of people they know," she said.

Catharine Simpson and her husband Colin, Kevin Simpson's twin brother, coincidentally also welcomed a new child, Ethan.

They too purchased a leaf for the wall.

"It (the timing) was not planned, a total accident," said Catharine Simpson.

"But it's special that (our kids) will get to grow up together and have so many memories together just like their



Angellique and Kevin Simpson and their new baby, Amella, stand with Colin and Catharine Simpson and their new baby, Ethan, in front of the newly completed Enchanted Forest Baby Wall in 3A-north tower at the Saint John Regional Hospital. The Simpson families were among the first to purchase leaves for the new baby wall. PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

fathers did, starting with their names on the baby wall."

When Arbour was thinking about how to make the mural interesting for kids, who regularly come and go in that part of the hospital, she said she wanted to incorporate nothing too scary.

"So I drew a field mouse, a deer, a sleeping fox, a rabbit, a squirrel, a couple owls, a chickadee, a ... sparrow, a seagull of course since we live on the coast and a woodpecker," she said, adding the 10-foot-tall 22-foot-wide painting took her 93 hours to paint.

It's really colourful and beautiful but, it's more what it represents, Catharine Simpson said.

The personalized leaves cost \$75 and also come with a commemorative leaf which can be placed in a baby album or used as a gift confirmation for parents.

Money raised by the wall will go toward women and children's programming at Saint John Regional Hospital - including the renovation of the fetal assessment clinic for example, said

Gilliland.

"So we can make it more comfortable for mothers and babies when they have to visit," said Gilliland.

For babies who did not survive, a special butterfly can be purchased to float among the leaves on the wall, said Gilliland.

Losing someone is a part of life's journey we don't talk about a lot, Angélique Simpson said.

"So the butterflies are a great way to honour the baby's life and what it meant to people in their family without dismissing that it happened," she said, adding she is sincerely grateful for the top-notch care she received at the hospital while she was there.

"The quality of care we got at Saint John Regional Hospital was outstanding so this is just another way of maintaining that care on the side of maternal and children's health (for years to come)," she said.

For more information visit www.babywall.ca.