

Dear Editor,

People around here, including me, don't say enough good things about North Oaks Medical Center.

Instead, we too often focus on rumors, complaints, and other negativity. A local community hospital with limited financial resources becomes an easy target for critics when our loved ones don't recover from illnesses like we hope. It's understandable.

On the other hand, it is only fair to recognize our local doctors, nurses, and staff when they achieve something special. On Valentine's Day, they did just that when my wife Brandie delivered our son Luke at the North Oaks Woman's Pavilion.

The North Oaks experience was amazing from beginning to end, starting with their Magnolia OB/GYN Clinic. Their doctors, nurses, and staff kept us informed, confident, and comfortable as we embraced the excitement and anxiety of first time parenting. Dr. Porter, Tina, Kim, and many more Magnolia team members deserve our eternal gratitude for nine months of phenomenal pregnancy care. They were simply outstanding!

The North Oaks prenatal classes were also exceptional. Our instructor, Ms. Maryellen, does an incredible job of packing practical information into her six week educational program. She also personally checked both our car seats to make sure our child would travel home safely.

When the time to deliver our baby arrived - three weeks early! - the North Oaks Labor and Delivery team passed the test with flying colors. Again, more hard-working healthcare professionals than I can mention teamed up to provide Brandie and Luke with the world class care they deserve. Dr. Porter, always a warm and brilliant woman, proved herself to be a clutch performer under pressure. Our tireless and talented charge nurse Laura and her colleague Kelsey, fresh off of delivering four other babies during that night, stayed past the end of their 12-hour shift to assist with Luke's delivery. Thanks to another impressive team effort, Luke was finally born.

Our prayers had been answered.

Next, the North Oaks Nursery kept Luke healthy and happy while Brandie recovered from her courageous delivery. Again, the team effort was amazing. Dr. Fritz, Leigh, Kristen, Greta, Kaye and many more thoughtful professionals taught us how to hold, feed, and burp our beautiful baby boy.



Throughout our stay at North Oaks, they treated Brandie like a queen and Luke like a little prince. Everyone we encountered, from the retiring Chairman of the Board, Mr. A.J. Bodker, to the custodial staff, was friendly and professional. CEO Jimmy Cathey and COO Michele Sutton should be proud of the team they have assembled.

Brandie and Luke both did great too, of course. I am blessed beyond my wildest dreams with a wonderful wife and son. The Lord alone deserves credit for that.

Of course, I understand that while my dreams were coming true in the Woman's Pavilion, some North Oaks visitors were living through nightmares as their loved ones fought deadly diseases and other illnesses. The frightened faces I passed in the hallways remain in my prayers - especially the NICU mommies and daddies.

In closing, I'd like to thank the many unmentioned North Oaks nurses, doctors, and others that helped Luke, Brandie, and me enjoy our best Valentine's Day ever. To Melissa, Wanda, Nicole, Barbara, Jane, Dot, Shelley, Tasha, Fran, Becky, Dr. Grisoli, and many more (sorry to those I missed!), you will always be special to us. I hope more local expectant parents will give you a chance to show what you can do to make dreams come true.

Sincerely,

Parker Layrisson,  
Ponchatoula, LA