



## The Star-Ledger

### Livingston laboring to keep up with babies

Issuing certificates keeps 3 clerks busy

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What's that noise coming from Livingston? More than likely, it's the sound of babies crying.

There are so many babies being born in this West Essex suburb, it takes three clerks in the township's Office of Vital Statistics just to meet the requests for birth certificates.

That's because Saint Barnabas Medical Center on Old Short Hills Road has become the state's No. 1 hospital for births. More than 7,200 babies are born there each year.

To meet the demand, the hospital has a staff of 103 obstetrician/gynecologists, a neonatal intensive care unit, and services for high-risk patients.

While the families that deliver in Livingston may be from throughout the state, they all have to go to the same place to go get their birth certificates: the township's Department of Health, Welfare and Human Services.

"It's very busy, every day," said Louis E. Anello, director of the department, which moved two years ago to its new location, a two-story brick building at 204 Hillside Ave.

In fact, only New Brunswick, which has two hospitals within its city limits, issues more birth certificates than Livingston, Anello said.

At Saint Barnabas, parents must fill out the information needed for a birth certificate while still at the hospital, but it is their responsibility to obtain the birth certificate from town hall, said Samantha Anton, a spokeswoman for Saint Barnabas.

Anello said his office has tried to make it easy for parents. They can download a request for a certificate at [www.livingstonnj.org](http://www.livingstonnj.org) and send in a request by mail, or come to the office in person, fill out a form and wait for the certificate.

Some parents may not even realize they've forgotten to get their child's birth certificate until the document is needed for school registration, joining a sports program or applying for a passport.

"It's a real chaotic time in their lives. For some people it's not a priority 'til they need the certificate," Anello said.

And with the end of summer right around the corner, parents already are scrambling to get new shoes and school supplies. Some may have to add getting their child's birth certificate to the list.

"Parents who forget before the registration of school are frantic," Anello said.

And it's not just new parents who need copies, he added. Teenagers going to college may need a birth certificate to register and adults need them for renewing driver's licenses.

"Other than your Social Security number, it's your main form of identification," Anello said.

Requests for birth certificates are so high in Livingston that the township issued 15,308 last year alone. At \$10 each, that translated into \$153,808 in revenue for the community and enough work to keep three full-time employees busy.

But Livingston Township Manager Michele Meade said being in the birth certificate business isn't really lucrative for the town. "It doesn't offset a significant amount of the cost," she said, adding that the fee just "covers the expense of it."

The \$10 fee is comparable to what other towns charge, said Anello and Meade.

To streamline the work, Anello bought a computer software program to print the certificates more quickly, though the documents must be done on special paper purchased through the state that is locked up when the office is closed.

The director said that requests for birth certificates have increased over the past few years as smaller hospitals have closed and more people are coming to Saint Barnabas. He pointed out that not just anyone can get a birth certificate for a child.

Since Sept. 11, new restrictions require that parents – showing photo identification – are the only ones allowed to request a child's birth certificate. Photocopies of identification must be provided if the request is done by mail.

"It's a legal document. We can't release it to anyone else, not to grandparents, either," he said. The good news, Anello said, is once the request is received, it is processed very quickly. "If you come in, it takes five minutes," he promised.

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