

# First water birth at Good Sam



Amanda Cowan

Kate McCulloh of Corvallis enjoys a little quiet time with her newborn son, Calvin, on Wednesday morning at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center after she brought him into the world through water birth Tuesday afternoon. (Amanda Cowan | Corvallis Gazette-Times)

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Kate McCulloh already was at the hospital, in active labor with her second son, when she and her husband, Matt McCord, learned that a birth in water was an option. She dove at the opportunity:

“Hell, yeah; let’s do it.”

About 90 minutes later, at 3:30 p.m. Tuesday, Calvin McCord made his debut — all 8 pounds, 14 ounces of him.

Kate McCulloh, 37, of Corvallis, is a longtime swimmer, so she knew that she wanted to have her second son in the water because it relieves the pressures of gravity, easing the pain associated with labor and sometimes even the need for pain-reducing medication. Calvin became the first baby born via water birth at Good Samaritan Regional Medical Center’s latest addition to its Center for Women and Families. But registered nurses at the center predicted that there will be many more.

Despite requests from mothers in the community for water births, which have become fairly popular throughout the state, Good Samaritan did not have the training or resources to offer the service, said Debbie Hein, registered nurse and nursing department manager.

That is, until now.

After a push by Samaritan OB-GYN clinic midwives, nurses and midwives from the center and from the Corvallis Clinic recently took a Waterbirth Certification Workshop led by founder Barbara Harper and coordinated by Terri Shank, the assistant manager of the nursing department.

A grant from the Women Investing in Samaritan Health helped pay for the equipment and a 375-gallon birthing pool, which the center purchased last fall for about \$800.

Shank said McCulloh's midwife suggested her as the perfect candidate for the center's first water birthing procedure because she met the health requirements of a low-risk water birth.

"The prospect of doing this in the water was really appealing to me," McCulloh said. Her older son, Tim, 2, wasn't born in the water, but she spent a lot of time in the bath prior to his delivery. "The laboring in the water was really nice. You just don't feel the same pressures."

While labor nurses tracked the baby with a Doppler monitor from a short distance, they tried to keep their presence to a minimum during delivery.

"We're trying not to intervene," Hein said.

Matt McCord, 39, said he saw Calvin open his eyes under water. The environment a baby enters during a water birth is similar to the womb, Hein said. The baby, still connected to the placenta, doesn't start breathing through his lungs until his face surfaces to the air.

"She was in the actual birthing pool for 30-45 minutes or so," he said. "I was nervous, mostly because we didn't know it was going to be a reality until we were pretty far into the labor."

Even with some nerves and some pain, the couple looks back on the event as a positive experience.

McCulloh, who is 5-foot-11, said the inflatable birthing pool also provided a lot of extra space.

"It was just a really relaxing environment," McCulloh said. "Everybody here was so supportive of us and really made it a wonderful experience." She and her husband took Calvin home on Wednesday.