



## Record Number of Births at St. Luke's

By Sam Kennedy

LEHIGH VALLEY - While many health systems across Pennsylvania have been experiencing a decrease in newborn deliveries in recent years, St. Luke's University Health Network (SLUHN) is trending in the opposite direction as more mothers choose St. Luke's for their prenatal care and deliveries than ever before.

For the first time in the Network's history, a total of more than 6,000 babies were born at St. Luke's three birthing hospitals during a fiscal year, which ends June 30. The figure surpasses Fiscal Year 2024's total of 5,000 births, which at that time was a new record.

"This major milestone reflects our patients' trust in, and desire for, the special care and expertise they experience in our labor and delivery suites at St. Luke's Allentown, Anderson and Upper Bucks campuses," said Elizabeth Dierking, MD, chair of the Department of Obstetrics & Gynecology.

Number 6,000 was tiny baby Levi, arriving at 2:09 a.m. on Wednesday, June 10, at St. Luke's Allentown Campus. The 5-pound, 15-ounce and 20 ½-inch-long infant is the son Kevin Kelenski and Eliza Oliveri of Orefield.

"I've met a lot of great employees over multiple shifts, due to the length of my time in labor," said Oliveri, a patient of St. Luke's Complete Women's Care in Fogelsville.

Most hospitals in Northeast Pennsylvania are seeing a decline or flattening of their birth rates, consistent with the rest of Pennsylvania and the nation (<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/HealthStatistics/VitalStatistics/BirthStatistics/Pages/birth-statistics.aspx>).

US birth rates are predicted to decline throughout the remainder of the 21st century, from 10.8 births per 1,000 people in 2023 to 8.5 per 1,000 in 2100, according to usafacts.org.

"This trend is happening throughout Pennsylvania and in most of the country – but not at St. Luke's," noted Dr. Dierking.

Why?

St. Luke's is synonymous with all-around excellence. This past fall, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services ranked St. Luke's #1 – ahead of Houston Methodist and Mayo Clinic, two of the nation's most prestigious institutions – as the nation's top health system for quality, safety, and patient experience. This objective recognition, based on public data reported to the government, reaffirmed St. Luke's preeminent position among the leading health systems in the country.

Expectant mothers and couples know they can count on St. Luke's superior prenatal and postnatal care as well as the delivery of their babies by the small and intimate practices and care teams that provide patients personalized care.



## Aaron Smith, Christian Smith and Tristan Smith Honored for Eagle Scout Awards

By State Rep. Joe Emrick

I recently attended the Eagle Scout Court of Honor for three Troop 317 Bethlehem Township scouts: Aaron Smith, Christian Smith and Tristan Smith.

For his Eagle Scout service project, Christian created a Butterfly Exhibit at Bethlehem's Camel Hump Farm which involved building a fence around the farm's gazebo, power washing the gazebo and replacing the gazebo's screening and making signs containing native butterfly information. Tristan's Eagle project consisted of planning, organizing, raising funds for and leading the building and installation of a patio oasis for Bethlehem's Hope Center, including custom-built benches, a planter box and chess table. And Aaron replaced the fencing that encloses a dumpster at Safe Harbor of Easton.

I was proud to present to them House citations recognizing their hard work and accomplishments. Good luck to all of you in your future endeavors.

## Congratulations Eagle Scout Evan Tamandl

By State Rep. Joe Emrick

Last week, I had the chance to welcome Eagle Scout Evan Tamandl of Troop 74, sponsored by the Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Nazareth. In April, Evan received his Eagle Scout Award, the highest advancement rank attainable in Scouting America. To fulfill his community service requirement for the award, Evan created a compass orienteering course in Nazareth Borough Park.

I presented Evan with a Pennsylvania House of Representatives citation to congratulate him on his achievement. Best wishes to Evan for continued success!

