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Neonatal nurse Michelle Mueller, left, and mom Jerri Mahaney check on Mahaney's son, Trey, Sunday at the new Children's Hospital in Aurora. In addition to being tagged "beautiful," below, 4-month-old Trey was Baby No. 1 during Saturday's move. *Lyn Alweis, The Denver Post*

## Precious cargo



*Staff and patients' families give rave reviews as they settle into the new Children's Hospital.*

**By Karen Augé** *The Denver Post*

For much of his short life, Trey Mahaney has been a very sick baby. This weekend, he got to be something else: a Very Important Baby.

Trey, just shy of 5 months old, was the first patient transferred to the new Children's Hospital's neonatal intensive-care unit Saturday, and his arrival was heralded like that of a visiting dignitary.

"When we got into the elevator, the people with us called ahead and said, 'We have Baby No. 1 in the elevator,'" Trey's mom, Jerri Mahaney, said.

When Trey and his entourage arrived on the fourth floor, "Everyone was waiting for us," she said.

The hospital's chief executive, Dr. Jim Shmerling, was there to shake hands.

By Sunday morning, boxes were still sitting unpacked in a nurses' area; one corridor was piled with cast-off furniture, orphaned equipment and boxes; and tech staff in bright yellow T-shirts were trying to stamp out computer bugs.

The hospital, which opened Saturday morning and welcomed the last patient transferred from the old downtown Denver hospital by 7 p.m., was up and running remarkably well Sunday.

Trey's father, Airman 1st Class Richard Mahaney, relaxed in his son's private room watching the Cleveland Browns beat the Bal-

# CHILDREN'S: Upgrades met with "wows"

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timore Ravens and marveled at how much more comfortable rooms are at the new hospital.

Trey's older sister, Lauren, lounged on a sofa-bed reading the Sunday comics, and the baby's nurse consulted a computer outside his room that contained his medical records.

Throughout the vast NICU, babies' families and nursing staff sang the praises of the new hospital.

The new neonatal unit is prettier and bigger than the old one, so much so that Michelle Mueller, the nurse in charge of the unit Sunday, passed out maps to her staff.

Mueller said the improvements are practical as well as cosmetic.

When a baby improved at the old building, he or she moved to the "step down" NICU. Only the ones in the most critical condition stayed in the NICU.

"Psychologically, it's difficult to have (that) many kids of such intensity jammed in one little space," Dr. Randy Wilkening, University of Colorado Health Sciences Center's head of neonatology.

Theresa Grover, medical director of Children's NICU, said nurses couldn't

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Jerri Mahaney, mother of 4-month-old Trey, on Children's Hospital's move to its new facility in Aurora

watch patients get better there because as soon as they improved, they moved on. Now they can share in that progress.

The new unit has space for 60 babies, 15 more than the old.

The parents of babies in the new unit's 30 private rooms can sleep on pullout beds in those rooms, Mueller said. That's better for the babies too.

For parents of newborns in the 30 nonprivate beds, there are "family sleep rooms" and a laundry room and eating area.

That's important, Mueller said, because many babies spend months in the unit, and often families stay with them.

The improvements aren't limited to the NICU, according to Danette Tafoya, mother of a 2-year-old at the hospital.

Sunday, as she pulled her son, Carter, in

a wagon across the sunlit, mosaic-tiled floors of the new hospital, Tafoya pronounced it "beautiful."

Carter, whose move from the old hospital to the new was described in Sunday's Denver Post, slept in his hospital bed all night Saturday, she said.

Carter hadn't done that since he arrived a week earlier for leukemia treatment.

Then Tafoya offered possibly the ultimate praise for a hospital: "He's actually eating. I think the food must be better here."

Staff writer Katy Human contributed to this report.

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