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By Ricardo Navarro

Natividad Medical Center NICU Nurses Work Hard Through Holidays

As you make your way down the quiet halls on the delivery floor at the Natividad Medical Center, pictures of healthy babies and happy parents warm up your heart.

Behind one of the doors on that hallway, a team of Neonatal Intensive Care nurses work non-stop for babies. Small, fragile, beautiful babies. Like little Sophia, weighing in at 2 pounds, 6 ounces.

"I love holding her and I'm sure she loves it too," said Nora Lee Nunez, Sophia's Mom.

Sophia was born at 26 weeks, that's 3 months premature. Nunez can't help but look down at Sophia and hold her little jewel close and tight. But she said going into labor early, was life shattering.

"It was very scary and overwhelming. The first few days it was hard especially seeing your baby with all the tubes," said Nunez.

With the help of the unit's nurses it got easier for Nunez.

"A lot of times they are afraid. The monitors, the machinery, it scares them, so we have to help them get pass that," said Norma Flemming, Charge Nurse of the unit.

The vigilant caretakers said its all part of the process.

"Our job is to make sure that the parents bond with the baby and that they aren't afraid of the baby and that we send Mom home who's competent," said Flemming.

They said having to work the holidays is nothing compared to the end result of their care, which is to get the families in the NICU room to mirror the pictures in the hallway outside.

It cost hundreds of thousands of dollars for the care. But the NICU at Natividad is actually highly reviewed in California. It is one of the only prenatal units that discharges babies earlier than average because of the quality of their care. Its also, the only facility in Monterey County with a 24-hour nurse practioner.