

explain to her where her mommy is?"

Adrienne is not expected to be released from the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit at St. Joseph's Hospital in Tampa until December.

"She could breathe on her own but wouldn't be able to sustain herself," said Kim Hanson, a registered nurse who works in the 42-bed infant center.

Lying in the fetal position on a fleece warming blanket, Adrienne is connected to a feeding tube, a ventilator and a heart monitor. Plastic wrap shields her from drafts

her mother's nose."

Cisneros said he has firsthand experience of the hospital's neonatal unit. He also spent his first three months there.

The stresses of his wife's death and single fatherhood has been exhausting, especially because they have been coupled with a 144-mile round trip — made sometimes twice daily — from Sarasota to the Tampa hospital, with his mother, Wanda Loehr.

Although his wife's death has not scared him about driving, Cisneros said it has been a reminder to wear a seat belt — something the Florida Highway Patrol said his wife wasn't doing on the night of her death.

While sitting in the left-turn lane at Stickney Point and Swift roads, Kimberly Cisneros' Jeep Wrangler was rear-ended and forced into oncoming traffic.

Her vehicle, which had its doors off, was rammed by an oncoming Jeep. Cisneros said his wife was thrown out the driver's side door and hit her head on the rain-slicked pavement.

"She was afraid if she got into a car accident and if she wore a seat belt it would hurt the baby," Cisneros said. However, experts recommend that pregnant women wear their seat belts while driving.

Kimberly Cisneros, a 5-foot-2-inch blue-eyed blonde, moved to Florida from Texas soon after her high school graduation. She had come to console a grieving family member.

She met Cisneros, and eight months later they were planning a wedding. They celebrated their first anniversary in July.

Cisneros said his wife had started collecting books for Adrienne and had put up a wallpaper border in the nursery two days before she died. He said she wanted to decorate the room in a Noah's Ark theme.

Both Kimberly Cisneros and the driver whose Jeep struck the front of her Jeep were taken to Tampa hospitals. The driver whose Buick rear-ended Kimberly Cisneros' truck was unhurt. The Florida Highway Patrol charged him with failure to use due care.

It was considered an accident on a night that produced heavy rains and tornados in Sarasota.

The white 1995 Jeep Wrangler that the couple shared is considered totaled. Cisneros says he hasn't taken care of the insurance paperwork, but once he does he plans to buy something safer for him and the baby.

Until then, Loehr said, she has to drive him everywhere.

"I'm a divorced mom with three kids of my own. We're trying to get him a rental car or something," she said.

"He has a lot of people praying for him," said Loehr, whose children range from ages 6 to 20. "Fortunately, he has his strong faith in God. He has his up and down days

"How am I going to ... explain to her where her mommy is?"

JOSEPH CISNEROS

that could interrupt her nearly 22 hours of sleep daily.

When she does awaken, she squirms to notify nurses that her tiny Pampers are wet or opens her eyes, seemingly staring at her stuffed animals or the photo of her parents taped to the side of her crib.

Adrienne looks "more mature" than when she arrived, and she is more active and "even her condi-

tion has improved," Hanson said.

Once she is a little bigger, Adrienne will be moved from the plastic crib, called a radiant warmer, to an incubator and then to a cradle, Hanson said.

Speaking softly and pressing his fingertips against her back on Thursday, Cisneros beamed.

People tell him his 13-inch-long daughter looks just like him.

But fortunately, he said, "she has

and, until a couple days ago, he hadn't really focused on how he's really a father."

Still stunned by his wife's death, Cisneros said he hasn't yet cleaned his apartment. It took until Friday for him to get to the laundry, and he returned to work just Wednesday.

To ease the pain, Cisneros said he tries to stay busy: going to work, using his Sony PlayStation, reading or playing with his pit bull, Molly, between trips to the hospital.

"I'll have some lights on and make sure the dog is set in the bed. Then I'll turn all the lights off in the house so I can't look around and see anything," Cisneros said. Reminders, from photos to Kimberly's hairbrush, are near the bed.

But he said he is reminded of his loneliness every morning when he wakes up with Molly beside him instead of Kimberly.

Although he sometimes goes to bed and gets up in tears, Cisneros said support from the community has been tremendous.

With his answering machine constantly on, Cisneros screens his

calls. About half of them have come from strangers, well-wishers who want to help any way they can.

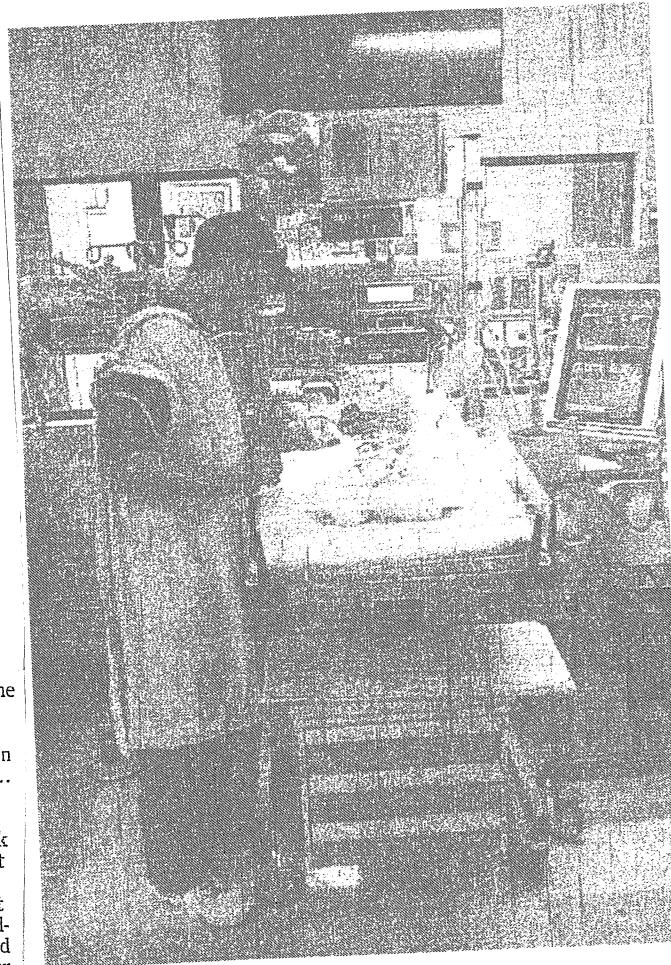
"Some people will call, and when they say, 'This may sound weird ...' Then I figure it out (that I don't know them)," he said. "A lot of people call, and I don't want to talk to them. They want to know about the accident."

Liberty Baptist Church and Hot Flash, a clothing store at the Landings, have been raising money and collecting baby supplies for Cisneros.

Liberty Baptist, the church the couple attended with Loehr's family, has raised \$4,000 so far. Hot Flash has been given a bassinet, a stroller, diapers, formula, blankets, clothing and toys for the Cisneros family.

Cisneros said he appreciates the help, and he knows that the supplies will one day be helpful. But for now, he's still getting used to the idea that he is a father to a tiny infant.

"It gave me a warm fuzzy feeling," he said, shaking after he kissed her. "I just want to take her home."



Adrienne Elsie Cisneros, weighing in at 1 pound 9 ounces, has gotten almost-daily visits from her father, Joseph, since her birth by Caesarean section two weeks ago. Her mother died in a car crash.