Shane Opatz photo / UW-Stout students Bader Shwikan and his wife, Ahood Alzahofi, both of Saudi Arabia, had the area's first baby of 2013 at Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire. Their daughter, who weighed 5 pounds, 3 ounces at birth, was born just before 2 a.m. Tuesday.

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**Menomonie couple celebrate as their daughter is the region’s first baby of 2013**

**By Pamela Powers**
**Menomonie News Bureau**

Ahood Alzahofi and Bader Shwikan watched on television the countdown to a new year as they awaited the birth of their daughter.

It was then, mom Alzahofi said, she realized she likely would have her new baby in 2013.

"I'm just thinking I want my baby to come in the new year," she said, holding her daughter, who was born at 1:56 a.m. Tuesday.

Alzahofi did not expect to have the first baby born in Eau Claire in 2013.

The baby girl, who had not been named when her parents were interviewed, weighed 5 pounds, 3 ounces at birth and was 18.75 inches long.
"She didn't want to come in 2012," Alzahofi said, noting the baby was due Dec. 27. "She is very smart. She wanted to come in the new year."

Shwikan said he was pleased he and his wife had a daughter. The couple have a 3-year-old son, Talal.

"I'm very excited," Shwikan said. "I'm very happy this is the first girl in the family. I don't have any sisters."

Alzahofi and Shwikan came into Mayo Clinic Health System in Eau Claire for a checkup Monday evening about 6 p.m. because Alzahofi had been having contractions about two minutes apart for a couple of days.

The doctor told them they needed to cancel any New Year's Eve plans and stay at the hospital.

Both parents are full-time students at UW-Stout in Menomonie. Alzahofi, 28, is a junior studying dietetics, and Shwikan, 29, is a junior studying electrical engineering. They came to the U.S. from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, for school. Their son was 9 months old when they came to the U.S.

They are leaning toward the name Rama or Danah for their daughter.

"We're close to the second one," Shwikan said. Alzahofi pointed out Danah means "the pearl."

Alzahofi had the baby by Caesarean section.

Both parents said they cried in happiness as their daughter came into the world.

"We were crying because we were so happy to hear her voice," Shwikan said.

Older brother Talal saw his sister Tuesday morning.

"He wanted to take her home with him," Alzahofi said, noting he is staying with family.

Mom and daughter are doing fine but will likely have to stay in the hospital about three more days.

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