

St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital

Lavonia, Franklin County, Georgia

<http://www.stmaryssacredheart.org>

St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital is guided by the St. Mary's Health Care System mission to be a compassionate and transforming healing presence within our communities. Serving the Lake Hartwell region, St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital is a 56-bed acute care hospital accredited by the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Health Care Organizations. We offer a wide range of services including general surgery, inpatient care, obstetrics and a 24-hour emergency department as well as outpatient imaging and laboratory services. St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital brings specialty services close to home, provided by a network of board certified physicians.



St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital is located in Franklin County, Georgia, serving a population of over 47,000 between Franklin and Hart Counties. Poverty in both Franklin and Hart Counties is a problem across all age groups with a significantly higher percentage of families and individuals living below the poverty level than the state of Georgia and the nation.

According to the 2015 County Health Rankings, Franklin and Hart Counties also have higher percentages than Georgia in cardiovascular health, respiratory health, diabetes and many other significant health issues. As a whole, the region lacks adequate and affordable healthcare options in the areas of primary, dental and mental health, especially for those without adequate insurance. As a result of these findings, focus areas have been identified and the hospital has developed a strategy plan around the needs it can most effectively influence. This plan focuses on developing and/or supporting initiatives that will hopefully improve the following health needs in Franklin and Hart Counties: **Access to Care**, **Chronic Diseases** and **Substance Abuse and Mental Health**.

Commitment: Caring for the most vulnerable.

As a tax-exempt, Catholic healthcare provider, St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital offers charity and below-cost discounted care to patients who meet income criteria. One of our ministry's five Core Values is Commitment to Those Who are Poor. Funding from the tax credit will offset some of the costs of charity care so that we can continue providing access to quality care to the underserved, while remaining financially able to meet the future health care needs of our entire community. Tax credit donations will also help us offset some of the costs of other unreimbursed care, including bad debt, and bridge the gap between reimbursement and cost of care for Medicaid recipients. We will continue our commitment to providing quality healthcare for our local community, regardless of a patient's ability to pay.

Tax credit donations will not be used solely for the purpose of uncompensated care, but will strengthen our ability to provide care for the most vulnerable population in our community. Through the hospital's 2016 Community Needs Assessment and Implementation Plans, access to care for the under- and uninsured patient population was identified as a high priority focus area. The tax credit donations will help us continue to address this significant community need.

Sustainability: Looking at the future.



As a rural hospital, one of our primary challenges is to provide modern, life-saving services locally; otherwise, people in our community must travel 30 miles or more to reach hospitals in larger cities – travel time that is inconvenient at best, life-threatening at worst. The travel burden is even more problematic for some elderly and low-income patients in our community due to lack of transportation resources. In addition, we face significant financial challenges that create risks for our future ability to adequately address community health care needs.

These challenges include rising costs of pharmaceuticals, increasing labor and benefit costs, and costs related to necessary maintenance and updates for existing technology. These and other financial challenges currently outpace reimbursement rate increases from Medicare, Medicaid, or private insurers. Your tax credit donations will play a substantial role in allowing us to keep and provide quality healthcare locally.

Ongoing support will help us further our patient care efforts by assisting in areas such as:

- **Expansion of telemedicine capabilities** to leverage technology for improved remote access to physician specialists for our hospitalized and emergency department patients. Enhanced telemedicine capabilities would reduce the number of patients needing transfer to a larger facility for care; provide quicker access to specialized expertise (such as cardiology, pulmonology, or neurology) – even in cases where patients might need to be transferred -- and provide a better care transition for patients who need to be followed-up on an outpatient basis.
- **Improved access to services and care** through assisting in the recruitment of primary care providers to the community, providing local availability for infusion services for patients in need of sometimes very costly intravenous medication therapy, and ensuring appropriate staffing to provide quality care in a timely manner in areas such as the emergency department.
- **Acquiring modern technology and equipment** that allows people in our community to receive care close to home.
- **Health-related renovations or improvements** to the existing facility to enhance patient care.
- **Ongoing support for equipment repair and replacement** and upgrading our technology in areas such as emergency, surgical, and inpatient patient care services.

Your tax credit donation in any amount to St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital will help to enhance our long-term ability to provide first-rate health care in our community. Together, we can **Help Enhance Access to Rural Treatment (HEART)**! For more information about Sacred Heart Hospital, please contact Lauren Papka lpapka@stmaryssacredheart.org or visit www.stmaryssacredheart.org.