



St. Mary's Hospital breaks ground for Center for Heart, Vascular & Neurosciences

Media Contacts:

Brooke Marshall, Regional Director Marketing & Communications
St. Mary's Health Care System
706.389.3895

Brooke.Marshall@stmarysathens.org

Mark Ralston
Marketing Admin Coordinator
706.296-6717 (mobile)
mrалston@stmarysathens.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Athens, Ga. – August 28, 2026 – St. Mary's Health Care System celebrated the start of construction on its new \$35 million Center for Heart, Vascular and Neurosciences (CHVN) on Aug. 21 as leaders, physicians and community supporters took up shovels for a ceremonial groundbreaking at the hospital's campus on Baxter Street.

When finished in October 2027, the 15,000-square-foot addition will expand the hospital's facilities and technology for the care of patients with stroke, heart disease and rhythm disorders, blood vessel diseases such as aneurysm, cancer, women's health issues, and more.

"One thing about healthcare, we will all need it at some point, and what better way to make meaningful impact than by addressing prevailing local needs spanning heart diseases, stroke, vascular and neuro care?" said Stonish Pierce, President and CEO of Trinity Health Georgia, in remarks to the standing-room-only crowd.

"These are needs that many of you, your family members and friends suffer from today or may unfortunately encounter in the future," he continued. "What a blessing and what an opportunity to have modern care and technology available here at home."

"Today represents a generational leap forward for cardiac, stroke and vascular care for the citizens of Athens and our surrounding service area," said Jeff Brown, Senior Vice President of Operations.

"On one hand, we are deepening our commitment to exemplary cardiac care by expanding our cardiac cath labs and electrophysiology services. On the other hand, we are breaking new pathways to the treatment of stroke, cancer, vascular issues, women's health and other services far too many to list," he said.

Urging community support of a \$3 million campaign to augment funding for the center, Charlie Upchurch, an Athens real estate executive and St. Mary's Foundation Board Member and Chair of the Capital Campaign, noted the impact St. Mary's has had on his family and the community.

"Philanthropy has always played a transformative role at St. Mary's," he said. "These funds will support critical enhancements that elevate patient care, expand access to advanced technologies, create healing spaces for patients and families, and ensure that this center delivers the highest level of excellence for years to come.

"When you invest in this campaign, you are not simply helping construct a building. You are helping attract and retain outstanding medical talent. You are helping expand access to cutting-edge care. And you are helping save lives," Upchurch concluded.

The new center will feature:

- State-of-the-art 4D CT imaging, allowing physicians to see the inside of the body in motion, which enables higher precision for targeted treatments – vital for cancer treatment – as well as fewer invasive procedures, faster decisions, and better patient outcomes.
- Expanded rapid-response stroke services, helping to ensure that patients have 24/7/365 access to the technology needed to remove large-vessel blood clots that cause many of the worst strokes. The system can also treat aneurysm and other serious vascular conditions.
- A dedicated electrophysiology (EP) laboratory for the diagnosis and treatment of dangerous heart rhythm disorders. EP can help prevent sudden cardiac death, restore quality of life, and reduce the need for open-heart surgery.

"The technology coming to Athens is truly innovative," Brown said. "While we expand cardiac services to allow faster and broader access to care, we are also taking a bold step with our stroke program. When all is finished, St. Mary's will be the only comprehensive stroke center in Northeast Georgia."

In addition, the 4D CT and interventional radiology system will be the first of its kind in Georgia, Brown said. "It combines the pinpoint preciseness of CT imaging with the navigational excellence of an interventional imaging system to create one machine that truly does it all. It will provide our interventional radiologists with the ability to more precisely target tumors for lifesaving and life-sustaining interventions."

Pierce noted that the CHVN is part of a nearly \$100 million investment in the health of Northeast Georgians by Trinity Health, one of the largest not-for-profit Catholic healthcare systems in the nation. Other components of that commitment include the 3-story St. Mary's Good Samaritan Pavilion in Greensboro (now under construction), investments around the region in new medical practices and physician recruitment for St. Mary's growing medical group, expanded MRI services in Athens, and enhanced wound care services at St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital in Lavonia.

"Our commitment to high-level care, higher-level caring is extending beyond bricks and mortar and will continue into the community," he said. "We are a ministry on the go and on the grow!"

For more information or to donate to the CHVN Campaign, please visit www.stmarys-health.org/foundation/st-marys-chvn or contact Jennifer Messer, Chief of Development, at Jennifer.messer@stmarysathens.org. For more information about the CHVN and progress updates, visit www.stmarys-health.org.

3 | St. Mary's breaks ground for Center for Heart, Vascular and Neurosciences



Members of St. Mary's Foundation Board of Directors pose for a photo at the ceremonial groundbreaking for St. Mary's Center for Heart, Vascular and Neurosciences. Photo by Wingate Downs