



St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital celebrates 10th Anniversary

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Lavonia, Ga. – On Friday, June 13, dozens of people from across the region gathered at St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the hospital becoming part of St. Mary's Health Care System and its parent ministry, Trinity Health.



Stonish Pierce, President and CEO of Trinity Health Georgia, speaks at the Sacred Heart celebration

On June 1, 2015, St. Mary's officially acquired Ty Cobb Regional Medical Center, Clear Creek OB/GYN, the hospital's Certificate of Need, grounds, and certain related services from Ty Cobb Healthcare System. The \$12.9 million acquisition made it possible for the hospital, which had been burdened by excessive debt and out-migration, to remain open and begin growing again.

"We are here today because 10 years ago, St. Mary's and Trinity Health took bold and courageous action to avert a crisis," said Stonish Pierce, President and CEO of Trinity Health Georgia. "In 2015, this hospital was struggling. The good folks at

Ty Cobb Health System were doing everything they could to keep the doors open and the lights on. But the financial reality of our times is that it's very hard for a stand-alone hospital to survive. They desperately needed a larger system to step in.

"St. Mary's answered the call. We were determined to make sure this community would continue to have access not just to quality care, but to the high-level care and higher-level caring St. Mary's is known for," Pierce said.

In the 10 years since, St. Mary's has invested substantially in the 56-bed hospital and the community, from introducing 3D mammography to the hospital's 3-county service area to enhancing access to primary care, specialty care and surgical and anesthesia services. Support from St. Mary's and Trinity Health enabled the hospital to weather the unprecedented challenges created by the COVID pandemic.

Sacred Heart Hospital Director of Administrative Operations Stephanie Clouse echoed Pierce's comments. "We have the right people in the right places," she said. "This is a wonderful hospital

that is growing and expanding its services to better serve our community. I can't wait to see what we accomplish in the next 10 years.”

“Looking forward, we are committed to continuing to leverage our strengths as part of Trinity Health for the benefit of this community,” Pierce said. “We are committed to building partnerships to enhance access to care. We are committed to raising safety, quality and patient experience even higher.”

But Pierce noted major challenges lie ahead, particularly nationwide shortages of physicians, nurses and other healthcare professionals, and if proposed cuts to Medicare and Medicaid take effect. Countering those headwinds, he lauded Georgia’s Rural Hospital Tax Credit, which makes it possible for state taxpayers to designate a portion of their state taxes to support rural hospitals such as St. Mary’s Sacred Heart.

Pierce’s remarks highlighted several 5-star reviews and personal words of thanks from patients, including a cardiac patient, a surgical patient and a woman who delivered a baby in the Mother/Baby Unit. The final patient he quoted, a resident of Anderson, S.C., said she chooses to drive to Georgia to get care at Sacred Heart. “Now, I am doing much better. I would give you a million stars if I could,” he quoted her as saying.

“Messages like these are inspiring. They confirm that we have the right people in the right place, doing the right thing, right here in this community. Thank you for your support of St. Mary’s and our healing mission. Our vision is to be the best place to work, practice medicine and receive care in Northeast Georgia. It’s a big vision, but I believe we have the people, determination, commitment and faith to achieve it,” he concluded.



Several colleagues who have been with Sacred Heart Hospital since 2015 attended. They are, left to right, Christine Davis, Brenda Powell, Jennifer Reno, Brooke Byrum, Regina Hooper, Kim Driver and Tyler Davison.

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St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital Board members who attended the 10th Anniversary celebration were, from left to right, Charles Rice, Chris Moon, Scott Hardigree, John Hylton, Diane Toney, Ed Ridgway and Stonish Pierce.



St. Mary's leaders who attended the Sacred Heart Hospital 10th Anniversary celebration were, from left to right, Jeff Brown, Senior Vice President, Operations, St. Mary's Health Care System; Regina Hooper, Associate Chief Nursing Officer, St. Mary's Health Care System, and Director of Nursing at Sacred Heart Hospital; Stephanie Clouse, Director of Administrative Operations, Sacred Heart Hospital; Julie Carter, Vice President, Mission Services, St. Mary's Health Care System, and Stonish Pierce, President and CEO, Trinity Health Georgia