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St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital Earns Recognition from the American Diabetes Association

The ADA's Education Recognition Program certification ensures quality diabetes education and support for people living with diabetes.*

Lavonia, GA – August 24, 2026 – The American Diabetes Association® (ADA) – the nation's leading organization committed to fighting diabetes – has announced the recognition of St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital through their Education* Recognition Program (ERP).

The ADA's ERP certificate assures that educational services meet the National Standards for Diabetes Self-Management Education and Support (DSMES). The corresponding intervention provided is evidence-based and outcome-driven. Services apply for recognition voluntarily and ADA-ERP recognition lasts for four years.

"DSMES is an essential part of managing diabetes and is as affective as diabetes medication. Therefore, all people with diabetes benefit from it," said Barbara Eichorst, MS, RD, CDCES, the ADA's vice president of health programs. "We applaud St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital for its commitment to providing value-based interventions such as DSMES, maximizing corresponding outcomes, and patient experience."

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC's) National Diabetes Fact Sheet, there are over 40 million people, or 12.0%, of the U.S. population who have diabetes. While an estimated 29.1 million have been diagnosed, unfortunately 11.1 million people are not aware they have this disease. Each day, nearly 3,300 Americans are diagnosed with diabetes. Many will first learn they have diabetes when they are treated for one of its life-threatening complications: heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, blindness, nerve disease, or amputation. Diabetes is the eighth leading cause of death in the U.S.; in 2021, it contributed to 399,401 deaths. The ADA's Economic Costs of Diabetes in the U.S. in 2022 report confirms diabetes continues to be one of the nation's most expensive chronic health care conditions with an estimated cost of diagnosed diabetes of \$412.9 billion.



St. Mary's Sacred Heart Hospital

“We are proud to offer this quality program to residents of the greater Lake Hartwell area,” said Emily Jones, St. Mary’s Diabetes Program Coordinator. “I feel privileged to work and live in this community. Most importantly, I am honored to support my neighbors on their journey towards better health by identifying community partners, local farmers and growers, food access resources, and recreational and physical activity opportunities.

“Food and movement should be enjoyed through all seasons of life,” Jones added, “I look forward to bringing this message of connection and nourishment to the ADA ERP group classes in Lavonia.”

To enroll in St. Mary’s monthly classes in Lavonia, please ask your primary care provider for a referral. To learn more about the program, please contact Jones at (706) 356-7413 or by email at emily.jones003@stmarysathens.org.

To learn more about the ADA’s ERP and other ERP-certified services, go to [Education Recognition Program | American Diabetes Association](#).

About the American Diabetes Association

Nearly half of American adults have diabetes or prediabetes; more than 30 million adults and children have diabetes; and every 21 seconds, another individual is diagnosed with diabetes in the U.S. Founded in 1940, the American Diabetes Association (ADA) is the nation’s leading voluntary health organization whose mission is to prevent and cure diabetes, and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. The ADA drives discovery by funding research to treat, manage and prevent all types of diabetes, as well as to search for cures; raises voice to the urgency of the diabetes epidemic; and works to safeguard policies and programs that protect people with diabetes. In addition, the ADA supports people living with diabetes, those at risk of developing diabetes, and the health care professionals who serve them through information and programs that can improve health outcomes and quality of life. For more information, please call the ADA at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit diabetes.org. Information from both of these sources is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#). Find us on Facebook ([American Diabetes Association](#)), Twitter ([@AmDiabetesAssn](#)) and Instagram ([@AmDiabetesAssn](#)).

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