



## Nikki Mercadel receives St. Mary's DAISY Award for nursing excellence

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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Athens, Ga.** – Nikki Mercadel, a registered nurse providing bedside care on the Neurosciences Unit at St. Mary's Hospital, has received St. Mary's DAISY Award for Nursing Excellence. She was nominated by a patient who had been suffering from intractable pain before she intervened.



*Nikki Mercadel, RN*

"I struggled to find any position that allowed me to rest," the patient wrote in Nikki's award nomination. "From the moment Nikki walked in, everything changed. She immediately took charge, thoroughly assessed my situation, and contacted the doctor to explain that my pain was not being adequately managed. Together, she and the doctor developed a new plan.

"Nikki took the time to talk with me, helping me slow my breathing and stay calm so the medications could begin to work. She has an incredible ability to distract, reassure, and truly connect with her patients during stressful moments.

"Nikki is extremely knowledgeable, and I trusted every recommendation and explanation she provided," the patient concludes. "More importantly, she clearly cares about her patients. As someone on the receiving end of that care, I could truly feel it. Her presence reduced my stress significantly, which made a real difference in my ability to rest and heal."

Beth Ricketson, RN, Manager of St. Mary's Orthopedics and Neurosciences Nursing Units, said the patient's experience was one of many examples of Mercadel's exceptional commitment to high-level care with higher-level caring.

"Nikki truly has a heart for nursing," Ricketson said. "She is a great listener and comforter, and when she sees that a patient requires additional thought and attention, she is right there to deliver the care they need. She is a strong patient advocate, and we are proud to have her on our team."

Mercadel is a resident of Statham and joined St. Mary's in June 2024.

### About the DAISY Award

The DAISY Award is an international recognition program that celebrates the skillful and compassionate care nurses provide day-in and day-out. It was created in gratitude for the nurses who provided care to Patrick Barnes, a 33-year-old husband and father who lost his fight against a deadly autoimmune disease

in 1999. His family created the DAISY Foundation, which now partners with more than 7,600 healthcare organizations and nursing schools in all 50 states and around the world to honor and inspire extraordinary nurses. Learn more about the DAISY Award at <https://www.daisyfoundation.org/>.

At St. Mary's, each DAISY Award recipient is recognized at a public ceremony with their colleagues. They receive a certificate, a DAISY Award pin, and a stone sculpture entitled "A Healer's Touch" that is hand-carved by sculptors in Zimbabwe. In addition, they and their colleagues are invited to celebrate the occasion with cinnamon rolls, a treat Patrick would request – even though he couldn't eat them – as a thank-you to the nurses caring for him.

Anyone can nominate a St. Mary's nurse for the DAISY Award, including patients, patients' family members, providers, and colleagues. Any nurse in the St. Mary's system is eligible, including those at all three hospitals as well as home health care/hospice services and medical group offices. The nomination simply asks you to share your story of why a nurse is special to you. St. Mary's honors eight nurses each year.

There are two ways you can nominate a St. Mary's nurse:

- Visit St. Mary's DAISY Award webpage at <https://www.stmarys-health.org/for-patients/after-your-stay/daisy-award>
- Contact Melissa McDaniel, Marketing Administrative Assistant and Volunteer Coordinator, at 706.389.3892.

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