



SSMHealth.

St. Mary's Hospital Foundation

Gratitude

Report 2025-2026



*United by compassion.
Empowered by your generosity.*

Community generosity in action: Breaking barriers to care

The Fraternal Order of Eagles Aerie 2693 fired up the fryers for more than just dinner – they sparked generosity across Jefferson City. Their famous chicken dinners aren't just an Eagles' tradition; they're a community tradition. Every ticket purchased, every meal enjoyed, and every helping hand contributed to something bigger: removing barriers for patients in need. Thanks to this shared effort, funds raised through two events last year supported the **Cancer Patient Assistance Fund** and **Diabetes Education Program Fund** at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Jefferson City.

This shared effort isn't just about dollars raised; it's about neighbors coming together to create real change for real people ...



When a patient begins cancer treatment at SSM Health Cancer Center's radiation oncology in Jefferson City, the journey can be long and demanding. A full course of radiation takes months and requires dozens of trips to the clinic – sometimes more than 30 visits in a single month. For many patients, transportation is a major hurdle. They often live in rural areas; some drive nearly two hours each way. Without help, many wonder how they'll make it to their next appointment. Thanks to donor support, gas assistance is available to ease this burden. **“Once we start scheduling daily treatments, it opens the door for us to learn more about their situations and adjust appointments to fit their needs,”** shares Kasey Bradley, lead radiation therapist.

One of the first signs of transportation insecurity occurs during scheduling, when patients are asked where they live. That simple question often leads to an honest conversation about whether getting to and from treatment is a hardship. “When we tell patients this resource is possible because of the Foundation, they're surprised – and relieved,” says Bradley.

“It's a very big deal. We absolutely have patients who simply wouldn't be able to make their daily appointments.”

While a ride-share program is available, it isn't an option for everyone. Eligibility depends on living within a certain distance from the clinic, which can leave rural patients without access to services.

Your gift is more than just gas. It means a mom can keep showing up for radiation without having to choose between treatment and groceries. It means a grandfather doesn't have to miss treatment because the cost of the drive is too much. Your generosity means patients can focus on healing – not on how they'll get there.



Ensuring patients stay strong

When you live with cancer, weight loss and malnutrition can be the natural result of the demands cancer makes on your body. Not only does cancer increase your caloric needs, but it can also make it difficult or unpleasant to eat whole foods. Thanks to donor support, patients treated at the SSM Health Cancer Center at JCMG – primarily those with head and neck cancers—receive Ensure®, a nutritional supplement, at no cost. This helps guarantee they get the nourishment they need on a daily basis.

“On top of paying medical bills and traveling to appointments, we don’t want to add one more burden,” says Kasey Bradley, lead radiation therapist at SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital – Jefferson City. **“Being able to provide Ensure® right at their appointment, without an extra expense or trip to the store, has been huge.”**

Your generosity removes a major obstacle for patients, ensuring nutrition is one less worry during treatment. Without your support, they could face significant out-of-pocket costs for nutritional supplements – expenses that can quickly add up over months of care.

Every three years, we ask: **What does our community need?**

SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital conducts a Community Health Needs Assessment (CHNA) to identify the greatest health challenges in Jefferson City.

What we found:

- Diabetes is the TOP health concern.

The reality:

- 30+ Million Americans live with diabetes.
- Diabetes is the #7 Leading cause of deaths in U.S.
- Many people don’t even know they have it.

The risks of uncontrolled diabetes:

- Foot amputations
- Vision loss
- Kidney damage

Together, we are changing this ...



Measuring what matters – Better care for every patient

Patients with diabetes at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Jefferson City come from all walks of life – rural residents, individuals experiencing homelessness, and even those who avoid medical care altogether. One patient hadn't seen a doctor in 20 years until a stroke brought him to the hospital, where he was newly diagnosed with diabetes.

“At first, he didn't want to do anything we suggested – he just wanted to leave,” said Karen Renner and Emily Aughtman, both certified diabetes care and education specialists at St. Mary's Hospital. With his son's encouragement, Karen and Emily provided him with a blood glucose meter and explained how and why to use it. **“We were thrilled when he left with his meter in hand,”** they shared.

Patients facing financial hardship receive a blood glucose meter, test strips, and alcohol swabs at no cost – essential tools for monitoring blood sugar in real time and understanding the impact of lifestyle changes. This support removes major worry and eliminates an out-of-pocket expense during an already overwhelming diagnosis.

“As a result, he got more engaged with his care than he otherwise would have been if a meter wasn't given to him at discharge,” said Emily. After only a month, the patient reported he was regularly checking his blood sugar and taking his medication, and his A1C – a measure of average blood sugar – had improved significantly.

Karen and Emily experienced a true highlight of their roles last year when, for the first time, they received funding from the Foundation – enabling them to provide this essential resource to patients with diabetes.



Empowering patients and staff through education

At SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital – Jefferson City, your generosity powers a Diabetes Self-Management Education Program that changes lives. Managing diabetes can feel overwhelming – but with the right tools and guidance, patients gain the knowledge and confidence they need to take control of their health.

This program serves individuals with type 1, type 2, or gestational diabetes, and is the only program in Jefferson City that meets the highest standards set by the American Diabetes Association. Certified diabetes educators walk alongside patients, teaching practical strategies that make healthy choices possible – and sustainable.

Your support turns information into impact. **Thanks to donor-funded classroom resources, educators transform complex concepts into**

Medicare is now paying close attention to how hospitals manage blood sugar levels for patients with diabetes. In 2024, hospitals began reporting cases of low blood sugar (hypoglycemia). Beginning in calendar year 2026, hospitals will be required to report electronic clinical quality measures (eCQMs) for severe hyperglycemia and hypoglycemia. These numbers matter because poor blood sugar control can lead to serious complications, longer hospital stays, and even higher risks of death.

Thanks to your generosity, nurses, care teams, and even new employees at SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital now have a quick, lifesaving tool right at their fingertips. Attached to their employee badge, is a guide that shows exactly what to do when a patient's blood sugar drops – without wasting precious time logging into the hospital's computer system to access a treatment plan.

clear, interactive lessons that keep patients engaged during the six-hour course. When they leave, they don't just have knowledge, they have confidence. They set personal health goals, and our team follows up at three weeks and three months to offer encouragement and answer questions.

And it works: most patients show real progress, and many see their A1C levels improve significantly within three months. Without education – and the tools that make it effective – the risk of serious complications rises.



“You don't want to delay treatment for someone with low blood sugar,” said Karen Renner and Emily Aughtman, certified diabetes care and education specialists at St. Mary's Hospital. **“Any delay can be dangerous, so this tool helps us act fast in real-time.”**

Your support strengthened diabetes education for patients and staff alike, improving care both inside and outside the hospital.

Investing in care – inside and out

Expanding access to care

Patients in Jefferson City will soon have access to even more advanced care as Phase Two of the St. Mary's Hospital Health Plaza expansion takes shape. In December 2023, we opened a Multispecialty Clinic in the Health Plaza, bringing advanced services like gastroenterology, general surgery, orthopedics, and pulmonary care closer to home. For many patients, these specialties were previously difficult to reach, especially for those living in rural areas.

Demand for specialty care has skyrocketed – new patient requests have doubled across all service lines. It's clear that we need more space – and more providers – to keep pace.

Your generosity is fueling the next phase of growth – expanding the Health Plaza to include sports and rehabilitation, neurology, and ENT specialists – services we've never had room for before.



Celebrating excellence and legacy

Guardian Angel program

Every day, we hear extraordinary stories of gratitude from patients about the care and compassion shown by physicians, nurses, caregivers, and staff at St. Mary's Hospital. These stories have the power to inspire, comfort, and connect us all. Through the **Guardian Angel** program, patients and families can share their appreciation in a meaningful way – honoring the individuals who made a difference in their care. When recognized, these “Guardian Angels” receive a heartfelt letter and a custom-crafted lapel pin as

a lasting reminder of the impact they've made. It's one more way we celebrate the exceptional care that defines SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital.

Congratulations to our 2025 Guardian Angels, Dr. Christopher Paynter, DO, and Tasha Stevens, PT

To learn more visit givetossmhealth.org/SMJCGuardianAngel



Empowering future leaders

Because of you, St. Mary's Hospital employees can continue their education and advance their careers - ensuring exceptional care for every patient. **Tuition, textbooks, uniforms, and other costs can be overwhelming, but the generosity of donors through the Annual Swing for St. Mary's Golf, Tennis, and Pickleball Classic last fall removed those barriers.**

Offering scholarships to empower our team members to grow professionally is a priority. And the impact doesn't stop there—students in our community pursuing health care degrees are also encouraged to apply.

“As a past recipient of the scholarship, I am wholeheartedly grateful for the Foundation and the meaningful supporters who go above and beyond with their generosity. I am fortunate to have been awarded a financial opportunity towards a master's degree in public service and safety leadership. Upon completion, my intention is to seek, and earn, a leadership pathway aimed at serving others. With the outpouring of support for higher education and career advancement, future leaders can contribute part of their success to the Foundation and donors. I look forward to repaying my debt of gratitude in the future.” - Clint Hays



Program and medical equipment support

Branched 4-vessel ultrasound training block mode

Thanks to your support, SSM Health St. Mary's was able to purchase a state-of-the-art ultrasound device for vascular access. This technology is a game-changer for patients who are difficult to start IVs on. Previously, these patients often endured multiple needle sticks, causing unnecessary pain and delaying critical treatment.

With the new ultrasound, nurses can locate veins quickly and accurately, reducing trauma and improving patient comfort. It also enhances training for our clinical team. Instead of using temporary homemade models that lasted only a few days, nurses now have access to high-quality simulation tools that allow for thousands of practice attempts. This means better skills, more confidence, and safer care at the bedside.

Arjo FloJac

Every year, up to one million hospitalized patients experience a fall – a moment that can turn recovery into risk. Lifting a patient safely from the floor isn't just challenging; it can put both patients and caregivers in harm's way.

Thanks to your support, SSM Health St. Mary's Hospital now has the FloJac®, an innovative air-assisted mattress that makes fall recovery safer, faster, and more dignified.



Pain clinic vitals monitor

Every patient at SSM Health Spine & Pain Management Center deserves care that is safe, effective, and compassionate. Pain procedures require continuous monitoring of vital signs to protect patients in real time. When one of our monitors began to fail, the risk was clear: without replacement, patient safety could be compromised, especially as we added a full-time physician and increased the number of procedures.

Your generosity changed that story. Because of you, a new vitals monitor is in place – ensuring every patient receives the safest care possible

Cardiopulmonary rehab gym

Every day, 25–35 patients walk through the doors of SSM Health St. Mary's Cardiopulmonary Rehabilitation Center – each one determined to reclaim their health after a cardiac or pulmonary event. For these patients, recovery isn't just about medication; it's about movement, education, and confidence.

Thanks to your support, our state-of-the-art rehab center offers a carefully designed exercise and education program that helps patients build strength and improve quality of life. **Your generosity recently funded a new treadmill and a second NuStep® machine, giving patients access to low-impact, full-body workouts that are essential for recovery.**

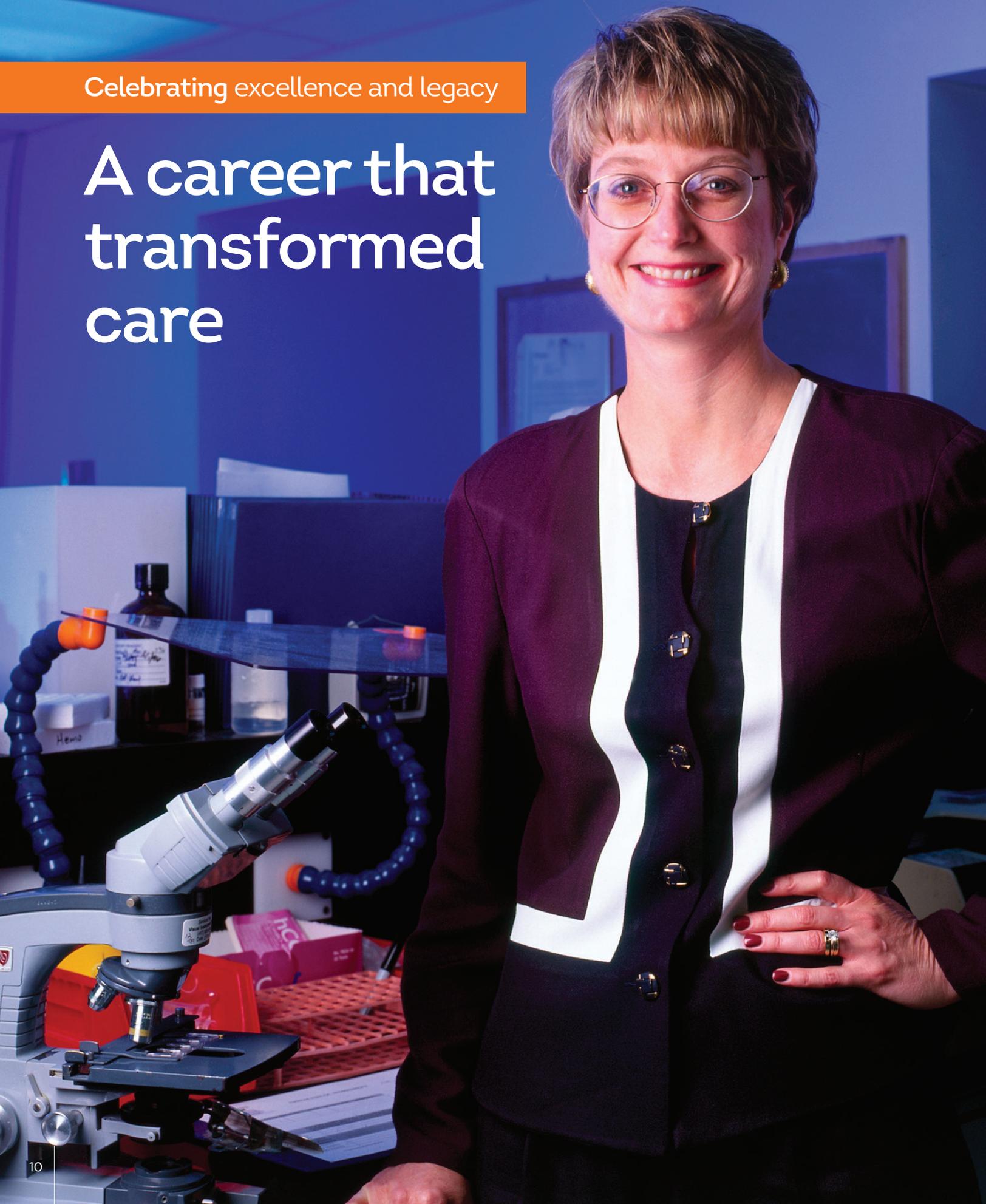
Why does this matter?

- Our single NuStep® was in constant demand – now, twice as many patients can benefit from this vital equipment.
- Two of our treadmills are nearing the end of their lifespan, and with plans to welcome peripheral artery disease patients soon, the need for reliable equipment is growing.



Celebrating excellence and legacy

A career that transformed care



For **Dr. Denise Tritz**, the journey into medicine began with a fascination for mystery – sparked by the forensic drama Quincy, M.E. That early curiosity led her to a distinguished 30-year career as Medical Director of Pathology at SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital – Jefferson City, where she became a cornerstone of patient care.

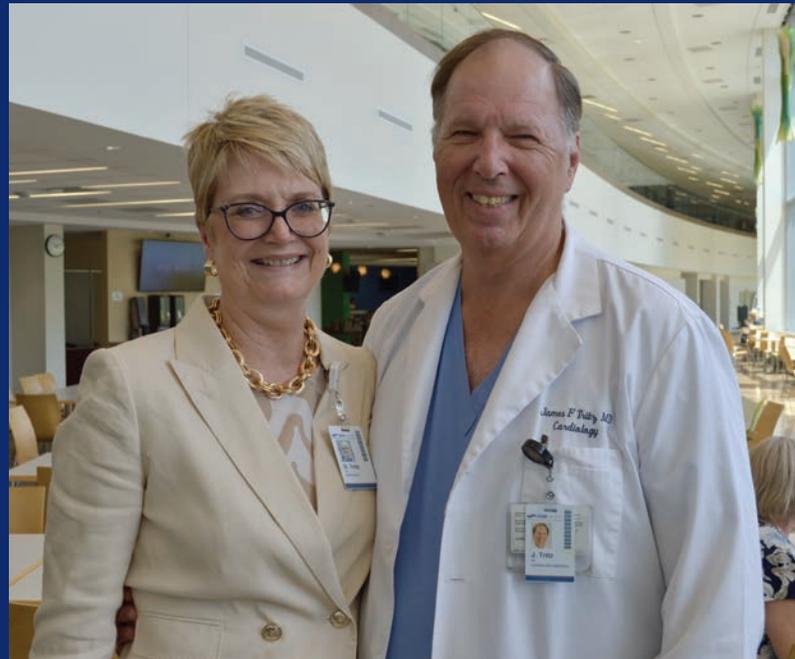
Pathology, she explains, is **“the best part of medicine.”** It’s the field that unlocks the clues hidden in blood, tissue, and fluid samples to uncover the truth behind a patient’s illness. **“About 70% of medical decisions are based on laboratory data,”** she said. **“The lab is the hub of the wheel, and all the information extends out to the providers to give them an overall picture of the patient’s status.”**

Dr. Tritz’s commitment to quality was unwavering. **“Every value we provide in the medical record must be accurate and precise,”** she emphasized. **“Patient identification has to be correct every single time, or you might be treating the wrong condition.”** Her guiding light – quality services – was not just a professional standard, but a deeply personal one. Having lost her sister to breast cancer and her mother to leukemia, she understood the emotional weight of every diagnosis. **“When I diagnosed cancer, I knew the impact. Families are overwhelmed, but having an answer gives them a game plan – and that provides comfort.”**

Though pathology is often perceived as a solitary science tucked away in the hospital basement, Dr. Tritz was far from isolated. She participated in multidisciplinary cancer conferences, collaborated with radiologists during biopsies, and occasionally met patients face-to-face. Her work touched nearly every department, and her influence extended to hospital-wide committees focused on quality and patient safety.

Her legacy is not only in the diagnoses she made but in the systems she helped shape. **“I hope people will look at my work and say, ‘She was**

a great pathologist, provided high quality care, was a team player, and was compassionate.”



Dr. Tritz’s story is also a testament to the power of donor generosity. As a long-time member of the SSM Health St. Mary’s Hospital Foundation Board, she’s seen firsthand how philanthropic support transforms care. **“Donors have so many opportunities to give,”** she said. **“I think it means the most if you can donate to something close to your heart. What is closer than the health and wellbeing of our community?”**

From funding scholarships and purchasing vital equipment, to launching initiatives like the Cancer Center and EICU, donor contributions have strengthened the hospital’s ability to deliver exceptional care. **“When we donate to St. Mary’s Hospital Foundation, we know those funds are working for good in our community,”** she said.

Dr. Tritz’s legacy is a reminder that behind every diagnosis is a team—and behind every team, a community of supporters who make excellence possible. Together, we carry her vision forward.

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