Ochsner Health has a strong track record of welcoming mission-driven partners to our health system to ensure and expand access to local services, invest in better technology and facilities, improve quality and control healthcare costs. As part of a connected healthcare system, our hospitals and caregivers are empowered to make a greater impact on the communities we serve.

With Ochsner, more than **885,000 patients received care** at more than 2,450,000 clinic visits in 2020. Everything we do is driven by our mission, vision and values. Our patients are our friends, families and neighbors – we will always do whatever we can to provide excellent care, support patients in their wellness journey, and serve as their most trusted healthcare partner in all things.

With Ochsner, local hospitals have been able to keep their doors open, ensuring more communities in our region have access to high-quality healthcare services close to home. Hospitals want to join Ochsner because they have an opportunity to grow and expand services and invest in better facilities, technology and care.

Further, Ochsner’s partnerships with hospitals throughout the state and region allow for flexibility during events such as hurricanes. If one hospital experiences destruction or needs evacuation, partner hospitals are the first to step up. Following Hurricane Ida, Ochsner St. Mary accepted more than 30 patients from Ochsner-affiliated Leonard J. Chabert Medical Center, which took significant damage from the storm. They were also able to house employee physicians whose homes were impacted, as well as providing meals and free gasoline so that frontline workers could continue to care for patients.

Read on for a case study about how Teche Regional Medical Center became Ochsner St. Mary, expanding healthcare access and services in a small community.
Today, the residents of St. Mary Parish, Louisiana – a community of more than 50,000 residents – have access to high quality primary and specialty care at Ochsner St. Mary in Morgan City. The hospital plays an important role in the region, but its future was not always certain.

The hospital first opened its doors as Lakewood Hospital in 1955 with 50 beds to meet the growing healthcare needs of the community. By 1960, the hospital had expanded to 96 beds, it was soon clear that even more beds would be needed. In 1981, the 7-story hospital that exists today was built with 168 patient beds.

Previously owned and operated by the St. Mary Parish Hospital Service District, the hospital was leased to Province Healthcare – later to merge with LifePoint Health – and the name changed to Teche Regional Medical Center (TRMC) in 2001. Although the hospital prospered for several years, expanding services and increasing staff at a time when nearby hospitals had to make cuts, the healthcare landscape was changing. By 2018, the hospital's daily census was down to just 30 patients per day. Hospital infrastructure and equipment was aging and in need of repair, but the cost was too high for the financially distressed hospital. Many patients felt they had to leave the parish to receive quality care.

TRMC faced potential closure – which would leave the rural community without local access to healthcare.

St. Mary Parish officials, along with Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards, approached Ochsner Health about the possibility of partnering with TRMC so that the hospital could remain open and return to success. Ochsner, with its strong track record of managing and operating community hospitals, is known for its ability to navigate the complexity of state and federal regulation and have expertise in administering healthcare facilities with strong physician alignment.

On October 1, 2019, TRMC officially became Ochsner St. Mary. Since partnering with Ochsner, the St. Mary community has benefitted from enhanced access to care, improved care coordination, innovative telehealth and digital medicine programs and improved patient care and hospital operations. Ochsner has also brought more jobs to the area and focusing on workforce development to ensure a robust pipeline of talent in the region for years to come.

Residents benefit from events like health fairs, where they can take part in preventive health screenings, visit informational booths on the hospital’s services and meet local providers.

“Our community has benefitted greatly from the partnership with Ochsner. In addition to providing excellent care for our residents, Ochsner has had a positive impact on our local economy by providing new jobs and increasing the minimum wage for all workers,” said William E. Bourgeois, local business leader and attorney at Bourgeois Law, LLC.
Partnership leads to continued success, expanded access and additional services.

“With Ochsner, we’ve been able to improve the quality of care in our community, providing the people of St. Mary Parish with even more access to primary and specialty care close to home. The partnership with Ochsner has brought stability to our local hospital, along with implementation of the latest technology and equipment to serve patients in the area,” said Dr. William Cefalu, chairman, St. Mary Hospital Service District 2.

Since partnering with Ochsner, Ochsner St. Mary:

- Increased minimum wage to $12/hour
- Increased access to outpatient services, including extended hours
- Added service lines to meet the needs of the community, including Wound Care
- Implemented Ochsner’s instance of Epic electronic medical records system, leading to a more coordinated care experience for patients
- Invested in the hospital’s facilities and infrastructure:
  - Renovated Emergency Department and main lobby
  - Replaced hospital roof and helipad
  - Upgraded capabilities with new computer and phone systems
- Improved hospital security with a new in-house team, providing 24-hour coverage and more experienced officers
- Partnered with Fletcher Community College to expand its nursing and allied health programs

+ Expanded access to care with the recruitment of new providers in general surgery, endocrinology, orthopedics, obstetrics and gynecology and family medicine
+ Deployed the latest and most innovative telehealth and digital medicine solutions, including
  - eICU
  - Telesitter
  - TelePsych
+ Added service lines to meet the needs of the community, including Wound Care
+ Increased access to outpatient services, including extended hours
+ Expanded Behavioral Health, including the addition of a geriatric unit
+ Enhanced sleep lab to create a more home-like atmosphere
+ Immediate capital improvements
+ Continued commitment to quality
Helping neighbors through natural disasters.

Ochsner St. Mary met the communities needs following Hurricane Ida in August 2021:

- Notification of emergency evacuation of other Bayou Region hospitals
- Establishment of complete Med-Surg / COVID-19 unit within hours
- Admission of 30+ patients (primarily COVID-19 patients), all staff and physicians overnight
- Employees and physicians housed
- Triage area established as extension of the ED
- Additional Region 3 / FEMA assistance
- Relocation of St. Anne’s Women’s Services and Surgery service lines
- Renovation and updates completed in 24 rooms to allow additional capacity for patient transfers