



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact: Jennifer Stevens
Woodland Heights Marketing Director
936-637-8688
936-635-0806**

First beating heart surgery performed at Woodland Heights

LUFKIN, TEXAS (October 9, 2006)...Woodland Heights Medical Center announces another first in cardiac care for Lufkin. The first beating heart surgery was performed today at Woodland Heights by Dr. Julio Williams, Cardiovascular and Thoracic Surgeon.

The beating heart bypass surgery is different from traditional bypass in that the heart is beating throughout surgery; therefore, the surgeon does not have to use the Heart-Lung machine, which is stressful on the patient's body, according to Dr. Williams, who added he is excited to bring this new, higher level of care to East Texas. "Cardiac surgery has come a long way since the introduction of the Heart-Lung machine of the 1950's. This is a much less invasive procedure," Dr. Williams said.

"The future of cardiac surgery is here in Lufkin now," he said.

The benefits of beating heart surgery include quicker recovery time, shortened hospital stay, and fewer cognitive and neurological consequences, Dr. Williams said. This surgery also is beneficial to those patients who have renal insufficiency before surgery, mainly in two types of patients: those who have diabetes and those with hypertension, he said.

Dr. Ravinder Bachireddy of the Heart Institute of East Texas says that now "people from this area don't have to travel all the way to Houston...this is a good thing for patients and families."

Lance Jones, CEO of Woodland Heights, said he is delighted to help bring this state-of-the-art procedure to Lufkin. “The residents of East Texas are lucky to have this high level of medical care, once thought to be only available in metropolitan areas.”

Jim Wehmeier, Director of Economic Development for the City of Lufkin, echoes Jones’ sentiments, “The incredible medical industry in Lufkin is one of the things that makes our community so special. To have the opportunity to add someone of Dr. Williams’ talents and expertise in cardiovascular and thoracic surgery is truly a blessing to East Texas and its citizenry.”

Dr. Williams said he looks forward to continuing the excellent cardiac and thoracic care provided in Lufkin. He emphasizes that “cardiac care is an always-evolving field and what was considered impossible 20 years ago is now possible.”

Dr. Williams is in practice with Dr. Randall Blakestad at the Cardio-Thoracic Institute of East Texas located at 121 Gaslight Medical Parkway. Office hours are Monday-Friday from 8:30 a.m. – 5:00 p.m. His office can be reached at (936) 634-8854.

About Woodland Heights Medical Center

Established in 1918, Woodland Heights Medical Center was Lufkin’s first hospital. Now, almost nine decades later, Woodland Heights is recognized throughout Deep East Texas as the leading provider of high quality, innovative health care services. In 2006, Woodland Heights Medical Center was named a Distinguished Hospital for clinical excellence—ranking in the nation’s top 5% for clinical care. * Recognized for its continued excellence in cardiac care, Woodland Heights is a five star rated hospital for the treatment of heart failure. * Additionally, Woodland Heights is ranked in the nation’s top five percent for pulmonary and gastrointestinal care. * Accommodating a wide range of clinical specialties, Woodland Heights has achieved excellence in other key medical and surgical areas including neurology, orthopedic surgery, physical medicine/rehabilitation, vascular surgery and obstetrics and gynecology. Woodland Heights also offers a full range of outpatient diagnostic services including advanced imaging, laboratory, outpatient surgery and emergency services. Through its Rehabilitation Center, Woodland Heights offers cardiac rehabilitation, stroke recovery and physical and occupational rehabilitation. Combining modern facilities, leading technology, an exceptional staff and a commitment to the communities it serves, Woodland Heights Medical Center remains at the forefront of quality health care in Deep East Texas.

* *Healthgrades*