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**Woodland Heights to be honored as Start! Fit Friendly Company by American Heart Association:
*The only business in Lufkin to be awarded this distinction***

Lufkin, TX, (January 25, 2010) – Woodland Heights Medical Center has been honored as a Start! Gold Fit Friendly Company by the American Heart Association. This honor is given to companies who demonstrate a commitment to the health of their employees by creating a culture of wellness in the workplace. Woodland Heights is the only business in Lufkin to receive this award. Some of the fit-friendly benefits Woodland Heights offers their employees include:

- Walking Program
- Onsite fitness facility for employees, medical staff and volunteers
- “Healthy Choice” menu options in hospital cafeteria
- Onsite exercise classes through the Healthy Woman program
- Educational luncheons on wellness related topics through the Healthy Woman program

The American Heart Association’s Start! Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition program calls for employers to encourage workplace wellness and create a work environment conducive to physical activity, specifically walking.

“The Start! Fit-Friendly Companies Program is easy to implement and not only can improve employees’ health and wellness but also has proven, positive effects on the bottom line. It’s a simple solution to a growing and sometimes staggering problem — holding down healthcare costs,” said David Ellis, PT, MHS, Director of Therapy Services and Chairman of the Woodland Heights Wellness Committee, the committee responsible for helping to improve the health of the Woodland Heights employees.

Many adult Americans spend most of their waking hours at work, and many are in sedentary careers—raising their risk for a host of medical problems, such as obesity, high blood pressure and

diabetes. Employers face ever-increasing healthcare costs such as \$12.7 billion in annual medical expenses due to obesity alone.

Employees often have trouble finding time to take care of their health. Start! provides a solution by encouraging them to start walking, which has the lowest dropout rate of any physical activity because it's free and easy to do.

Companies that participate in the Start! Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program can implement healthy workplace practices such as:

- Establishing walking routes around the office
- Offering healthy food options in cafeterias and/or vending machines
- Generating online newsletters and implementing tracking tools

"Studies suggest that implementing a worksite physical activity program and promoting a culture of physical activity can help companies increase productivity and reduce absenteeism, turnover rates and costs,"¹ added Dan Jacobs, spokesperson for Woodland Heights. "A recent study showed that for every dollar an employer invests in wellness, up to \$1.65 in health care expenses can be saved."²

For more information about the Start! Fit-Friendly Companies Recognition Program and how it is helping improve the health of Americans by focusing on an activity that is convenient, free and easy, call 903-323-8800 or visit heart.org/start.

About Woodland Heights Medical Center

Established in 1918, Woodland Heights Medical Center was Lufkin's first hospital. Now, nine decades later, Woodland Heights is recognized throughout Deep East Texas as the leading provider of high quality, innovative health care services. Accommodating a wide range of clinical specialties, Woodland Heights has achieved excellence in key medical and surgical areas including cardiology, pulmonology, 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.

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Photo Caption: Rhonda Bullard, American Heart Association Representative, stands with Casey Robertson, Assistant CEO of Woodland Heights, left, and David Ellis, Chairman of the Woodland Heights Wellness Committee

¹ Stewart WF, Ricci JA, Chee E, Morganstein D, Lost productive working time costs from health conditions in the United States; results from the American productivity audit. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2003; 45 (12): 1234-1246

² Naydeck, B., Pearson, J., Ozminkowski, R., Day, B., Goetzel, R., The Impact of the Highmark Employee Wellness Programs on 4-Year Healthcare Costs. *J Occup Environ Med.* 2008; 50(2): 146-156