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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

October 26, 2009

NEW STATE-OF-THE-ART THEDASTAR ARRIVES *Aircraft Features Latest Safety Technology for Patients, Crew Members*

The new ThedaStar helicopter featuring the latest collision avoidance technology flew into service today improving passenger and crew safety.

Based at the Level II Trauma Center at Theda Clark Medical Center, ThedaStar responds directly to accident/trauma scenes and also transports patients between facilities 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Painted red, white and blue, the new ThedaStar can carry two patients, one pilot and two flight nurses.

“We’re excited to welcome the new ThedaStar and its new technology. The new collision technology makes take-offs and landings safer for patients and crew members” said ThedaStar Supervisor Gary Stromberg. “The aircraft also uses night vision goggles that will improve flight safety at night and satellite tracking so dispatchers can track ThedaStar via satellite instead of via radio. These improvements make ThedaStar safer for patients and crew members and allow us to reach our destination as quickly and as safely as possible.”

Theda Clark staff members, emergency medical service providers, and officials from area communities served by ThedaStar attended a ceremony today welcoming the twin-engine Eurocopter E-135, which is among the world’s first air ambulance to use the Honeywell Collision Avoidance Technology. The crowd then bid the current ThedaStar farewell as it flew over the hospital, entering retirement.

The new ThedaStar will be the third helicopter based at Theda Clark since its air medical helicopter program began in 1986. ThedaStar’s primary coverage area is a 40-mile radius around Neenah, but it also transports patients to Marshfield, Upper Michigan, Milwaukee and Madison. The craft’s twin engines also mean it can fly over large bodies of water, such as Lake Winnebago, which speeds up response time.

“When someone is injured in an accident or has a stroke, time is of the essence. The new ThedaStar will help us get patients to the care they need more quickly and in a safe, reliable manner,” Stromberg said.

In June, ThedaCare announced plans to lease the \$6 million helicopter from PHI Inc., a Lafayette, La., company that supplies the pilots and mechanics who work on ThedaStar. Leasing the helicopter instead of buying a new one is more cost effective since there is a fixed monthly fee and PHI will pay maintenance costs, said Jill Case-Wirth, vice president of Theda Clark Medical Center and Appleton Medical Center.

“The helicopter we sent off to retirement today has served us well for 9 years, but it’s time for a new aircraft and we couldn’t be happier,” she said. “We continue to see an increased need for medical air transports and the new helicopter will allow us to better serve our local communities, EMS crews and area hospitals that rely on us for life-saving care.”

- More -

Theda Clark Medical Center is a 166-bed acute care hospital founded in 1909. In addition to general medical and surgical care, specialized services include a birth center, Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin -
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Fox Valley, the region's only American College of Surgeons Verified Level II Trauma Center, the Aylward Outpatient Surgery Center and ThedaStar Air Medical Helicopter. Theda Clark Medical Center also offers comprehensive neuroscience care and the Theda Clark Stroke Center was the first stroke center in Northeast Wisconsin to be certified as a Primary Stroke Center by The Joint Commission. The Bariatric Program at Theda Clark, along with Midwest Bariatric Solutions and its surgeons, have jointly received two Bariatric Surgery Center of Excellence designations by the American College of Surgeons and the American Society for Bariatric Surgery.

ThedaCare (www.thedacare.org) is a community-owned health system consisting of Appleton Medical Center, Theda Clark Medical Center, New London Family Medical Center, Riverside Medical Center in Waupaca, ThedaCare Physicians, and other health care services. ThedaCare is the largest employer in Northeast Wisconsin with nearly 5,400 employees.

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