



Press Release

Media Contact

Shannon Brown | shannon.brown@huntsvillememorial.com

936-291-4512

## Huntsville Memorial Stresses Commitment to Walker County Residents

*Local healthcare provider touts successes despite the challenging industry and the closure of other rural hospitals.*

HUNTSVILLE, Texas (July 12, 2017) – Much has been said regarding the state of local healthcare in recent weeks. Speculation over the future of Huntsville Memorial Hospital (HMH) has had many in the community wondering whether the closure of the local hospital could become a reality. According to hospital officials, the answer is a definite “no.”

Over the past decade, HMH has overseen a dramatic improvement in healthcare services for Walker County residents, despite a challenging and ever-changing healthcare industry.

“That continuity of care says a lot about our focus and commitment to providing what’s best for our community,” speaking on behalf of the hospital board, Mac Woodward, HMH Board Chairman explains. “Being able to support approximately 90 percent of our community’s healthcare needs is something special, especially for a rural hospital such as ours.”

Woodward is quick to underscore the importance of the services offered by the hospital. He explains that since 2013, 15 Texas rural hospitals in counties with populations of 60,000 or more have closed.

“As of right now, almost 30 percent of the counties in our state already lack access to local healthcare,” Woodward says. “We’ve seen that take place regionally with the closure of Timberlands Healthcare in Crockett. We refuse to see that happen to Huntsville.”

In a challenging healthcare industry, the hospital has persevered, despite lowered funding by local, state, and federal governments.

Woodward says that HMH’s board of directors is confident that the current administration will continue to help the hospital navigate a dynamic and ever-changing industry with the same success it has seen over the past five years.

The hospital’s financial stability is not a concern for Woodward. He says that net revenue is trending slightly higher than in the previous year and that operating expenses are holding steady, according to projections. Additionally, Woodward stresses a working-capital increase of more than \$4 million this fiscal year over last, of which continues to be reinvested into the hospital

The average daily census at HMH has increased more than 300 percent since the current executive team came on board. In addition, 13 new providers have been recruited to the region, bringing much-needed profitable service lines and providers to Walker County.

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“We’ve been lucky to oversee the addition of many valuable services for patients, reducing their need to travel to other communities for care,” Woodward says. “Among these, cardiology, primary stroke, bariatric, and robotic surgical services have all contributed to the hospital’s success in recent years”. HMM is the largest private employer in Walker County. Closing the hospital will have a serious economic impact that could have severe and lasting effects on the hospital and the community.

Without a long-term strategy or hospital operator identified, employees and medical staff could face an uncertain future. Patients could also face reduced access to local healthcare services.

“Huntsville Memorial Hospital continues to provide more than 600 great-paying jobs,” Woodward adds. “That means we are helping family, friends, and neighbors earn a reasonable wage and live a higher quality of life. We have seen how the closing of a hospital affects a community. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of ensuring we keep that from happening here at home.”

Although HMM has continued to excel in business and patient care, a national healthcare consulting firm, Stroudwater Associates, has been retained to review operations, finances, and identify potential areas to improve efficiency. . We look forward to sharing new findings with the community, but in the meantime, the hospital remains committed to delivering superior healthcare services to residents of Huntsville and the greater Walker County region.

Woodward stresses that both the hospital district and the hospital’s board of directors ultimately want what is best for Walker County residents. He says that over the next few weeks, the board will be kicking off initiatives designed to help the community understand the role that HMM has played in the growth of the community and the way the expansion of services has been possible, despite what many are calling the “demise of rural healthcare.”

“It’s going to take a collaborative effort between the hospital and the district to be as transparent as possible and provide accurate data for the community,” Woodward says. “By working together, I believe we can clear up any confusion, resolve any concerns, and move forward stronger than ever – reassuring the community of our commitment to keep healthcare local.”

### **About Huntsville Memorial Hospital**

Founded in 1927, Huntsville Memorial Hospital (HMM) provides healthcare services for residents of Walker County. Under an operations agreement with the Walker County Hospital District, HMM offers a wealth of medical services, including in-patient care, major/minimally invasive surgeries, obstetrics, a Level IV trauma center, advanced radiology services, an outpatient lab, rehabilitation programs, several health clinics, women’s center and much more. For additional information, please visit [www.huntsvillememorial.com](http://www.huntsvillememorial.com).