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HEART CENTER OF GREATER WATERBURY FILES FOR PERMANENT STATUS
Connecticut Office of Health Care Access To Decide Program's Fate

Waterbury, Conn., Sept. 15, 2008 — The Heart Center of Greater Waterbury has filed a Certificate of Need (CON) with the Connecticut Office of Health Care Access (OHCA) seeking permanent status for the Heart Center.

The Heart Center of Greater Waterbury recently received a six-month extension from OHCA allowing the Center to operate through January 19, 2009. The Heart Center, provides lifesaving cardiovascular procedures such as angioplasty and open heart surgery to people in the Greater Waterbury region, and had been in jeopardy of being closed prior to the extension.

In 2005 the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury was granted a three-year "demonstration status" program. During the initial three years of providing services, the Heart Center had to meet certain criteria as outlined by the OHCA to assure patient safety and quality of care. The three-year project ended in August and the Heart Center is submitting a CON to receive permanent status for the program.

A CON is a formal application required when a health care facility proposes a medical equipment purchase, introduction of a service, reduction or termination in services, or changes in ownership or control. Connecticut health care facilities programs must obtain a CON prior to developing, expanding or closing certain services.

The Heart Center's CON was filed in accordance with OHCA's filing date procedures and outlines in detail why it should be granted permanent status, according to Loraine Shea, executive director of the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury. A public hearing for the Heart Center's CON is expected sometime in October.

"By granting the six-month extension, OHCA has certainly acknowledged the Heart Center's importance to Greater Waterbury," said Loraine Shea, executive director of the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury. "The Heart Center has successfully met all of the appropriate national quality standards. Physicians, elected officials, and the Greater Waterbury community are united in our belief that this program must be continued on a permanent basis."

Shea said the Heart Center has successfully treated more than 2,400 hearts and met or exceeded all of the criteria outlined by OHCA except for the volume targets for open-heart surgery. She said that the volume targets were based on research from 1975, but more recent and relevant research indicates that the Heart Center's open heart procedure volume is sufficient not only to have a quality program, but an efficient one as well.

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Public support for the program has been overwhelming, said Shea. More than 2,000 people attended a public rally in August and the Heart Center has received 12,000 letters of support from Greater Waterbury residents.

The Heart Center of Greater Waterbury will continue to operate for the next six months while OHCA reviews the CON.

“We have a great amount of confidence in our application and we look forward to working with OCHA to make the Heart Center a permanent fixture in our community,” said Shea.

For more information and to show your support for the Heart Center of Greater Waterbury, please visit www.heartcentergw.org.

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