

# A much needed facility for much needed physicians'

## Round Rock med school dedicated at crucial time

By CHAD THOMAS

Officials with the Texas A&M Health Science Center held a dedication ceremony Thursday in north Round Rock, offering updates on the medical education facility set to open next fall.

The 133,000-square-foot Health Science Center will be the newest of Texas A&M's seven medical schools and will welcome an estimated 200 freshmen med students in 2010.

The students, after completing four years of school and additional years of rotations, will

enter the medical field at a crucial time, A&M representatives said. According to Nancy Dickey M.D., president of the Texas A&M Health Science Center, Texas will need 16,000 new physicians by 2020 to maintain its current doctor-to-patient ratio.

The Health Science Center will train and help keep doctors in Central Texas, local officials and A&M representatives said.

"It's a much needed facility for much needed physicians," said Michael McKinney M.D., chancellor of the Texas A&M University System. "There's a shortage here in Central Texas due to such rapid growth."

Added Bill Jones, chair of the Texas A&M Board of Regents, "(The growth) has strained our roads, our clinics and our hospitals. We need more doctors, more nurses and more trained professionals."

In attendance Thursday were state, county and local legisla-

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tors, including State Representative Dan Gettis and State Senator Steve Ogden, each of whom played a pivotal role in bringing the medical center to Williamson County, A&M officials said.

Mr. Ogden said the idea originally was proposed nearly five years ago by retiring State Representative Mike Kruse, who had considered bringing a University of Texas medical school to the county. Mr. Ogden moved ahead with the idea, eventually entering discussions with Texas A&M and Mr. Dickey.

"I pushed hard for this," Mr. Ogden said. "This was one of the projects that I was most personally involved in (within) my district."

Through the work of Mr. Ogden and Mr. Gettis in the capital, the Texas Legislature last year appropriated \$9 million for the Health Science Center. Then, in January, the Avery family donated 15 acres of land - and made another 26 acres available for purchase - near FM 1480 and County Road 113. Construction on the facility began in August with the local development company, Waterstone and contractor Chason.

Upon completion next fall, the Health Science Center will be used for clinical teaching, student support services and College of Medicine administration. Parts of the center will be used by Lone Star Circle of Care, which will run a health-care clinic for uninsured and underinsured Williamson County residents. Georgetown's Texas Life Sciences Collaboration Center - a biotechnology company - also signed an affiliation agreement with the health center.

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