



St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center

A member of CHW

NEWS RELEASE

Aug. 17, 2009

Surgery Gives Arizona Cowboy a Chance to Pursue Dream of Professional Roping

Since four years of age, Joseph Kimball, 46, has been an Arizona cowboy with dreams of becoming a professional roper. Late last year, he almost lost that dream when his heart began to deteriorate. Luckily, a team of cardiac surgeons at St. Joseph's Hospital and Medical Center's Heart & Lung Institute, was able to repair Joseph's heart to help him continue his passion.

An avid team roper and just one classification under the professional level, Joseph was attending the national rodeo finals in December when he began feeling ill and flew home. Diagnosed with pneumonia two months earlier, he went to a Valley emergency department where doctors diagnosed kidney and congestive heart failure. With his heart pumping at 10 percent, Joseph was in extreme distress. His cardiologist was able to stabilize him but found a severely blocked aortic valve.

Surgeons offered to repair Joseph's heart with a mechanical valve, which would require a lifetime of blood thinners and force him to give up his career as a roper. Not satisfied, Joseph asked his cardiologist to consult with Lishan Aklog, MD, chief of Cardiovascular Surgery at St. Joseph's. Dr. Aklog recommended repairing Joseph's heart with a tissue valve through a minimally invasive surgery. Blood thinners would not be needed with this type of valve and Joseph could continue to rope after his surgery.

"Dr. Aklog gave me the news I had been hoping to hear," says Joseph. "With this type of surgery, I would be able to follow my dream."

During preoperative testing, Dr. Aklog and his team found that Joseph was in even more danger. In addition to the blocked valve, he had an aneurysm of the aorta that required additional treatment. The surgery was so successful that Joseph was riding horses one month later and his heart function is nearly normal.

"I feel like a different person now," says Joseph. "I don't remember having this much energy in the last 10 years. There's no comparison – I feel so much younger. It's amazing to me what this procedure has done."

—St. Joseph's—