

Medicinal miracle saves man's heart

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Staff Writer

HOUMA — Two years ago, a doctor told former Chauvin resident Aaron Cathcart he had a little over a year to live because his heart was so weak that he would not survive surgery.

But with a little luck and cutting-edge science, today Cathcart is not only living — he's thriving. And he wants everyone to know about the medicinal miracle that he believes saved his life.

On June 26, Cathcart became the first person to receive combination adult stem cells injected into his heart during open-heart surgery.

"It used to be that I couldn't walk a couple hundred feet in the yard without getting pains. I couldn't go out if the weather dropped below 50 degrees because my heart would

strain in the cold," Cathcart said.

Cathcart, who along with his wife, Betty, now lives in Franklinton, is getting back to things he'd missed, including walking his poodle, Buddy, without needing his defibrillator to shock him to get his heart started again.

"This is the first time they ever did this. They had no idea what to expect, and they were amazed it did as well as it did," Cathcart said.

Cathcart's heart had an "ejection factor" of about 20 or less. An ejection factor indicates how well your heart is supplying blood to your body. A normal person has an ejection factor of about 55.

The Cathcarts first learned about the experimental adult-stem-cell

