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Athersys Recognized Among Fastest Growing Companies in North America on Deloitte's 2013 Technology Fast 500(TM)

Attributes 180% Revenue Growth to Technology Leadership in Regenerative Medicine

CLEVELAND, Nov. 13, 2013 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Athersys, Inc. (Nasdaq:ATHX) today announced it ranked 413th on Deloitte's Technology Fast 500™, a ranking of the 500 fastest growing technology, media, telecommunications, life sciences and clean technology companies in North America. Athersys' revenue grew 180% during this period.

Athersys' Chief Executive Officer, Gil Van Bokkelen, attributes the Company's revenue growth to its technology leadership in the field of regenerative medicine and its record of establishing collaborative partnerships with leading pharmaceutical companies and other organizations. "Athersys is committed to developing innovative therapies, like MultiStem®[®], that have the potential to address substantial unmet medical needs, including stroke and other neurological conditions, heart and vascular disease, and inflammatory and immune conditions. Our record of scientific achievements has led to significant grant awards, commercial partnerships with companies like Pfizer Inc., and an international network of collaborations with leading clinical and research centers around the world," noted Dr. Van Bokkelen. "We are proud of the fact that we are recognized as a leader in a field that many believe has the potential to transform medicine as we know it. Achieving success in even a few of the areas we are pursuing will create extraordinary value for our shareholders."

"The 2013 Deloitte Technology Fast 500 companies are exemplary cases of those spurring growth in a tough market through innovation," said Eric Openshaw, vice chairman, Deloitte LLP and U.S. technology, media and telecommunications leader. "This year's list is a who's who of companies behind the most exciting and innovative products and services in the technology space. We congratulate the Fast 500 companies and look forward to what they do next."

"The fastest growing companies in the U.S. are drivers of constant innovation and operate with the agility to stay ahead of a quickly evolving marketplace, and software, biotech/pharma and internet companies continue to be at the forefront," added James Atwell, national managing partner of the Emerging Growth Company practice, Deloitte Services LP. "The companies excelling in these sectors have a startup mentality that allows them to be nimble and adapt quickly, which is why they consistently lead the list of fast-growing companies each year."

Athersys has also been a previous Technology Fast 500™ award winner in 2011 and 2012.

About Deloitte's 2013 Technology Fast 500™

Technology Fast 500, conducted by Deloitte LLP, provides a ranking of the fastest growing technology, media, telecommunications, life sciences and clean technology companies — both public and private — in North America. Technology Fast 500 award winners are selected based on percentage fiscal year revenue growth from 2008 to 2012.

In order to be eligible for Technology Fast 500 recognition, companies must own proprietary intellectual property or technology that is sold to customers in products that contribute to a majority of the company's operating revenues. Companies must have base-year operating revenues of at least \$50,000 USD or CD, and current-year operating revenues of at least \$5 million USD or CD. Additionally, companies must be in business for a minimum of five years, and be headquartered within North America.

About MultiStem

MultiStem cell therapy is a patented regenerative medicine product that has shown the ability to promote tissue repair and healing in a variety of ways, such as through the production of multiple therapeutic factors produced in response to signals of inflammation and tissue damage. MultiStem has demonstrated therapeutic potential for the treatment of inflammatory and immune disorders, neurological conditions, and cardiovascular disease, as well as other areas, and represents a unique "off-the-shelf" stem cell product that can be manufactured in a scalable manner, may be stored for years in frozen form, and is administered without tissue matching or the need for immune suppression. The product is extensively characterized for safety,

consistency and potency. Athersys has forged strategic partnerships with Pfizer Inc. to develop MultiStem for inflammatory bowel disease and is also being evaluated as a novel therapeutic approach for certain neurological and cardiovascular conditions.

About Athersys

Athersys is a clinical stage biotechnology company engaged in the discovery and development of therapeutic product candidates designed to extend and enhance the quality of human life. The Company is developing its MultiStem[®] cell therapy product, a patented, adult-derived "off-the-shelf" stem cell product platform for disease indications in the cardiovascular, neurological, inflammatory and immune disease areas. The Company currently has several clinical stage programs involving MultiStem, including for treating inflammatory bowel disease, ischemic stroke, damage caused by myocardial infarction, and for the prevention of graft versus host disease. Athersys has also developed a diverse portfolio that includes other technologies and product development opportunities, and has forged strategic partnerships and collaborations with leading pharmaceutical and biotechnology companies, as well as world-renowned research institutions in the United States and Europe to further develop its platform and products. More information is available at www.athersys.com.

Forward-Looking Statements

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995 that involve risks and uncertainties. These forward-looking statements relate to, among other things, the expected timetable for development of our product candidates, our growth strategy, and our future financial performance, including our operations, economic performance, financial condition, prospects, and other future events. We have attempted to identify forward-looking statements by using such words as "anticipates," "believes," "can," "continue," "could," "estimates," "expects," "intends," "may," "plans," "potential," "should," "suggest," "will," or other similar expressions. These forward-looking statements are only predictions and are largely based on our current expectations. A number of known and unknown risks, uncertainties, and other factors could affect the accuracy of these statements. Some of the more significant known risks that we face that could cause actual results to differ materially from those implied by forward-looking statements are the risks and uncertainties inherent in the process of discovering, developing, and commercializing products that are safe and effective for use as human therapeutics, such as the uncertainty regarding market acceptance of our product candidates and our ability to generate revenues, including MultiStem for the treatment of inflammatory bowel disease, acute myocardial infarction, stroke and other disease indications, including traumatic brain injury, and the prevention of graft-versus-host disease. These risks may cause our actual results, levels of activity, performance, or achievements to differ materially from any future results, levels of activity, performance, or achievements expressed or implied by these forward-looking statements. Other important factors to consider in evaluating our forward-looking statements include: our ability to raise additional capital, including the amount and timing of the sale of shares of common stock to Aspire Capital; final results from our MultiStem clinical trials including for ischemic stroke; the possibility of delays in, adverse results of, and excessive costs of the development process; our ability to successfully initiate and complete clinical trials; changes in external market factors; changes in our industry's overall performance; changes in our business strategy; our ability to protect our intellectual property portfolio; our possible inability to realize commercially valuable discoveries in our collaborations with pharmaceutical and other biotechnology companies; our ability to meet milestones under our collaboration agreements; our collaborators' ability to continue to fulfill their obligations under the terms of our collaboration agreements; our possible inability to execute our strategy due to changes in our industry or the economy generally; changes in productivity and reliability of suppliers; and the success of our competitors and the emergence of new competitors. You should not place undue reliance on forward-looking statements contained in this press release, and we undertake no obligation to publicly update forward-looking statements, whether as a result of new information, future events or otherwise.

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