

Martha Wooten Named First Reliance Associate of the Year And Nine Associates Awarded President's Club



Florence, SC (March 12, 2009) – First Reliance Bank recently announced at its annual associate meeting that Martha Wooten, Service Manager for the Florence market, is the First Reliance Associate of the Year for 2008.

Each year, as part of the bank's associate rewards and recognition program, all associates have the opportunity to nominate an outstanding associate and submit a detailed reason of why the chosen associate deserves the award. A committee then carefully reviews the nominations and selects the associate who goes above and beyond performance expectations and who is the best role model for living the values of First Reliance Bank. Wooten was selected from among the bank's 145 associates.

In her years of service with First Reliance Bank, Wooten has earned a reputation as one of First Reliance Bank's most highly regarded associates. Trustworthiness, commitment to excellence, and positive attitude are just a few characteristics used to describe Wooten during the nomination process. Wooten was also described as someone who 'is a great coach and enjoys seeing people on her team reach their potential.' As one of the bank's top performing leaders, Wooten well exceeded her 2008 performance goals.

Outside of her role as Service Manager, Wooten actively participates in not only First Reliance sponsored community events, but she also volunteers much of her free time with civic and charitable organizations within the Florence community. Throughout the year, Wooten donated close to 1,000 hours of her personal time in her efforts to give back to the community. "As a top performer and highly active community volunteer, Martha was the clear choice for associate of the year," stated Rick Saunders, President and CEO of First Reliance Bank. "She consistently goes above and beyond her responsibilities to ensure the success of our customers and the bank. Martha's dedication to contributing to the community by actively participating in local events supports our bank's purpose and mission."

Martha graduated from Gardner-Webb University, North Carolina in 1999 where she earned a Bachelor of Science degree. Martha currently resides in Florence County with her husband, John, and their daughter.

As the 2008 Associate of the Year, Wooten receives 1,000 shares of First Reliance Bank stock, \$500 cash, one week of additional vacation, and her own VIP parking spot.



First Reliance also announced the President's Club winners for 2008 at its annual meeting. President's Club awards are for outstanding sales performance, top service and operational excellence and best of the best professional. The 2008 President's Club Winners are: Ashley Hewitt, *Personal Banker*, Denise Lee, *Personal Banker*, Brad Turner, *Personal Banker*, Ricky Reynolds, *Personal Banker*, Joe Campbell, *Personal Banker*, Ashley Peavy, *Personal Banker*, Marnie Moore, VP Retail Mortgages Florence, Tyron Jones, *IT Analyst/Network Administrator*, Tom Rouse, VP Sales Manager.

All award winners and their guests will have an exclusive dinner with the bank CEO and have an opportunity to share what the bank is doing well and what ideas they would like to share to support the future growth of the bank and to help it achieve its mission of being the largest and most profitable bank in South Carolina.

First Reliance Bank, one of the **Best Places to Work in SC**, encourages associate growth and development through benefits and incentive programs such as the Associate of the Year Award and President's Club Awards.

ABOUT FIRST RELIANCE BANK

*First Reliance Bank, founded in 1999, has assets of approximately \$605 million, and employs over 140 highly talented associates. The bank serves Columbia, Charleston, and Florence markets in South Carolina. The bank has been recognized for its success including being the only company ever to be named to The Top 25 Fastest Growing Companies™ in South Carolina four times including 2002, 2004, 2005, and 2006 (SC Chamber/Elliott Davis). In June 2007, the bank was added to the Palmetto 25, a list of S.C.'s largest publicly held companies. In 2006, 2007, and 2008 the bank was also recognized as One of the Best Places to Work in South Carolina by the SC Chamber of Commerce. **First Reliance Bank offers a unique Hometown Heroes package of benefits to serve those who are serving our communities, a Customer Service Guaranty, Totally FREE Checking, Totally FREE Business Checking, FREE Coin Machines, a Worldwide NO FEE ATM Network, and a Mortgage Service Guaranty. It also offers 8-8 Extended Hours in all of their Florence, Mt. Pleasant, and Lexington locations and is open on most traditional bank holidays. Its Easy to Do Business With™ standard has earned the young bank a customer satisfaction rating of 98% (Lamothe & Associates, Inc., Research Firm). First Reliance Bank is traded as FSRL.OB.***

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