



**BANK TO IMPLEMENT AWARD TO RECOGNIZE
UNCOMMON ACHIEVEMENTS OF MIDDLE TENNESSEANS**

COLUMBIA, Tenn. (July 17, 2009) – First Farmers and Merchants Bank is announcing an award it will bestow annually on individuals with Middle Tennessee roots who have been quiet but effective achievers. Called the “First Farmers & Merchants Bank Achievement Award,” the honor will be given to one person each year whose character and successes are representative of both the American spirit and the values of First Farmers and Merchants Bank.

“With the many difficulties and hardships citizens in our country, state and region are currently enduring, we thought it would be good to identify people who have overcome challenges in their lives and risen to where they positively impact others,” said T. Randy Stevens, chairman and CEO, First Farmers & Merchants Bank. “Such individuals and their stories are all around us, but usually, because of their personal character, these folks are humble and don’t say a lot about what they’ve done. However, their success demonstrates that Americans *can* achieve great things, regardless of circumstances and regardless of what must be overcome. That’s a message that’s sorely needed right now and this award will hopefully honor that spirit of success in some small way.”

The award seeks individuals with character and integrity who have quietly made a difference in their families, communities and the lives of others, have overcome challenges while realizing their achievements and who can serve as an inspiration to others. Recipients do not need to be high profile individuals or have a direct relationship with First Farmers. And they may not even live in the Middle Tennessee area. However, the best candidates will have somehow impacted individuals within the First Farmers seven-county service area.

“I expect that the human stories we uncover in this award process will be very, very similar to that of our bank,” Stevens said. “First Farmers began in modest ways and had enormous challenges that

had to be overcome during our growth, including recessions, financial panics and the Great Depression. But by setting a responsible course of action, and quietly following it through the years, adjusting where and when necessary, we scaled our mountains and reached a level of success that many banks today would love to have. We also take pride in surrounding ourselves with people of great integrity, which, I believe, has been one of the reasons we've succeeded for one hundred years. The award recipients will reflect that same richness in character.”

A search is currently underway to identify the first recipient, which is expected to occur by the end of this month. An announcement about the individual will be made in July, with the honor being awarded at an Achievement event in Columbia in August.

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About First Farmers & Merchants Bank

Founded in 1909, First Farmers & Merchants Bank (Member FDIC) is one of the most successful independent banks in Tennessee, with total assets of approximately \$917 million and deposits in excess of \$758 million. An additional \$2.7 billion in assets is held by its Trust & Financial Management Department. Headquartered in Columbia, Tenn., the bank operates 17 offices in a seven county area in Middle Tennessee that includes Maury, Lawrence, Marshall, Hickman, Giles, Dickson and Williamson counties. It is distinguished by its commitment to traditional, personal banking relationships that incorporate state-of-the-art technology to provide the highest possible level of service. For additional information, visit www.fandmbank.com or call the main office at 931.388.3145.