

Southern Bancorp receives "GIVE" award

Honor recognizes exceptional service to the community

Southern Bancorp is one of six financial institutions to receive a 2009 Southeast Community Bank "GIVE" Award, which honors exceptional community service. "GIVE" stands for charitable Giving, community Involvement, Volunteerism and employee Engagement. Judges chose the winners from community banks in seven southeastern states based on criteria including objectives, strategies and results.

Southern Bancorp won for its efforts to serve the community, including its mission to reduce poverty in the Mississippi Delta town of Ruleville, where the bank is based. Southern Bancorp has given \$1 million in recent years to Ruleville and the neighboring town of Drew, to help spark revitalization.

"Southern Bancorp and all our employees are honored to receive this prestigious award, which represents our commitment and passion toward improving all the communities we serve," said

Phil Baldwin, President and Chief Executive Officer of Southern Bancorp. "We are dedicated to involve these local communities in every step of our community revitalization efforts. Strengthening communities truly requires a team effort."



In addition to the bank's economic contributions, several employees donated days, nights and weekends – almost 1,000 volunteer hours – to help low-income families prepare and file their income taxes. The bank also coordinated and is helping implement the 10-month Ruleville community strategic planning process, resulting in a blueprint for economic development and growth. Southern Bancorp has also made grants to attractions and events including the B.B.

King Museum, Delta Interpretive Center and Ruleville Roast and Fall Festival, leading to increased tourism and tax collections for the town.

"We knew that many community banks make helping the community a

priority, but we were deeply touched by the scope of their generosity," said Sal Inserra, partner at Porter Keadle Moore, LLP, the accounting firm that hosted the awards. "We're happy to make people aware of the inspiring things they do."

In addition to Southern Bancorp, the other winners include:

- Bank of Tennessee — Kingsport, Tennessee
- Fifth Third Bank — Charlotte, North Carolina

- Paragon National Bank — Memphis, Tennessee

- The Peoples Bank — Biloxi, Mississippi

- The little bank — Kinston, North Carolina

The winners were honored at an awards banquet in Atlanta this month. Sponsors of the event include Porter Keadle Moore, LLP, law firm Bryan Cave, LLP as well as Banker's Dashboard, FIG Partners LLC and Fidelity National Information Services.

About Southern Bancorp

Southern Bancorp is a \$1 billion rural development bank that serves 80,000 customers in Arkansas and Mississippi and works to transform rural economies by stimulating investments in people, jobs, businesses, and property. Since 1988, Southern has provided over \$2.3 billion in loans in high poverty areas and launched comprehensive community development initiatives attracting over \$100 million in new investments in distressed rural communities. **DBJ**