



***BAI Banking Strategies* Names FirstMerit Corp. Executive ‘Maverick Banker of the Year’**

Executive vice president in retail banking applies unconventional methods to improve deposit growth and profitability.

CHICAGO — May 6, 2009 — *BAI Banking Strategies* yesterday named FirstMerit Corp.’s Julie A. Grossi “Maverick Banker of the Year.” The award recognizes Executive Vice President Grossi’s innovative approaches to generating deposits and achieving profitability growth at the Akron, Ohio-based company. Ms. Grossi received the award last night at the annual BAI Mavericks in Banking held in Chicago.

The *BAI Banking Strategies* “Maverick Banker of the Year” award was launched in 2008 in conjunction with BAI Mavericks in Banking – a radically different creative forum and community for an exclusive group of executives who thrive on innovative ways to address business challenges. The forum encourages open debate among executives who are energized by the business challenges and inevitable changes that face the retail banking industry. The “Maverick Banker of the Year” was chosen from a group of finalists from a variety of financial services organizations. Each finalist was a thought leader who helped their organization unleash new ideas to better connect with and serve customers while enabling their people to achieve great results. The “Maverick Banker of the Year” award, BAI Mavericks in Banking forum, and its associated online community are brought to the industry with exclusive sponsorship from Microsoft Corp.

“With all the issues facing the retail financial services industry today – customer confidence, credit and risk management, and increased regulatory oversight – it would be easier for bankers to revert to familiar, traditional ways of doing business,” said Debbie Bianucci, president and chief executive officer of BAI. “BAI applauds Ms. Grossi’s and FirstMerit Corp.’s results in growing deposits and delivering innovative banking solutions to their customers.”

“At FirstMerit we encourage and embrace new and exciting ways to reach our customers and it is an honor to be recognized for all of the great work we do,” said Grossi. “What makes us all mavericks is we are leading our industry towards a more customer focused model. From the tremendous success of our Reality Checking and Savings products, our 24 hour call center to our creative advertising, we drive change that gives true benefits to our customers. Our customers have let us know that we are different and they like it - average core deposits were up by 9.2 percent at the end of 2008 compared with a year ago. We are the bank everyone wants to go to.”

Since Ms. Grossi joined FirstMerit in January 2007, she has been instrumental in designing and implementing strategic marketing initiatives that enabled the bank to grow low-cost core deposits and enhance customer loyalty during a period of nearly unprecedented turmoil in the financial services industry. Of particular note is FirstMerit’s non-interest “Reality Checking” program, which attracts customers with various free features and benefits.

“As banks look for new ways to generate revenue, they are beginning to focus on providing innovative services that can help attract new customers, deepen and extend relationships with long-term clients and expand opportunities to cross-sell more products to existing customers,” said Rich Feldmann, industry solution director for Microsoft Corp. “Microsoft is proud to work with BAI on the Mavericks in Banking program to create a dialogue for forward-thinking leaders and congratulates all Mavericks in their efforts to help deliver innovation and value to banking customers.”

Finalists for the *BAI Banking Strategies* “Maverick Banker of the Year” award, also honored at the BAI Mavericks in Banking forum, included Stephen M. Ellis, executive vice president for Wells Fargo & Co., San Francisco; Paul Halpern, senior vice president for E*Trade Financial Corp., New York, N.Y.; Daniel H. Hoke, senior vice president for Minneapolis-based U.S. Bancorp; and Mark D.

Quinlan, executive vice president and chief information officer for Associated Banc-Corp., Green Bay, Wisc.

www.bai.org/mavericksinbanking

About *BAI Banking Strategies*

BAI Banking Strategies, updated monthly online, presents the latest in best practices and thought leadership through in-depth and unbiased editorial coverage. With access to so many industry newsmakers and innovators, no other online publication is better positioned to interpret and cover the strategic and managerial trends in today's complex and dynamic financial services industry. For more information, go to www.bai.org/bankingstrategies.

About BAI

BAI is the financial services industry's partner for breakthrough information and intelligence needed to innovate and stay relevant in an evolving marketplace. For more than 80 years, we have focused on advancing the industry by offering unbiased education and research. Our offerings are as diverse as the industry, and include premier events such as BAI Retail Delivery Conference & Expo, ground-breaking research and performance metrics, professional learning and development programs, and in-depth editorial coverage through *BAI Banking Strategies*. Learn more at www.BAI.org.

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