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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Howe Barnes Hoefler & Arnett, Inc. Announces New Appointment in Research**

**February 2, 2009, Chicago, IL-** Howe Barnes Hoefler & Arnett announces the appointment of Mark Muth as Vice President in its research department. Mr. Muth will provide equity research and analysis on community banking organizations throughout the Southeast United States. Mr. Muth will be located in the newly opened Nashville, Tennessee office of Howe Barnes.

Prior to joining Howe Barnes, Mr. Muth was the Senior Research Analyst for FTN Midwest Securities Corporation, an institutional brokerage firm based in Cleveland and a subsidiary of Memphis-based First Horizon. Mr. Muth was ranked #4 of 125 bank analysts on *Wall Street Journal's* 2007 "Best on the Street" Analysts Survey and has 10 years of experience in the financial industry. Mr. Muth received his B.A. from University of Tennessee, Knoxville, Tennessee.

"I am delighted to have Mark join Howe Barnes given the firm's ties to the community banking space and Mark's prior coverage of southeast and mid-Atlantic community banks. Mark is an outstanding analyst who focuses on fundamentals in addition to developing strong ties with both bank management and institutional investors. I established a great working relationship with him over the past six years when he worked for me at FTN and I am excited about reestablishing our relationship," commented Jeff Davis, Senior Vice President and Director of Research.

Established in 1915, Howe Barnes Hoefler & Arnett, Inc. is a full service brokerage firm headquartered in Chicago, IL with offices in six states throughout the U.S. Through its equity capital markets, research, investment banking, private equity and asset finance services departments, Howe Barnes specializes in community banks and thrifts. Through its private client services department, the firm provides investment advice and products to both individual and institutional customers. Howe Barnes Hoefler & Arnett is the exclusive provider of capital markets services for the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA). The firm delivers fixed income products and services through a strategic initiative with Vining Sparks IBG, Memphis, Tennessee.

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