

HOWARD, MERRELL & PARTNERS

For more information:

Laura Gross

919-844-2768

lgross@merrellgroup.com

Bank Independent Names Howard, Merrell & Partners Agency of Record

RALEIGH, N.C. – October 11, 2010 – Strategic branding and advertising firm Howard, Merrell & Partners has been selected as agency of record for Bank Independent. In this role, Howard, Merrell & Partners will provide public relations support as well as media planning and buying for the leading community bank in North Alabama.

“The agency’s expertise in corporate communications and media strategy is what we need as we look to expand our reach,” said Jane Rea, director of marketing and communications, Bank Independent. “We are excited to share our story of great service and knowledge with the community we serve.”

Bank Independent is a locally owned bank serving six counties in North Alabama and has invested more than \$670 million dollars in their local economy through loans to their businesses and customers.

“We are looking forward to partnering with Bank Independent as it looks to grow its presence in North Alabama,” said Jim Cobb, CEO, Howard, Merrell & Partners. “Our team is already hard at work developing strategies to build awareness about everything this community bank offers.”

About Howard, Merrell & Partners

Raleigh, NC-based Howard, Merrell & Partners Inc., founded 65 years ago, is a pioneer in understanding and applying the power of emotions to develop effective business and communications strategies. While much has changed since 1945, the agency still works to maintain the same virtues that Jack Howard and his predecessors used to build the agency over the years. Agency service offerings include brand development, creative development and production, consumer insight research, public relations, media asset services, event planning and management, social media, interactive services, Hispanic marketing and strategic account management.

Recent clients include BASF Plant Science, Butterball, Canvas on Demand, Central Aquatics, CHD Meridian Healthcare, Cisco, Colonial Bank, Component Hardware Group, Doctors Vision

Center, El Pueblo, Inc., Georgia-Pacific Professional (Dixie[®] and enMotion[®]), Hewlett-Packard, Interton, Invacare, INVISTA (CORDURA[®] brand), National Humanities Center, NC Beautiful, O2 Fitness, Oliver Twist Restaurant, ReSound, Safe Quality Food Institute, THOR•LO, UltraPet, and Zilla. The agency's work has been honored by the Telly Awards, the Addys, Graphis, The London International Advertising Awards, The Communicator Awards, Sir Walter Raleigh Awards, Hermes Creative Awards, The InSpire Awards and the North American Precis Syndicate. For more information, visit <http://www.merrellgroup.com> or the agency's blog at <http://www.merrellgroup.com/blog>.