



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Jennifer Trussell, Marketing Director

The First, A National Banking Association

[www.TheFirstBank.com](http://www.TheFirstBank.com)

(601) 450-8888

### **The First, A National Banking Association, Awards \$25,000 to Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp. for Business Lending**

GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI, April 18, 2013 – According to the Small Business Administration, Small businesses make up 99.7 percent of U.S. employer firms and 64 percent on net new private sector jobs of the U.S. economy. Also, in 2010 there were 27.9 million small businesses. The First wants to help keep the economy growing and support small business development, which is why they awarded \$25,000 to Gulf Coast Renaissance to further their business lending efforts.

“We support small business development and help entrepreneurs realize their dreams of starting a business,” stated Ray Wesson, President of The First, A National Banking Association’s Southern Region. “Gulf Coast Renaissance has been directly involved in supporting these initiatives, and we are excited to be a partner in their effort as we award them \$25,000 to specifically continue that mission,” continued Wesson.

“Because of The First, Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp. will be given even greater opportunity to fulfill our role as an organization that creates viable solutions for the betterment of Mississippi,” said Kimberly LaRosa, president and CEO of Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp. “We are deeply grateful to The First’s board of directors and staff for bestowing their confidence and trust on our organization, and we look forward to supporting further sustainable business growth in our region through this generous grant.”

Gulf Coast Renaissance Corp., founded in 2007 by several South Mississippi business leaders in the wake of Hurricane Katrina’s devastation, is a nonprofit community development financial institution focused on developing communities for the purpose of providing safe, quality housing solutions and economic opportunities. Through many community partnerships, GCRC has made the dream of homeownership a reality for more than 900 families, resulting in an economic impact of approximately \$112.5 million in South Mississippi. In September 2011, GCRC launched the Small Business Development Fund to stimulate the economic development efforts of the organization.

## About The First

The First, A National Banking Association founded in 1996, has operations in Hattiesburg, Laurel, Purvis, Picayune, Pascagoula, Bay St. Louis, Wiggins, Gulfport, Biloxi, Long Beach, Ocean Springs, and Diamondhead, Mississippi as well as Bogalusa, Louisiana. The Company's stock is traded on NASDAQ Global Market under the symbol FBMS. As of December 31, 2012, The Company had total assets of \$721.4 million. Additional information is available on the Company's website: [www.TheFirstBank.com](http://www.TheFirstBank.com).

For photos from the event:

Jennifer Trussell, The First

601-450-8888

[jtrussell@thefirstbank.com](mailto:jtrussell@thefirstbank.com)

Denise Carver, Gulf Coast Renaissance

228-896-3386

[dcarver@msgcrc.com](mailto:dcarver@msgcrc.com)

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