



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Becki Drahota of Storm Lake, Iowa Named the 2007
Iowa Small Business Person of the Year by SBA**

(DES MOINES, Iowa) – The U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA) has named Becki Drahota, of Mills Financial Marketing in Storm Lake, as its 2007 Iowa Small Business Person of the Year.

In recognition of the small business community's contributions to the American economy and society, the President of the United States designates one week each year as National Small Business Week. Scheduled for the week of April 23rd of this year, Small Business Week 2007 will honor the estimated 25 million small businesses in America. Since its establishment in 1963, the highlight of this annual tradition is the presentation of awards which focus on the outstanding contributions of small business persons and champions at the district, state and national levels.

As the 2007 Iowa Small Business Person of the Year, Becki will represent Iowa at National Small Business Week ceremonies in Washington, D.C. April 23-24, 2007 where she will compete for the National Award.

Becki is a Storm Lake native, who for 31 years has created a unique niche and filled it with a one-of-a-kind company exclusively serving the financial industry with integrated marketing solutions. She started Mills Financial Marketing (MFM) in June of 1975 at the age of 25, and has since grown the company from one account to clients in 15 states. Her firm provides market and customer research, strategic planning, brand development, creative execution, public relations and training to banks, credit unions and other companies serving the financial industry. Annual billings for the last three years average \$1.44 million.

As Becki built MFM, she infused the company with a strong mission to help clients succeed by providing a unique menu of continually expanding resources, including regulatory compliance and merchandising support as clients' needs have grown. The firm still actively works for its first client and is a significant exception to the marketing industry client churn percentages, with many MFM clients having tenures of more than a decade. MFM's expanding client roster includes century banks, mature market leaders, de novos, and regional independent banks and is a testament to the company's efficient, effective service delivery and strong client relationships.

In 2006, MFM clients won ten *Best of Iowa* Awards, including best of show. The *Best of Iowa* is the state-wide advertising and marketing competition for members of the Iowa Bankers Association (IBA). The IBA sponsors the Best of Iowa Competition to give deserved recognition to those bank marketers who are responsible for creating and executing successful marketing and advertising programs that enhance the image of their banks and contribute to profitability. MFM clients also brought home two National Awards from the American Bankers Association conference, further solidifying MFM's reputation as one of the best in the business.

MFM has 11 employees, with the majority located in the main office in Becki's hometown of Storm Lake, Iowa. There is also a "distance employee" in the branch office in Portland, Oregon. Becki fosters an environment of entrepreneurship and empowerment within her team and despite the challenges of selling a community of 10,000 that's more than two hours away from a major metropolitan area, Becki has been able to recruit and maintain an outstanding workforce and has never laid off an employee in three decades.

Becki also believes strongly in her community, receiving the Outstanding Woman in Business award from her hometown, where she and the MFM team actively support civic and charitable causes. She is also an increasingly sought after guest speaker.

An honors graduate of Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa, Becki was Drake's 2001 Distinguished Alumni Achievement Award recipient. She completed her Executive MBA in August 2003 from the University of Nebraska Omaha (UNO). She currently serves on the UNO's College of Business Administration Advisory Council with an emphasis on the Entrepreneurship Institute. She was the recipient of the of UNO's 2004-2005 Distinguished Alumni Award. In 2005, she became a Trustee of Buena Vista University in Storm Lake and serves on the Student Services and Marketing Committees.

Iowa Governor Tom Vilsack appointed Becki to the Iowa Workforce Council in 2002. She was the first woman to be accepted into membership in her Rotary International chapter. Becki is also a Paul Harris Fellow as well as a former president of the Storm Lake Chamber and is a Presbyterian Elder.

Becki and her husband Richard, a VP at Heritage Bank in Storm Lake, have two daughters. Sarah is the Public Relations Director at MFM, and Abby, is the Policy Grants Manager for Women in Government in Washington DC.

Becki can be contacted for comment at:

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