



F&M BANK RECEIVES TOP RECOGNITION FOR FINANCIAL SAFETY AND SOUNDNESS

DATELINE: *Lodi, Calif., March 20, 2009...* Kent A. Steinwert, President and Chief Executive Officer of Farmers & Merchants Bank of Central California proudly announced that F&M Bank has been recognized by *The Findley Companies*, California's preeminent bank advisory and consulting firm, as the **Best Performing Large Bank in California**.

In *The Findley Reports* March 2009 Newsletter, Findley stated "What is important in evaluating the 2008 performance for F&M Bank is that net income was \$23.9 million which was in excess of a 15% return on average equity for 2008; an exceptional performance." Findley Reports continued, "Operating in the Central Valley is a very difficult challenge based upon the current economic condition; however, F&M Bank has shown that it has been able to continue to build the franchise, add value to the shareholders and be an important part of the community."

The selection of F&M Bank as the best performing large bank in California in 2008, comes on the heels of another top recognition for the Bank. *BauerFinancial, Inc.*, one of the most respected national bank rating firms, announced that F&M Bank has once again earned the **highest 5-Star Superior** rating for financial strength and stability. The 5-Star rating is based on the overall financial condition and performance of the Bank and indicates that F&M Bank is one of the strongest banks in the nation. **This is the 71st consecutive quarter that F&M Bank has earned this highest honor. Only 7% of the nation's banks can claim this distinction.**

"Management and the Board's number one priority is to keep F&M Bank safe and secure for years to come. Thus, we are extremely proud that *The Findley Reports* and *BauerFinancial, Inc.* have recognized F&M Bank as one of the strongest banks in California. These enviable ratings acknowledge the Board of Directors and management's success in building F&M Bank into one of California's most secure and solid financial institutions. Our continued success is also reflective of our longstanding commitment to deliver outstanding personalized customer service and to reinvest in the communities we serve," stated Steinwert.

Founded in 1916, Farmers & Merchants Bank of Central California, also known as F&M Bank, is a full service, locally owned and operated community bank with \$1.7 billion in assets. F&M Bank proudly serves California's Great Central Valley through 24 convenient locations from Sacramento to Merced.

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