

For Immediate Release

**BUSINESS OWNERS MAKE THEIR MONEY
WORK HARDER IN CHALLENGING ENVIRONMENT**

JONESBORO, Ga. (April 24, 2006) — As energy prices and interest rates continue to rise, small and mid-size businesses are finding it more difficult to maintain or improve their profit margins. Some of these businesses are taking a fresh approach to this challenging environment by making their hard-earned dollars work harder for them.

“We’re in a growth-oriented economy, but pressures from energy prices and rising interest rates are squeezing the profit margins on a lot of small and mid-size businesses,” said Leonard Moreland, CEO of Heritage Bank. “Businesses are upbeat about sales and growth potential; it’s just a matter of finding ways to maximize what they’re doing. An increasing number of business owners and managers are changing or diversifying their financial resources to include banking products that help improve their return on investment and sustain that return over several years.”

Rising interest rates are projected to continue over the next several months, which will further eat into profit margins for any business that borrows to meet their short and long term capital requirements.

For service-oriented businesses that rely heavily on transportation, gasoline prices also continue to increase and already are pushing three-dollars a gallon, which initially wasn’t expected until the vacation-heavy summer months. Similarly, businesses that rely on disposable income such as restaurants, retailers, movie theatres and various types of recreation also are sensitive to the increased cost of living and doing business.

“The good news is that the job market is strong and metro-Atlanta continues to be a growth-oriented region,” said Moreland. “We don’t expect this to change. But business owners and managers should take a more sophisticated approach to investing in their businesses given the changing financial environment. There are ways to improve the profitability of a business without changing the way you do business.”

Ray Johnson, owner of Racetrack Auto Parts in Henry County and Tara Auto Parts in Clayton County, recently took stock of his cash flow and earnings and made some adjustments that already are benefiting his businesses.

“Business is good and we’re optimistic about the future, but you’ve got to watch the details,” said Johnson. “Rising interest rates seem like a little thing, but they’re like anything else; you can ignore them and take your chances, or you can turn them into an opportunity and become stronger. Because they (interest rates) keep going up, we made some adjustments that will actually make us stronger without affecting our daily operations.”

Traditional business banking products include free checking, money market accounts, variable and fixed APR loans, cash management services, and lines of credit. In some cases, these products are used in ways to help save money, while in other cases they are used to help increase revenue.

“This is not a one size fits all situation,” said Moreland. “Our team worked with Ray and developed a program that benefits his business. While every business is different, the principles that we applied to help Ray can help almost any business save money and increase profitability.”

This customized approach to business also has helped Heritage Bank with its own business. Earnings per share at CCF Holding Company, the holding company for Heritage Bank, increased 34 percent between January 1 and March 31, 2006, over the same period in 2005.

Heritage Bank, a state chartered commercial bank, has been serving metro Atlanta’s Southern Crescent since 1955. The independent community bank has seven full service offices, features a well-rounded offering of commercial and consumer products, and is an active, involved member of the community it serves. The company’s stock is traded on The Nasdaq Small Cap Market under the symbol “CCFH.” For more information, please call 770-478-8881 or visit the Heritage Bank website at www.heritagebank.com.

#

Contact:

Matt O’Connor, McRae Communications, (770) 460-7277 ext. 224