



# *NEWS RELEASE*

## **PRESS OFFICE**

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Release Date: **April 23, 2007**  
Release Number: **07-12**

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### *Associated Bank Wins National SBA Excellence In Lending Award*

**Milwaukee:** **Associated Bank** has been announced as one of just four financial institutions from across the United States to win the SBA's 2007 Excellence in Lending Award.

SBA Excellence in Lending awards recognize two 7(a) Loan lenders and two 504 Loan lenders. The awards for each category are based on lender size, portfolio performance and growth in approval volume in the previous fiscal year. Award winners have demonstrated a steadfast commitment to supporting the growth and expansion of small businesses across the country – even beyond the scope of SBA loans.

Associated's award reflected its success in the 7(a) loan category for an SBA loan portfolio of more than \$100 million. The other 7(a) winner had a portfolio of less than \$100 million.

Associated Bank, based in Green Bay, Wis., has a vast working knowledge of SBA programs and a genuine interest in the success of small businesses. Associated holds both SBA Preferred and Express Lender designations that allow the bank to underwrite SBA loans quickly and efficiently.

Associated has been the top SBA 7(a) lender in Wisconsin for the past two years. Over those two years, the bank has made SBA-backed loans amounting to \$92.5 million to 623 small businesses. The bank shares its expertise with other lenders and also aims to serve women and minority entrepreneurs. Associated also sponsors a radio program hosted by SCORE.

"I am extremely proud to have Associated Bank, a Wisconsin-based bank, named as the U.S. Small Business Administration's national 2007 Excellence in Lending Award winner," said Eric Ness, Wisconsin SBA District Director. "Associated Bank's deep commitment to the small-business community is evident in the ever increasing number of small businesses they have helped to start, grow and become successful utilizing SBA loan programs."

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“Associated is excited to receive this prestigious national honor from the SBA,” said Paul Beideman, chairman and CEO of Associated Banc-Corp, parent company of Associated Bank. “Being selected is a reflection of our bankers’ commitment to working with businesses and providing the resources, tools and financial solutions they need.

“SBA-backed loans are a valuable option for many start-ups and growing businesses. We are pleased to include them in our comprehensive list of business banking services,” Beideman said.

Representatives from Associated Bank, along with other national winners, will receive their awards and be honored on Monday, April 23, in Washington, D.C at an evening reception at the U.S. Department of State (Diplomatic Reception Room) as part of the 2-day annual ***National Small Business Week Celebration.***

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*Additional information about SBA’s programs and services is available at SBA’s Web site: [www.sba.gov](http://www.sba.gov) and Wisconsin’s SBA Website: [www.sba.gov/wi](http://www.sba.gov/wi)*