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For immediate release

FWI Leadership Gap Study Reveals Opportunity for Women Leaders Association positioned to help banking organizations bridge the gap

ROSEVILLE, MN (4/09/2007) -- Financial Women International, the longest-standing association devoted to the advancement of women in the banking and financial services industry, and its Foundation released a ground-breaking study, *The Leadership Gap*.

The FWI Foundation conducted a survey of community banks with a focus on the impact that the pending boomer retirement explosion would have on community banking. FWI conducted the survey in cooperation with the Independent Community Bankers of America (ICBA) and Red Ladder, Inc.

The leadership gap was defined as the shortage of experienced leadership – a void or gap – created in the next 5-10 years as some 78 million baby boomers begin to retire. Of 168 survey respondents:

- 52% agreed their bank is at risk of losing top talent
- 60% agreed their bank will need to cultivate a broader talent pool from which to draw leaders, including women and minorities

"Financial Women International has had a legacy of achievement and success in developing women leaders in the banking and financial services industry since 1921," stated Nancy Kinder, president. "*The Leadership Gap* study provides another opportunity for FWI to provide value to our members and their organizations."

Since 1976, the FWI Foundation has taken the lead in developing women leaders by providing the tools to fulfill their individual potential and further their contribution in the workplace. In the coming months, FWI will work with Minnesota-based Red Ladder, Inc., to develop several key training programs focused on the core leadership competencies identified as most critical in the next five to ten years. When rank-ordered, the top five competencies included communication, problem solving and decision making, personal integrity, vision, and planning and goal setting.

In addition, FWI launched a new magazine, *Today's Financial Women*, to coincide with the release of *The Leadership Gap* Study.

"Effective leadership is critical to the long term success and viability of any organization," stated Cindy Haas, Financial Women International Foundation Chair. "It is critical that we begin to prepare leaders now - particularly women - or we will put our organizations and ultimately our customers, at risk."

For more information about Financial Women International, please visit www.fwi.org or call toll-free 866-236-2007.

Financial Women International and its Foundation are dedicated to developing leaders, accelerating careers, and generating results for professionals in the banking and financial

services industry. Membership is comprised of financial executives representing all 50 states, Canada, and Russia.

ICBA represents the largest constituency of community banks of all sizes and charter types in the nation, and is dedicated exclusively to protecting the interests of the community banking industry. Learn more at www.icba.org.

Red Ladder, Inc., is an organizational and leadership development consulting firm specializing in the banking and financial services industry. Learn more at www.redladder.com.

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