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## At its inaugural recognition breakfast, F&M Bank honors local leaders and loyal customers

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Farmers & Merchants CEO W. Henry Walker, Mark Schneider, Richard Blade, Blair Cohn, Thomas Rhoads, Dr. Myrvin Ellestad (sitting), Rod Wilson, George Murchison, Wayne Piercy, Ken Walker (sitting), Cindy Atkinson, Peter Pettler, Kevin MacDonald, Christine Walker and F&M President and Chairman of the Board Dan Walker at the bank's first "People You Can Bank On" breakfast

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They are business owners, educators, community leaders, and, as the members of Farmers & Merchants' Bank (F&M) like to personally call them, "people you can bank on." Eleven individuals from Long Beach, Signal Hill and surrounding cities were honored for their notable impact on the community at F&M's inaugural "People You Can Bank On" breakfast on Aug. 25.

F&M executive associates, branch managers and guests gathered at the Virginia Country Club to pay tribute to and recognize the contributions of the honorees chosen as part of the customer-recognition program.

“They are men and women from different communities, industries and backgrounds who are united by an unyielding commitment to good will and progress,” said F&M CEO W. Henry Walker. “We’re recognizing those individuals who are successful in their industry during such a challenging time in the economy.”

Among the 2011 honorees were: Mark Schneider, award-winning owner of Dave Schneider Jewelry; Cal State Long Beach business professor Thomas J. Rhoads; Kevin MacDonald, CEO of The Arc in Artesia; Cindy Atkinson, owner of the Coffee Cup Café in Belmont Shore and co-founder of the Cranium Crusaders; Blair Cohn, executive director of the Bixby Knolls Business Improvement Association; Rod Wilson, president and CEO of Pacific Research and Strategies, Inc.; Wayne Piercy, former mayor of Lakewood and former principal of Long Beach Poly High School; George M. Murchison, former Port of Long Beach harbor commissioner; Dr. Myrvin Ellestad, former Long Beach Memorial Hospital Chief of Cardiology; Richard Blade, owner of six local McDonald’s restaurants and board member for Camp Ronald McDonald for Good Times; and Peter D. Pettler, local attorney and former U.S. Army Lieutenant Colonel. Nominations were accepted from the Long Beach and South Bay region branches, and various names were presented to a selection committee, which chose the honorees, and each of those individuals’ respective branch managers provided introductions and plaques at the ceremony.

The honorees have, and in most cases, still play prominent roles within both Long Beach and Signal Hill. Ellestad has been banking with the organization for 61 years now, served as the physician to bank patriarchs Gus and Ken Walker, and authored 185 research papers and six textbooks. Rhoads is a third-generation Long Beach resident who has been teaching business law for about 20 percent of the students in the College of Business. Schneider holds leadership positions with the Long Beach Rotary and is a volunteer advisor on career planning to the Gemological Institute of America.

“It’s wonderful to be recognized,” Rhoads said. “...to have done what I’ve been doing and then have someone come along, like the bank, to recognize me.” Main branch manager Jeffrey Parrish was a student of Rhoads and had the honor of presenting his award at the ceremony. “He speaks from practicality and takes teaching to what it is at its core.”

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F&M Chairman of the Board and President Daniel Walker served as master of ceremonies, and concluded the morning celebration on a high note. “There are other individuals that need recognition so we will have more of these events over and over again,” he said.