



Greater Florence Chamber of Commerce
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Subject: Business Person of the Year and Chamber Champ
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F. R. "Rick" Saunders was presented the most coveted award at the Chamber's 90th Annual Dinner held on September 6th, 2007.

The Greater Florence Chamber Business Person was recognized for his outstanding contributions to the region. Charles K. Williams, committee chairman of the Business Person of the Year sponsored by Wachovia, presented the award to Mr. Saunders.

Rick began his banking career in 1983 at Pee Dee State Bank. While at the bank, he worked his way into the management of the bank and at the time of the merger with Centura, was a senior executive and board member. In 1998, seeing an opportunity to establish a locally owned bank, he joined with his brother Paul and friend Dale Porter to organize First Reliance Bank. They started with 12 employees in a modular unit and now employ nearly 170 people. The bank has since expanded outside of the Pee Dee to Lexington, Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, Greenville, Rock Hill and Myrtle Beach; and has assets of approximately \$510 million. First Reliance Bank has been named 4 times as the Top 25 Fastest Growing Companies in South Carolina and was named one the Best Places to Work in South Carolina in 2006 and 2007. Rick was also recently named the 2007 Ernst & Young Entrepreneur of the Year for the Carolinas.



The Chamber Champ of the Year Award was presented to Tom Kinard of Pee Dee Electric Cooperative, Inc. for his contributions to the Chamber. Kinard is a graduate of Leadership Florence and has served on the Board of Directors. He has supported the Annual Membership Dinner, Chamber Golf Classics, and the Chamber Auction.