

Sandler O’Neill Research Analysts Honored by *Financial Times/StarMine* and *Wall Street Journal*

Firm Demonstrates Research Depth as Five Analysts Earn Highest Industry Honors

New York – June 4, 2012 – Sandler O’Neill + Partners, L.P., a full-service investment banking firm specializing in financial services companies, today announced that five of its analysts were recognized by the *Financial Times/StarMine* and *The Wall Street Journal* “Best on the Street” annual analyst surveys.

The three Sandler O’Neill analysts recognized by the *Financial Times/StarMine* are:

- Mark Fitzgibbon, Principal and Director of Research – First place stock picker for commercial banking sector
- Devin Ryan, Managing Director – First place earnings estimator for the capital markets sector
- Frank Schiraldi, Managing Director – Second place stock picker for thrifts and mortgage finance companies

Sandler O’Neill today also noted the recognition of two of the firm’s research analysts by *The Wall Street Journal* “Best on the Street” analyst survey. For 2011, Michael Kim, Managing Director, and Casey Orr, Associate Director, each ranked as the nation’s No. 3 stock pickers for the Investment Services and Banks categories, respectively.

“These honors, particularly since they were earned by several members of our team, are gratifying. What truly drives us is bringing clients new insights on financial companies and identifying undervalued investment opportunities,” said Fitzgibbon, who has led Sandler O’Neill’s research department since 2000. “Some investment banks have retrenched their coverage of financials following some challenging and uncertain years. We have deepened our resources and expanded our coverage, believing that a changing environment makes independent, fundamental analysis more valuable than ever to institutional investors.”

Sandler O’Neill publishes research on more than 320 financial companies, including more banks and thrifts than any other investment banking firm.

About Sandler O’Neill + Partners, L.P.

Founded in 1988, Sandler O’Neill + Partners is a full-service investment banking firm dedicated to providing comprehensive, innovative advisory and transaction execution services to the financial industry. The firm specializes in strategic business planning, mergers and acquisitions, capital markets, mutual-to-stock conversions, investment portfolio and interest rate risk management, fixed income securities transactions and mortgage finance restructurings. Sandler O’Neill also is a market maker in hundreds of financial stocks and publishes equity and fixed income research focused on selected banks, thrifts and insurance companies, investment banks, asset managers, specialty finance companies, e-finance companies, real estate investment trusts, financial technology companies and transaction execution companies. Additional information about Sandler O’Neill can be found on the firm’s website at www.sandleroneill.com.

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