

## **AMERICAN BANKER TO HONOR EL BANCO FINANCIAL PRESIDENT LUZ URRUTIA WITH 2006 COMMUNITY BANKER OF THE YEAR AWARD**

NEW YORK CITY – October 18, 2006 — The editors of American Banker will honor Luz Lopez Urrutia, president and chief operating officer of El Banco Financial Corp. in Roswell, Georgia with an American Banker 2006 Community Banker of the Year Award for Advocacy at a gala dinner at New York's Pierre Hotel on Thurs., November 30th.

"El Banco's success is based on a powerful combination of advocacy and business values," said David Longobardi, editor in chief of American Banker. "The company starts with the assumption that business as usual is not enough to win customers in a traditionally underserved segment."

Established in 2001 as Nuestra Tarjeta Servicios Inc. and renamed this summer, El Banco targets the Latino community. Working from a deep understanding of that market's needs, the company blended money services and traditional banking in a way that a traditional institution never would. El Banco leads with remittance and check-cashing capabilities that appeal to the unbanked and under-banked, which represents some 80% of the Latino market.

As El Banco sees it, these groups – many of them recent immigrants -- find banking confusing and intimidating. With that in mind, El Banco designed family-friendly and fully bilingual branches. Most revolutionary, it lets customers work their way "up a ladder" of services, starting with familiar offerings like check cashing and money transfer, and advancing over time to traditional banking.

In an effort to extend its vision, El Banco launched a consulting unit to help other institutions transplant its model. The company licenses its transaction-processing system, which enables banks and retailers to offer versatile and competitively priced check-cashing services.

Founded in 1836, American Banker is the award-winning daily newspaper for the financial services industry. Its annual Banker of the Year Awards honors the individuals who set the highest standards of progress, innovation, and performance in the banking and financial services industry.

Since the inaugural Best in Banking/Banker of the Year Awards dinner and ceremony in 2001, the gala has become the industry's premier event, attracting a who's who of lawmakers, regulators, and leading executives. For information on attending or sponsorship opportunities, please contact Jessica V. Dunlap Yazujian at 212-803-6597.

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