



For Immediate Release

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Eleventh-Annual Merchants Bank 150 Season-opener at Thunder Road Races into Town for the Fiftieth Season Opener!

BARRE, VT —Thomas S. Leavitt, Executive Vice President of Merchants Bank, announced today that the company will roll into the eleventh running of the “Merchants Bank 150” on Sunday, May 3, 2009. This is an American-Canadian Tour event and the season opener for Barre’s Thunder Road International Speedbowl. The event is a NHMS ACT Invitational Qualifier. The program will get underway at 1:00 p.m., with qualifying heat action for all divisions starting at 1:30. The full race card will culminate with the Late Model 150 lap feature showcase.

“Particularly exciting this year is that this is the 50th season opener of Thunder Road, an event that continues to bring us some of the best short-track racing anywhere in the country. ACT’s “best 10 of 12 races” scoring system ensures an exciting competition through the championship campaign. We are pleased to continue to build our tradition of providing Vermont motor sports fans with a big season-opening event. Our Central Vermont team, led by Peggy Henry and Wendy Rea, plan to host another memorable day,” said Leavitt.

Merchants Bank looks forward to a continuing sponsorship of Michaud Motorsports for the 2009 season. The Bank has supported Cris Michaud for the prior four seasons at Barre’s Thunder Road. Michaud (of Northfield, Vermont) earned “King of the Road” distinction as the Thunder Road Late Model division champion in 2001, 2004 and 2005. His consistency has garnered the respect and admiration of fans, fellow racers, and league officials. In 2006 and 2007, Cris raced well again finishing second in the track points championship after each 14-race season behind Chad Wheeler and Dave Pembroke, respectively. Cris finished third in the 2008 ACT season opener at Lee, NH. He went on to a terrific season at Thunder Road, winning four events, including the Governor’s Cup and the Mid-Season Championship. He finished a close second in the Labor Day Classic 200.

“We are proud to be associated with Merchants Bank,” stated Michaud. “We appreciate both their support and all they have done to promote racing in Vermont,” he continued.

Leavitt commented on the Bank's history at Thunder Road. "We have proudly sponsored some outstanding drivers and teams for the past 13 years, moving into our second decade with the Merchants Bank 150. We look forward to crowning the 2009 champion."

Prior Merchants Bank 150 Winners

1999 – Phil Scott

2000 – Tracie Bellerose

2001 – Ken Dufour

2002 – Jean Paul Cyr

2003 – Scott Dragon

2004 – Jean Paul Cyr

2005 – Dave Pembroke

2006 – Jean Paul Cyr

2007 – Scott Payea

2008 – Scott Payea

Vermont Matters.[®] Merchants Bank strives to provide funding to support organizations with programs and services throughout Vermont that help meet basic needs; advance environmental initiatives, energy efficiency and awareness; and promote community enrichment through local sports related initiatives. The continuing mission of Merchants Bank is to provide Vermonters with a state-wide community bank that blends a strong technology platform with a genuine appreciation for local markets. Merchants Bank fulfills this commitment through a branch-based system that includes 34 community bank offices and 42 ATMs throughout Vermont, Personal Bankers dedicated to top-quality customer service and streamlined solutions, including: Personal Banking with *CashRewards Checking*sm, *Free Checking for Life*[®], a low-cost Money Market Account, Free Online Banking and Bill Pay, Overdraft Coverage, Direct Deposit, Free Debit Card, and Free Automated Phone Banking; Business Banking with Rewards Checking for Business, Business Online Banking and Bill Pay, Business Lines of Credit and Merchant Card Processing; Small Business Loans; Health Savings Accounts; Credit Cards; Flexible Certificates of Deposit; Vehicle Loans; Home Equity Credit; Home Mortgages. **Visit mbvt.com for information.** Merchants' stock is traded on the NASDAQ National Market system under the symbol MBVT. Member FDIC. Equal Housing Lender.

For information about Thunder Road, please visit www.thunderroadspeedbowl.com or call (802) 244-6963.

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