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**ACCION IN ALABAMA ANNOUNCES
INTEREST “BUY DOWN” PROGRAM FOR
SMALL BUSINESS LOANS
IN BIRMINGHAM’S WOODLAWN AREA**

*The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham
and The Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation*

*Will Jointly Fund Venture Encouraging Small Business Development
in Historic Neighborhood*

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. – Accion in Alabama – an extension of the nation’s largest microlender, Accion Texas Inc. – announces an interest “buy down” program that will help boost small business development in Birmingham’s historic Woodlawn area.

Utilizing a jointly funded grant of \$100,000 from the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and the Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation, the pilot program will enable the nonprofit lender to offer small business loans up to \$25,000 at 2 percent interest. The lower interest rate will make it possible for many struggling small business owners to obtain start-up or operating capital when they do not qualify for commercial bank loans. In addition to a lower interest rate, borrowers will also receive technical assistance and other important education and services. The pilot program targets existing and start-up businesses in the following zip codes: 35206, 35212, 35217 and 35222.

Anyone interested in this opportunity can learn more by calling 1-888-215-2373 or by coming by the Accion office at One 55th Place South in Woodlawn for a consultation. Hours are 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.



Accion in Alabama opened its Birmingham office in January and to date has made 15 small business loans totaling nearly \$200,000 – primarily in the Birmingham area. This new program will help increase that number dramatically.

“This partnership is an opportunity to increase economic development and employment opportunities in Woodlawn, part of our focus on increasing economic security across our community,” said James McCrary, Vice President of Grants and Evaluation for the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham. “We believe Accion’s experience will help our collaboration with the Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation to achieve maximum impact.”

“We are pleased to participate in this unique pilot project with the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham,” said Carol Butler, Executive Director of the Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation. “In partnership with Accion Alabama, we have the potential to substantially grow successful small businesses in the Woodlawn area while supporting the work of Woodlawn United to revitalize this historic community.”

Birmingham Mayor William A. Bell said the buy-down program represents an important partnership. “I am very excited about the revitalization efforts currently underway in the Woodlawn community. The Woodlawn Buy Down program is just another example of how successful public and private partnerships can yield positive results in our neighborhoods and create redevelopment opportunities that serve to enhance the City’s economic recovery targets.”

Elizabeth Barbaree-Tasker, Chief Operating Officer of ONB/Main Street Birmingham, a non-profit organization that partners with the City of Birmingham to improve the quality of life for neighborhood residents by the revitalization of their commercial cores, enthusiastically supports this new initiative to assist with a “renaissance” of the Woodlawn area. “A lack of access to even small loans is a barrier our business coaching clients consistently run up against. This program opens the door for more small businesses to grow, create jobs and join the revitalization efforts in Woodlawn,” she said.

“The buy down program is a natural for our overall vision of both strengthening existing businesses and launching new ones within this diverse community. We are ready to help in any way we can,” she said.

Accion Texas Inc. President and CEO Janie Barrera said the collaboration will help her organization’s mission gain a stronger footing in Birmingham and throughout Alabama. “We are excited about this new initiative and very grateful to the Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham and the Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation for believing in what we do, which is to support entrepreneurs who create jobs and transform lives,” she said. “We do this by extending financing and services to the marginalized and most financially



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fragile: low-wealth individuals and those with damaged or insufficient credit. Quite literally, we help improve lives and communities one small business loan at a time.”

She added that a substantial part of the joint grant will offer technical assistance and other important education and services to assist borrowers who obtain loans under the interest rate buy-down program. Consultations will be available at Accion’s office, One 55th Place South, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

Barrera, who is a member of President Obama’s Advisory Council on Financial Capability, said Accion’s goal is to give a “hand up” to entrepreneurs who don’t have access to traditional forms of capital, eventually making them “bankable” as they grow and prosper.

ABOUT THE COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham is the oldest and largest community foundation in Alabama, dedicated to driving positive change, leveraging gifts from donors and improving the life of the Birmingham region. For more information, contact Director of Communications and Marketing Emily Jones Rushing at 205-327-3806 or erushing@foundationbirmingham.org or go to www.foundationbirmingham.org.

ABOUT THE MIKE & GILLIAN GOODRICH FOUNDATION

The Mike & Gillian Goodrich Foundation was created in 2008 with the primary purpose of engaging in activities that strengthen communities and improve the quality of life for residents of the Greater Birmingham Metropolitan Area and the State of Alabama at large. For more information, contact Executive Director Carol Butler at 205-443-7809.

ABOUT ACCION IN ALABAMA

Accion in Alabama is an extension of Accion Texas Inc., which has been lending money for almost 20 years to aspiring business owners who were unable to obtain financing from traditional sources.

Accion in Alabama’s Birmingham office opened in January 2012 and is headed by Market Manager Lisa Riley. To date, the office has made 13 loans totaling \$167,000 to existing small businesses and startups throughout Alabama.

Accion Texas Inc. is a nonprofit, multi-state microlending company and small business lender that helps new and existing entrepreneurs successfully grow their businesses. Through affordable lending and business development services, Accion Texas is committed to empowering diverse individuals and small businesses that have limited access to traditional sources of capital.



Accion Texas Inc. has the nation's largest microloan portfolio. Since its inception, Accion has made more than 12,500 loans totaling more than \$130 million. Accion now operates in eight states: Alabama, Arkansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Tennessee and Texas. To learn more about Accion's lending options – call 888-215-2373 or visit www.accionalabama.org.

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