

Peoples Bank & Trust**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE****We Put People First.™**

July 17, 2023

Contact: John Gardner, President
Peoples Bank & Trust
888-728-1954
JGardner@BankPBT.com

Peoples Bank & Trust Named Rural Lender of the Year for Illinois

Pana, Ill. – July 18, 2023 – Peoples Bank & Trust is proud to be named Rural Lender of the Year by the Illinois district office of the U. S. Small Business Administration (SBA). The award recognizes Peoples' strong dedication to working with rural businesses to aid economic opportunities and quality of life for communities through SBA Express, SBA 7(a) and other lending options.

The Rural Lender of the Year for Illinois award was presented during a ceremony on Tuesday, July 18. "This award is presented to the SBA 7(a) lender with the best overall performance among rural lending in the category of number of loans," read a notification from Robert "Bo" Steiner, SBA District Director, for the U. S. Small Business Administration Illinois District.

Factors considered in the determination of the prestigious award included, "total loan volume, historical performance and overall coverage of the Peoples Bank & Trust service area" according to the SBA. The communication continued, "Thank you for all you do, and we (the SBA) look forward to continuing to partner with you to help entrepreneurs in Illinois."

"Our focus truly is putting our tagline, We Put People First, into practice every single day." said John Gardner, President of Peoples Bank & Trust. "There are so many hardworking business owners who know their business inside and out and are reliant upon us as business bankers, to share our expertise, guidance and assistance with them." Gardner continued, "They are the true economic engine for our communities. Helping them manage and plan for cash flow and long-term lending solutions is a privilege we take seriously."

Founded in 1954, in Pana, IL, Peoples Bank & Trust operates in 10 locations throughout central Illinois and assists borrowers in these communities and beyond. "This award is recognition of the trusted relationships developed with honest, hardworking business owners in the communities we serve," said Trevor Taylor, Vice President and Credit Lending Manager for Peoples. He continued, "We have achieved SBA Preferred Lending Program (PLP) and SBA Express Lender accreditations. This status means a simplified and faster approval process for all involved."

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Altamont
511 S. Main Street
Altamont, IL 62411

Charleston
1810 Lincoln Avenue
Charleston, IL 61920

Morrisonville
409 Carlin Street
Morrisonville, IL 62546

Palmyra
142 W. State Street
Palmyra, IL 62674

Pana
200 S. Locust Street
Pana, IL 62557

Springfield
2840 Mansion Road
Springfield, IL 62711

Taylorville
1221 Springfield Road
Taylorville, IL 62568

Tower Hill
Route 16
Tower Hill, IL 62571

Waverly
197 W. State Street
Waverly, IL 62692

White Hall
102 S. Main Street
White Hall, IL 62092



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At Peoples Bank & Trust, our Preferred Lending program status means that SBA 7(a) loans, up to \$5 million dollars, are underwritten and approved in-house. Internal underwriting of loans means a more streamlined procedure and less red tape. For borrowers this means Peoples has the ability to deliver quicker approvals than other lenders.

“Simply take a look throughout the state of Illinois and you will see a diverse range of businesses that call our region home. They include farming, agriculture, construction, heavy equipment, manufacturing, and others. The best part is being granted PLP status means we can help any of those types of businesses and more.” Gardner reinforced. “We are a great match for so many organizations looking to grow and expand their companies.”

In each of the communities that Peoples Bank & Trust serves, the bank is focused on being a contributing partner in the community. This focus has provided a proven track record of working with and assisting small businesses, independent businesses, and family-owned businesses.

“While we are honored to be recognized alongside some of the most successful lenders in the country,” Gardner said. “we take even greater pride in doing so while working with local businesses. We pride ourselves on delivering personal service and not a ‘one size fits all’ mentality of so many other lenders.”

When speaking about this ranking and the recognition, John Gardner stated, “We help customers secure lending through a very unique set of policies and procedures developed by our team to benefit our customers. Our business bankers know what it is like to be in the shoes of our customers. We dig deep to identify, locate, and secure loan options that fit their specific needs. Quite simply, we have tools that others don’t.”

This SBA award is the third time in the past few years that Peoples Bank & Trust has received recognition for dedication and serving their customers. In 2021 Peoples Bank & Trust was recognized by the SBA as the 2nd largest PPP lender in the state of Illinois by volume of loans made in a class of lenders under \$1 billion in assets. In 2021, the bank achieved a national ranking as one of the top 12 USDA Rural Development lenders in the United States.

Gardner added, “While these types of awards are appreciated, the best possible recognition we receive is the satisfaction we get from helping so many customers.”

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Peoples Bank & Trust is a locally owned and managed independent community bank with ten offices located in Pana, Taylorville, Altamont, Tower Hill, Charleston, Springfield, Morrisonville, Palmyra, Waverly, and White Hall. Peoples is a full-service bank offering outstanding customer service to consumers, small businesses, and farmers in Central Illinois. People First Bancshares, Inc., with corporate offices in Pana, Illinois, is the holding company for Peoples Bank & Trust.

For more information on Peoples Bank & Trust and their available banking services or how they can help with consumer or business lending needs, contact the bank at 888-728-1954 or visit www.BankPBT.com

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