



For Immediate Release

Media Contact: Ted Abernathy, Executive Director, Southern Growth Policies Board
Office: 919-941-5145, tabernathy@southern.org

**Southern Growth Policies Board Names
Rural Place Building
2010 Innovator Award Winner from Mississippi**

RESEARCH TRIANGLE PARK, NC – Southern Growth Policies Board is pleased to announce The Montgomery Institute's **Rural Place Building** initiative as the recipient of its *2010 Innovator Award from Mississippi*. **Rural Place Building** is helping rural communities in West Alabama and East Mississippi cope with the economic downturn through efforts to identify and build on community assets, promote entrepreneurship and new business development, and bring community leaders together to focus on regional issues and strategies.

The **Rural Place Building** initiative can already point to a number of successes.

To date, Carthage, Newton, Columbus, Noxapater, Heidelberg, Covington County, Marion, Philadelphia, and DeKalb have held workshops that have brought citizens and professionals together to identify community assets and build a common vision or plan for the future. The Mississippi Main Street program has adopted this process for communities throughout the state.

TMI has worked with area community colleges to develop the MyBiz Alabama-Mississippi Network and related website, MyBiz.AM, to help communities develop "grow your own" business strategies as an alternative to industrial recruitment. Today, 2,888 registered users can access 213 service providers through MyBiz.AM.

And, rural communities have banded together to develop regional workforce training programs, such as the Amatrol Anytime Anywhere e-Learning System that provides online access to over 450 virtual training modules. This allows individuals to access training at home, at the workplace, at libraries, and at one-stop career centers.

TMI continues to promote regional solutions by hosting quarterly meetings of mayors from 33 communities as well as regional summits on entrepreneurship, forestry, and regional competitiveness to help regional leaders understand common opportunities and challenges.

Innovator Awards are presented annually to one organization in each of Southern Growth's 13 member states in recognition of initiatives that are improving economic opportunities and quality of life in the region. The 2010 Innovator Awards were chosen from creative initiatives in the region that aim to help communities recover from the recession. One award winner per week will be announced in Southern Growth's e-newsletter, Southern Compass, leading up to an official recognition of all awardees at ***Southern Growth's Chairman's Conference, June 7-8, 2010 in Lexington, Kentucky***. For more information on Southern Growth's Innovator Awards program or Chairman's Conference, contact Ted Abernathy, Executive Director, Southern Growth Policies Board, at (919) 941-5145 or tabernathy@southern.org.

About Southern Growth Policies Board

Southern Growth Policies Board is a regional public policy think tank based in Research Triangle Park, North Carolina. Formed by the region's governors in 1971, Southern Growth Policies Board develops and advances visionary economic development policies by providing a forum for collaboration among a diverse cross-section of the region's governors, legislators, business and academic leaders and the economic and community development sectors. Southern Growth provides its members, and the region, with authoritative research, discussion forums and pilot projects in the areas of technology and innovation, globalization, workforce development, community development, civic engagement and leadership. To learn more about Southern Growth Policies Board, visit www.southern.org.