WINTRUST

NEWS RELEASE

Wintrust Creates Innovation Focused Business Unit

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ROSEMONT, Ill., Jan. 12, 2015 (GLOBE NEWSWIRE) -- Wintrust Financial Corporation ("Wintrust") (Nasdaq:WTFC) announced the creation of Wintrust Ventures, a business unit developed to meet the needs of Chicago's burgeoning innovation community, including start-ups, established businesses, incubators, angel investors and venture capitalists.

This new unit will expand the base Wintrust has already built within this segment in Chicago. With established relationships with incubators like Catapult, The Coalition and The Bunker, Wintrust Ventures will grow the portfolio using a mix of traditional banking and lending tools, venture financing, investment advice, networking events,

educational opportunities, personal connections and even equity investments in select companies.

"This space isn't new to us," said Edward Wehmer, Wintrust President and CEO. "As Chicago's Bank, we feel it is important to build a specialized team to approach this community and bring a different perspective. You can't approach it like traditional bankers. Standard banking services may work for some, while others are looking for advice or equity partners. All are looking for connections and customers."

Like others in this space, Wintrust will segment the market, but through a Chicago-specific lens, using the Chicago flag as a vehicle to illustrate an individual company's stage. A Single Star denotes a start-up, with the initial focus on advice, networking and basic banking services. Four Stars is for established mid-market companies, with Two and Three Stars representing those companies in-between where networking, venture financing and equity investing become the most important.

"Keeping this local will be a key differentiator for Wintrust," stated Jason Blumberg, CEO and Managing Director of Energy Foundry. "Banks coming in from outside the market don't seem to understand that these companies want to build their businesses and help build Chicago. You have to be from here to get that."

Wintrust already counts nearly 200 high-tech companies among its clients with approximately 40% of those starting in the last five years. Of all the businesses that bank with Wintrust, more than 30% have been operating for five years or less.

"Wintrust already serves as an engine for early stage business growth, "observed Todd Connor, Founder and CEO of The Bunker, the nation's first veteran-focused incubator. "This new team is a logical extension of their capacity and desire to work with promising entrepreneurs to enable the growth of promising companies. I have seen first hand Wintrust's commitment to investing in new businesses and local communities."

Like Wintrust's other business units, Wintrust Ventures will take a consultative approach to each individual relationship, building a financial package that best fits the immediate and long-term needs of each company or organization.

"In our three year relationship with Wintrust, we've seen them approach every company with an open mind and complete flexibility in designing financial packages," commented Galen Mason, Founder of Catapult Incubator. "They don't believe in cookie cutter solutions. Bankers need that kind of mind-set to succeed in this space."

Wintrust Ventures will be coordinated by Bailey Moore with a team of Wintrust corporate executives and seasoned commercial bankers, including Katina Panagopoulos and Tim Irwin. The team will be initially housed at Wintrust Commercial Banking's facilities at 190 South LaSalle and move to Wintrust's new facilities at 231 South LaSalle next

year.

About Wintrust

Wintrust is a financial holding company with assets of approximately $19 billion whose common stock is traded on the NASDAQ Global Select Market. Built on the "HAVE IT ALL" model, Wintrust offers sophisticated technology and resources of a large bank while focusing on providing service-based community banking to each and every customer. Wintrust operates fifteen community bank subsidiaries, now with over 135 banking locations located in the greater Chicago and southern Wisconsin market areas. Additionally, the Company operates various non-bank business units including one of the largest commercial insurance premium finance companies operating in the United States and Canada, a company providing short-term accounts receivable financing and value-added out-sourced administrative services to the temporary staffing services industry, a business unit engaging primarily in the origination and purchase of residential mortgages for sale into the secondary market throughout the United States, and companies providing wealth management services.

Forward-Looking Information

This press release contains forward-looking statements within the meaning of the federal securities laws. Investors are cautioned that such statements are predictions and actual events or results may differ materially. Wintrust's expected financial results or other plans are subject to a number of risks and uncertainties. For a discussion of such risks and uncertainties, which could cause actual results to differ from those contained in the forward-looking statements, see "Risk Factors" and the forward-looking statement disclosure contained in Wintrust's Annual Report on Form 10-K for the most recently ended fiscal year and in any of the Company's subsequent SEC filings. Forward-looking statements speak only as of the date made and Wintrust undertakes no duty to update the information.

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