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INSURANCE NEW FINANCIAL CONSULTING FIRM OPENS WITH OPTIMISM

NEW YORK (Oct. 24, 2001) - Earlier this month, a small team of thirtysomethings left The Hartford Financial Services Group, Inc. to start their own company, Mystic Capital Advisors Group, LLC. Now fully up-and-running, Mystic Capital provides a broad range of financial consulting services to the retail insurance and financial services industries.

With more than 20 years of mergers and acquisitions experience among the founding partners, Mystic Capital is an emerging firm that's poised for a leadership position in the consolidating marketplace.

According to Mystic Capital Managing Director Kevin P. Donoghue, the three-week-old company is already servicing and advising clients across the country. Co-founders Lorna Pankratz and Kevin Smith oversee the company's Western Region practice based in Denver and Southern Region practice based in Charlotte, respectively.

"My partners and I have been working together for a number of years developing and growing our former employer's M&A consulting practice, and advising on dozens of transactions, so its been a natural transition to working for ourselves," says Donoghue. "We remain an extremely dedicated and motivated team and are looking forward to the future of Mystic Capital."

It's that kind of optimism that defines the spirit of Mystic Capital, whose motto on the company's Web site (www.mysticcapital.com) reads: "Be OptiMystic!" While the spelling is unique to Mystic Capital, the sentiment has long been shared by the founding partners with their clients during the months that lead up to a successful transaction. Mystic Capital's executives are heeding their own advice.

At Your Service

The newly formed Mystic Capital specializes in servicing a targeted group of client industries, including:

- insurance agencies and brokerage firms;
- banks;

- third party administrators (TPAs);
- insurance wholesalers.

Mystic Capital's leadership team works one-on-one with clients in an often intensive process to achieve their business objectives. Mystic Capital provides a broad range of financial consulting services, including the following:

- ***Mergers & Acquisitions.*** Mystic Capital assists executives in developing and executing a plan to successfully buy, sell or merge. The process involves: buyer representation; seller representation; intermediary merger services; target valuation; deal structure and design; capital/financing solicitation; integration planning; key employee retention; and due diligence.

- ***Business Valuation.*** Mystic Capital provides this service as a core planning tool for clients to use as the basis for: annual strategic planning and executive compensation; annual ESOP valuations; perpetuation planning; estate planning; mergers and acquisitions; and expert witness needs.

- ***Perpetuation & Succession Planning.*** With nearly 75 percent of perpetuations or leveraged buyouts (LBOs) failing overtime to achieve business objectives, it's vital that business owners prepare an extensive succession plan. Mystic Capital's goal is to assist owners in negotiating and structuring "perpetuation friendly" deals. The process involves: helping owners to understand the anticipated benefits and pitfalls that follow perpetuation implementations; meeting collectively and individually with all involved to assess the current value of the firm and the ability of the business to generate enough cash to fund the perpetuation within the timeline negotiated; and working extensively with current and future owners to map out the plan for making payments and to educate all participants about the recourse for failure to do so. Above all, Mystic Capital recognizes that no one wins if the business fails to fund the debt load.

- ***Bank & Insurance Joint Ventures.*** Mystic Capital works very closely with clients to make sure that all parties involved understand the key issues of the intention and expectation of the joint venture and ensure that all key points are memorialized in a definitive agreement.

- ***Owner & Producer Compensation Plans.*** Mystic Capital works with clients to develop owner and producer incentive compensation plans. The process involves: analyzing current plans; interviewing key employees; surveying producers for feedback on current plan incentives; and developing long-term incentives to attract and retain talented employees.

For more information on Mystic Capital, visit the company's Web site at www.mysticcapital.com.

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