

**LEADING MINORITY-OWNED INVESTMENT BANK ADDS INDUSTRY VETERAN,
ANTHONY LECOUR, AND SEASONED PROFESSIONAL, JACK FOSTER, JR., TO ITS
CORPORATE FINANCE/ADVISORY PRACTICE**

**-- CastleOak Securities Raises \$114 Billion in Corporate Issues Through Year-end 2007
After First Calendar Year in Business --**

New York, – (January 8, 2008) – CastleOak Securities, L.P., a leading minority-owned investment bank based in New York, announced today that it is further building its corporate finance/advisory group with the addition of two seasoned professionals, Anthony LeCour and Jack H. Foster, Jr., who have joined as Managing Directors.

“Tony LeCour brings superb credentials and a proven record of accomplishment in strategic and financial advisory services to CastleOak. His skills and relationships in the marketplace are a tremendous asset, and he will strengthen our ability to advise clients on mergers and acquisitions, financings, asset sales, purchases and restructuring assignments,” said David R. Jones, President and Chief Executive Officer of CastleOak.

“Jack Foster also adds further depth to our ability to provide clients with strong corporate finance advisory capabilities,” said Mr. Jones. “An experienced capital markets professional, he has worked on transactions in the energy, media, technology, banking and other sectors, bringing strong analytical skills to M&A, capital fundraising, and other strategic transactions.”

“The addition of Tony and Jack to our team builds on our success on the recently completed acquisition, that was sourced and co-advised by CastleOak, of a \$340 million waste management company by a private equity firm in December,” Mr. Jones said.

Mr. LeCour previously served as Managing Director of The Bank Street Group, LLC, a boutique investment banking firm. He also ran his own advisory firm, LeCour Group Holdings, LLC, focusing on providing strategic and financial advisory services to technology, communications, media and consumer health science clients. Earlier, he was a Managing Director with Sandgrain

Partners, LP and Managing Director-Group Head of M&A with Utendahl Capital Partners, L.P. He also held senior positions with Sequoia Advisors, LP, GiroCredit Bank AG, where he led the firm's London M&A group, Citicorp Mezzanine Capital, and Lehman Brothers, Inc. He received a BA in applied mathematics from UCLA and an MBA from The University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School.

Mr. Foster has served with Next Street Financial as a Managing Associate and as Director of Strategic Planning for Carver Bancorp. Earlier, he was an Investment Banking Vice President with Blaylock & Company and an Investment Banking Associate with J.P. Morgan Securities. He also served in financial planning and corporate finance roles with Sony Music Entertainment and Coopers & Lybrand LLP. Mr. Foster received a BS in accounting from Florida A&M University and an MBA from Columbia University Business School.

Having just completed its first full calendar year of operations, CastleOak has assisted in the underwriting of over \$114 billion in primary corporate offerings since receiving approval from the Financial Industry Regulatory Authority (formerly NASD) to do such offerings in July 2006. Among the deals CastleOak co-managed during this time were multiple transactions for such clients as General Electric Capital Corp., AT&T, Southern Company, Citigroup, American Express, and Goldman Sachs.

“We are proud to have won mandates to co-manage nearly 50 offerings, including repeat assignments from several marquee clients, in just over a year's operation,” said Mr. Jones. “In addition to underscoring our fundamental commitment to superior client service, our record reflects CastleOak's strong capital position as well as our strategic partnership with Cantor Fitzgerald and the ability to leverage Cantor's distribution network.”

About CastleOak Securities, L.P.

CastleOak Securities, L.P. is a leading minority-owned investment bank offering an extensive suite of financial services including fixed income sales and trading, equity sales and trading, and financial advisory services. The firm offers clients expertise in primary and secondary market transactions, advice on mergers, acquisitions, divestitures, valuations and general strategic

assessments. Based in New York, with regional offices in Chicago and Atlanta, CastleOak is managed by a team of seasoned investment bankers who provide innovative, client-driven solutions that leverage their extensive professional experience, strong institutional relationships and keen market insight.

For more information, please visit www.castleoaklp.com.

Contacts:

Nneoma Njoku
CastleOak Securities
212-610-2297
njoku@castleoaklp.com

Robert Hubbell
CastleOak Securities
212-294-7820
rhubbell@castleoaklp.com