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AICPA Grants CPA WebTrust Seal to H.D. Vest, Inc.

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AICPA GRANTS CPA WEBTRUST SEAL TO H.D. VEST, INC.

- First Online Tax Preparation Site to Receive Seal of Assurance in U.S. -

NEW YORK, NY, JANUARY 20, 2000 – The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) and the accounting firms of *Leach Consulting and Accounting* and *Carroll, Caton & Greenway* announced today that H.D. Vest, Inc. (**NASDAQ: HDVS**) has been granted a *CPA WebTrust* seal of assurance for its online tax preparation site, www.hdvest.com. H.D. Vest specializes in providing extensive investment and tax services to the public through accounting and tax professionals.

As the recipient of the first *WebTrust* seal to be awarded to a U.S.-based online tax preparation site, the Company is looking to further build customer confidence in its online services by providing the security, privacy protection and peace of mind that customers seek.

"The safety of financial information sent via the Internet is the number one concern of Internet users," said Herb D. Vest, Chairman and CEO of H.D. Vest, Inc. "At hdvest.com, we share their concern and have taken security very seriously. That's why we're pleased that H.D. Vest is the first online tax preparation site in the U.S. to receive a *WebTrust* seal. It sends a clear message to our customers that their private information is protected and their financial planning transactions are safe and secure."

With the granting of this seal, *Leach Consulting and Accounting* and *Carroll, Caton & Greenway* move into a growing market for the accounting profession -- Internet and e-commerce consulting - especially in the financial services sector in which protection of sensitive and confidential information is crucial.

"*WebTrust* is the solution developed by the accounting profession to create a consumer comfort zone with the Internet regarding transactions and protection of private information," said Chris Leach, partner, *Leach Consulting and Accounting*. "H.D. Vest's main reason for obtaining the seal was to demonstrate that its interest in customer safety and security is first and foremost."

With *WebTrust*, CPAs and their international counterparts examine online businesses to determine if they are legitimate, their transactions are secure, the information they collect from customers is kept private, their business practices are fully disclosed to customers, and they have a mechanism to resolve customer complaints.

The first in a family of assurance services, *CPA WebTrust* is part of a global effort by the accounting profession to bring effective solutions to e-commerce. *WebTrust* is now being offered in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, England, Ireland, Scotland, Wales, France and Australia. Negotiations are underway with other European and Asian countries to offer *WebTrust*.

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Leach Consulting & Accounting is a San Diego, CA based firm with clients in the US, Canada, Mexico, Europe, and South America that has a technology focus and is a pioneer in the *WebTrust* program. Christopher Leach, CPA and Vice Chairman of the AICPA Electronic Commerce Assurance Task Force that developed *CPA WebTrust*, led the engagement. [Accounting Today](#) has named Mr. Leach as one of the 100 most influential accountants for the past two years. *Leach Consulting & Accounting* issued the first *WebTrust* seal and has assisted other accounting firms with their issuance of other *WebTrust* seals.

The CPA firm of *Carroll, Caton & Greenway*, based in Irving, Texas, assisted in executing this engagement. *Carroll, Caton & Greenway* serves a wide variety of clients but focuses on individuals, fiduciaries and business owners in the healthcare, real estate, natural resource, manufacturing, aviation, sports and service industries.

Headquartered in Irving, Texas, H.D. Vest, Inc. specializes in providing extensive training and support services to tax professionals who wish to add financial planning to their practices. H.D. Vest is the leader in the growing market for comprehensive financial planning services, with more than 8,000 affiliates managing over \$16 billion in assets for individuals, families and small businesses in all 50 states. H.D. Vest Inc.'s common stock trades on The NASDAQ Stock Market under the symbol **HDVS**.

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The American Institute of Certified Public Accountants (AICPA) is the ISO 9001 certified national professional organization of CPAs in the United States with more than 330,000 members in public practice, business and industry, government and education.

For more information about *CPA WebTrust*, please visit www.cpawebtrust.org.

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