Independent Banker

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Columns - Flourish

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This Community Banking Month, I invite you to try something new to spread your story. Share a new development, community project or initiative.

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As community bankers, we know relationships matter. Our actions in support of local schools, nonprofits, businesses and other community institutions make a difference, and when our customers see our commitment to our communities, it deepens their connection with us.

That strengthened engagement translates to stronger business as well. A 2015 *Harvard Business Review* [study](https://hbr.org/2015/11/the-new-science-of-customer-emotions) found that emotional connection is twice as valuable as customer satisfaction, and a [2017 Capgemini report](https://www.capgemini.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/dti_loyalty-deciphered_29nov17_final.pdf) concluded that emotional ties can drive a 5% increase in annual revenue.

But when I think back on my days as a community banker, it’s not the dollars and cents that stick with me; it’s the customer stories I remember. I used to love collecting customer testimonials, because I would hear stories of how, for example, a local business that opened a deposit account on the day the bank opened was now a community fixture being run by the second or third generation. In my experience, there’s nothing more gratifying than to see a local business thriving and know that your bank was part of that.

These are the stories worth telling, the ones that show our commitment to our communities and the people in them, and they extend far beyond the banking relationship. Consider Watermark Bank in Oklahoma City, Okla., and how it trained its team to [serve as substitute teachers](https://www.linkedin.com/posts/matt-pollock-a355a06_opportunity-activity-6887472882981621760-YlwE/) during a staffing shortage. Or look at our new chairman’s bank, Community Spirit Bank in Red Bay, Ala. Like many of your banks, it celebrates with the community—whether it’s chocolates on Valentine’s Day, tree trimmings at Christmas or pumpkin carvings at Halloween—and captures a snapshot of those activities on social media.

Sharing our stories is as simple as documenting what we’re already doing. For example, as new customers are opening accounts, we can make note of why they chose our banks and use that feedback. When our teams are out at board meetings, service events or community gatherings, they can take pictures and post what they’re doing on social channels. We can also use employee surveys to learn how they support the community and empower them to recount those experiences. It’s about taking that next step to communicate how we engage.

So, this Community Banking Month, I invite you to try something new to spread your story. Share a new development, community project or initiative. And tag ICBA in your social media posts by using the hashtag #BankLocally so we can help tell your story and further that message. Together, we will ensure the entire nation knows exactly what it means to be a community bank.

*Where I’ll Be This Month*

I’m headed to Memphis to meet with our state and regional partners, and then I’ll be engaging with the team at CRA Partners.