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Columns

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‘Ohana is the Hawaiian word for family, and as we prepare to head to Honolulu for ICBA LIVE next month, I’m struck by how much that word describes this community. We are a family of community bankers, supporting one another and our communities through our shared mission, vision and values.

In many cases, we’re not only a chosen family; we’re related by blood as well. Many of us are fourth- or fifth-generation community bankers, embodying a long family tradition of caring for community. We’re passing that ethos down, too. In fact, we have more children attending LIVE this year than we have in the past, and I can’t help but think of the rising community bank leaders that may be right in front of us and all they will bring to the industry.

So, it’s fitting that this year’s theme for ICBA LIVE is “Light the Fire. Light the Way.” Not only are we looking at the next generation of leaders among us; we’re also focusing on what we can do today to preserve and grow community banks’ impact. It’s never been more important to keep that flame of community banking spreading throughout the country.

Our communities need our continued support through these complicated economic times. They need us to remain advocates for their needs. They need us to continue to serve them as people, not as transactions. So, when we assemble at LIVE, it’s about coming together to ignite the passion for community banking on behalf of our communities in a way that moves the industry forward.

As we look at the continued pace of change, we are met with our fair share of challenges but also great opportunities. When we come together, the energy that arises helps us collectively identify the path forward. Then, we lift our heads up and address the technical and nuanced aspects of what we do with a focus on the long-term future of the industry. We create progress and momentum.

But possibly the most rewarding part of LIVE is the opportunity to meet fellow community bankers from around the country. Those hallway conversations where we share anecdotes and make new connections exemplify who we are as community bankers. That sense of ‘ohana shines through, because in community banking we’re more than just business leaders. We are a family, and I hope to see you at LIVE to help us build the relationships that will shape the future of the industry.

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*Where I’ll be this month*

I’ll be sharing the community bank perspective and speaking at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta’s Back to the Future: 2023 Banking Outlook Conference.