Independent Banker  
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Columns

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True relationships withstand the test of time, ebbing and flowing with the cycles of life, and such is the case with the community bank–customer connection. It’s not unusual to hear about a community bank having served a family or a business for generations, and that’s a testament to the strength of the relationship.

As we consider marketing in this month’s issue, I took time to reflect on exactly what differentiates the community banker and how marketing can help in growing and retaining business. I kept coming back to the fact that for community banks, marketing often points to finding ways to educate, support and grow community, as well as customer knowledge and awareness. By extension, these promotional efforts assume a natural role in a community bank’s journey, just enhancing what are already mission-critical initiatives.

For example, consider ICBA chairman Brad Bolton’s Community Spirit Bank in Red Bay, Ala., and its work to [share tips for financial resolutions](https://franklincountytimes.com/2022/12/28/kick-off-financial-resolutions-with-these-tips/?fbclid=IwAR0vKkrv_G8Sm_olmcibzB_kEuDX7k2SbNXhoBC8cN9T5WQu144aWgx81iY) in the local paper. Offering that information to the community helps individuals strengthen their financial savvy and supports a broader story of community bank leadership.

Or look to ICBA past chairman Bob Fisher’s bank, Tioga State Bank, in Spencer, N.Y., and how it teams up with local television stations to support cause-related activities, like the [No Shave November Cure the Blue 5K](https://www.wbng.com/business/around-the-tiers/2022/12/22/no-shave-november-cure-blue-5k-follow-up-with-tioga-state-bank/). Not only does this event help raise funds for an important program, it also demonstrates the bank’s involvement with and commitment to its community.

These examples offer only a snapshot of what community banks all over the country do to support their communities from a mission-based approach. In many cases, the added promotion these efforts deliver is a side benefit to serving the community.

That’s precisely why these efforts are successful: They garner attention because they are the right things to do. These stories create a value proposition around why banking with a community bank is so vital, and the differentiation from megabanks and credit unions happens by leading with the community bank relationship model front and center.

So, as you think about your bank’s planned storytelling this year, know that ICBA is standing by to help. In fact, stay tuned for a very exciting announcement that we’ll be making during ICBA LIVE, which will shine a light on what differentiates community banking. And our work won’t stop there. We invite to you join us in this next step of our journey as we continue to tell the community banking story.

Because beyond promotion, what you do matters to the customers and communities you serve. You are and will remain a partner through your customers’ lives and financial journeys. From a marketing perspective, that’s an ideal place to be.

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*Where I’ll be this month*

I’ll be connecting with community bankers from around the country at ICBA LIVE in Honolulu, Hawaii, from March 12–16. I hope to see you there!

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