

# Banking on community

## Service and support are key elements to the success of Pacific West Bank

When it comes to Pacific West Bank's community involvement, the best question to ask may be, "What don't they sponsor?"

The seven-year-old community bank is headquartered in West Linn and now has a branch in Lake Oswego. Its founding board, a 10-member group of local business leaders and friends, had a goal from the beginning to support their community.

They certainly have delivered, sponsoring the West Linn Arts Festival, the Old-Time Fair, Fourth of July parade, Music in the Park, Gallery Without Walls, Lakewood Center benefit concerts and Caddies for a Cure.

Then there are the projects they run themselves, like the Ducks/Beavers Food Bank Challenge, Lake Oswego's Got Talent, Academic All-Stars and Athletes of the Week.

And finally, there are the volunteer efforts of the 17 bank staff members, strongly encouraged by management. These include Clean-Up Oregon, the Lake Oswego Education Committee, the Historic Willamette Main Street funding campaign and summer barbecues for local sports clubs.

Service is so clearly a priority that Marketing Manager Kenn Bartley said Pacific West Bank has developed a reputation around town as one of "the" businesses to call or visit if you need a donation or other support.

And that's just fine with Bartley and the rest of the crew at Pacific West, because it's what the bank is all about. In fact, its logo is "banking on relationships."

Those three little words sum up the philosophy of board members, many of whom are raising or have raised children in Lake Oswego or West Linn.

"Our relationships within the community run deep," said board member Ed Kawasaki. "From friendships to shareholders to customers, these relationships form the foundation of the

bank, and it is the bank's opportunity through community service and support to show our appreciation."

Pacific West Bank began in 2004, with four employees. Now, 17 people staff two branches, one at 2040 Eighth Ave. in the historic Willamette neighborhood in West Linn, and one at 5200 Meadows Road in Lake Oswego's Westlake/Kruseway neighborhood.

Business is good, with the number of accounts and amount of deposits doubling since 2008, Bartley says.

He attributes that to a growing momentum, thanks in part to a backlash against big banks.

A community bank can do everything a big national bank can, explained Bob Seibert, the bank's chief financial officer and senior vice president, including loan and deposit accounts, free checking, commercial lending, money market accounts and certificates of deposit.

And it can do a lot more.

Take the bank's "Coffee with Steve" program. If you've never walked into either Pacific West Bank location, do yourself a favor and try it. You'll be greeted with the smell of fresh-baked cookies, just-brewed coffee and several warm, friendly smiles from people who are not standing behind a counter, but rather sitting at desks.

"We did that on purpose," Kawasaki said. "We wanted an environment where you could come in, relax, grab a cup of coffee and know instantly that you're not just a number, you're a person that we'd like to talk to."

Which goes back to "Coffee with Steve," an open invitation for cus-



Vern Uyetake

Kenn Bartley, marketing manager, and Ed Kawasaki, chairman of the board of Pacific West Bank, are shown with Kawasaki's eight-month-old niece, Luci Reid.

tomers or potential customers to call Steve Gray, president and chief executive officer, to sit down and chat with him. His direct line is 503-905-2217 if you'd like to give him a call.

Seibert said another advantage of a community bank like Pacific West is that it doesn't get distracted.

"Our focus is on our customers and products that are going to be a good fit for our customers," he said.

Lake Oswego and West Linn, for example, have a lot of residents who

obtained through a different bank, was falling apart. The customer feared he would lose the house, but Pacific West Bank was able to fix the loan within one week, making the deal go through without a hitch.

"It's that kind of attention and quick action on the behalf of our customers that really sets us apart," Seibert said.

Another benefit to both communities, Bartley said, is the community rooms that are open to local civic, non-profit, school, academic and small business groups. The rooms are available seven days a week, before, during and after bank hours.

In West Linn, 20 groups so far are taking advantage of this perk, including the West Linn Chamber of Commerce, West Linn Rotary Club, West Linn Baseball Club, the city of West Linn and four neighborhood associations.

Again, it's back to supporting the communities they serve.

"It's like buying local, except it's banking local," Bartley said.

Seibert agreed. "The board is a group of people who benefitted significantly from growing up here and now they have a means of supporting the community that benefitted and helped them," he said. "It's a lot easier to be proud of your company if you can see the tangible benefits of it in your community."

Pacific West Bank; 2040 Eighth Ave. in West Linn, 503-905-2222; 5200 Meadows Road in Lake Oswego, 503-905-2250; [www.bankpacificwest.com](http://www.bankpacificwest.com).

— Kari Hastings



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Kenn Bartley stands outside the bank's West Linn branch in the historic Willamette district.

run home businesses, so there are people on hand to make life easier for them. Highly personalized attention is another plus.

One customer was trying to buy a new home, Seibert said, and his loan,