

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE



Bank of Belleville Thrives by Committing to Building Community Relationships and Supporting Local Business

Belleville, Ill. – February 5, 2020 – In the early 2000s, lifelong Belleville area resident Ron Stephens was in the middle of a good career. He had a solid job at a local bank in the same town where his kids went to school and where he and his wife were raising them. But something was bothering him, a gnawing annoyance that was hard to articulate until one day, he and his colleague, Kevin Pesko, had a heart-to-heart over lunch.

“At this moment in our careers as bankers, Kevin and I felt like we were losing the sense of a personal connection and relationship with our customers,” said Stephens. “We always had good jobs, but they weren’t exactly unique, and so at that time, Kevin and I sought something that would have a greater impact and allow us to return to the way banking relationships were before they had changed over time.”

With that, the two career bankers set out to open their own bank, Bank of Belleville, and did just that with the support of more than 300 local investors in November 2005.

“You probably only get one chance to start a bank in your career; so, we took it,” said Stephens. “And we had a very specific vision and goal in mind – to create a community bank, based on personal relationships with local businesses and entrepreneurs, that positively impacts the community.”

That’s exactly what Bank of Belleville has done since its inception. Offering all the services as any corporate or large bank, Bank of Belleville is the only locally owned and operated bank in the city. Each of its employees shares a core ideology that places a priority on funding local, small businesses, creating personal relationships, and giving back through philanthropic gifts of time, talent and treasure. And, as it turns out, this model is working.

According to Stephens, the bank has grown every year since it began by way of clients, assets and revenue, even in years like 2008, when the financial crisis took hold nation-wide.

“I attribute that steady growth to our team, our culture and our client base,” said Stephens.

Then in August 2015, the bank relocated from its former location at 720 W. Main St. to 215 S. Illinois St. and doubled its assets.

The City of Belleville, Illinois, incorporated in 1814, is the St. Clair County seat and the largest city in southern Illinois. With a current population of 44,478 (2010), Belleville is home to the longest contiguous main street in the United States, excellent education and healthcare organizations, and thriving businesses and neighborhoods, including three National Historic Districts. Mayor Mark Eckert runs the municipal government along with elected officials including City Clerk Jennifer Gain Meyer, Treasurer Dean Hardt, and 16 aldermen representing eight city wards. The vision for the City of Belleville is one where all sectors of the community work together to help the city grow and prosper and to become a model for other communities to follow.

“As with everything we do at Bank of Belleville, we looked to see what impact relocating the bank would have on our customer base,” said Stephens. “We knew relocating near our former location would be just as convenient for our customers, but we also recognized that we continued to draw customers from outside of Belleville due to our customized personal service, customer referrals and technological advances.”

With that, the management team determined it needed to stay close to home, as Belleville remained the central location and was easy to travel to for its clients from east, west and downtown Belleville, Swansea, Fairview Heights, O’Fallon, Shiloh, Mascoutah, Freeburg, Smithton, Millstadt and beyond.

For the move, the bank purchased and demolished two buildings and built a state-of-the-art bank, also elevating the Route 159 corridor through the city.

“While we only moved about 10 blocks, it had a huge impact on our business, which doubled in size, and we hope that will impact the community too,” said Stephens.

Everything about Bank of Belleville – it’s culture, it’s 42 local team members, its furnishings, and even Lincoln Theater Popcorn on Fridays at the teller windows – supports the local Belleville culture and its residents. So, now when guys like Ron and Kevin look back on their careers and ask, ‘Is what I’m doing the right thing?’, they don’t have to look too far to know the impact they and their organization have made is palpable.

Cutline: At left is President and Chief Executive Officer of Bank of Belleville Ron Stephens with Market President Kevin Pesko, at right.

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