

Many well-known Wisconsin-based businesses have a company culture focused on customer service. This service, which is fundamental to the banking industry, has not only set companies like BCycle, Culver's, and Vortex Optics apart in their own industries, but influences organizations around the country to adapt efforts that engage employees to provide superior customer service.

» What is a Service Culture?

Developing a culture of service is twofold and starts with the employees. When a company creates an environment where employees feel respected, understood, and appreciated by their management, employees look forward to coming to work, perform better, and feel recognized for their efforts. Investing in the employees empowers them to invest in the customers through high-quality service. The end result

Wisconsin Businesses Promote Culture of Service

By Hannah Flanders



is that the customer is encouraged to return.

By supporting the employees, who in turn support customers, businesses create a culture of service. Not only do customers and employees benefit from the shift in culture, but businesses see better retention of their staff and loyalty among their patrons.

» Service Cultures in Wisconsin-based Businesses

Service culture is at the heart of Wisconsin banking, and bankers

are eager to find new ways of providing the top-quality service they are known for. Looking to other industries for examples of service culture can give the banking industry a leg up in their efforts to create work environments that foster great customer service.

Learning from other well-established, Wisconsin-based businesses helps bankers better understand the types of service that resonate best — after all, Wisconsin businesses in various industries

share many of the same customers.

BCycle — a Trek Bicycle subsidiary since 2009 — is headquartered in Waterloo and directly operates bike share programs across seven major U.S. cities. By establishing a culture focused on the wellbeing of people and their experiences, BCycle continues to strengthen their customer focus. **Morgan Ramaker**, executive director of BCycle, states that “delivering a great employee experience is critical to delivering a great customer experience.”

Taking action according to feedback is crucial in helping employees deliver the best experience and customers receiving it. By taking care of employees, businesses recognize the incredible amount of dedication and effort needed to achieve the mission and serve customers. Trek and BCycle

offer an on-site health care clinic, tuition reimbursement, flexible work environments, and many more opportunities to engage with their team members.

Employees are also inspired by several mantras both Trek and BCycle have established to connect customers with their mission to make the world a better place to live and ride. It is important to employees at BCycle that they understand the needs and experience of the customers. These initiatives relate to “ride the ride the riders ride,” or using field experience to learn and improve both products and services, as well as “the best service is no service,” which allows employees to anticipate the experience of the customer. “If you can fix the problem before the customer has to contact you about it — that’s how you begin to raise the bar and exceed their expectations.” says Ramaker.

To build products they love, offer remarkable hospitality, and change the world is a mission that requires the devotion of every member of the team and could never be done alone. By acknowledging this, BCycle continues to support its employees as a ‘Great Place to Work’ certified company in their efforts to achieve high-quality engagement and experience.

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Message from the Chair

2022 Forecast Looks Good, But Bankers Must Act

By Kenneth D. Thompson

After the challenges of the last several years, I believe I speak for everyone when I say I am continually amazed by the optimism that Wisconsin bankers hold not only for the growth of our industry, but for our economy and communities as well. Although the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc, I expect 2022 to be a year of immense growth and transition within our industry.

See p. 25 for a more in-depth look at the results of WBA's December 2021 Bank CEO Economic Conditions Survey.



Message from the Chair

Kenneth D. Thompson

Read more about the 2022 Midwest Economic Forecast Forum on p. 6.

As bankers, we are fortunate to have a unique perspective on our economy and communities. As many member CEOs highlighted in WBA's recent Economic Conditions survey, despite recent obstacles, a majority of Wisconsin bankers rate the

current health of the economy as 'good' and predict this to stay the same well into 2022.

Our work in providing flexibility to our staff and customers, as well as exceeding expectations of managing liquidity and technological growth in 2021, has absolutely aided in our efforts to provide stability in times of uncertainty. Our industry will continue to be challenged into 2022 as we face inflation; ongoing COVID protocols surrounding vaccinations, boosters, and possible mandates; as well as talent retention.

However, as mentioned repeatedly by Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President and CEO Neel

Kashkari during WBA's annual Midwest Economic Forecast Forum, Wisconsin's economy and our region as a whole has been on par with the recovery of the nation. Efforts by our community banks have not gone unnoticed and have played, and will continue to play, a substantial role in rebounding our economy.

Of course, innovation will remain the name of the game as banks navigate uncertainty. The next eleven months will certainly show the flexibility, creativity, and expertise of banks in Wisconsin and set our industry apart.

Thompson is president and CEO of Capitol Bank, Madison, and the 2021-2022 WBA board chair.



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New Year, New (People Representing) You?

By John Cronin

2022 is here. For all of you who made New Year's resolutions, I hope they remain intact or on track. From a Government Relations standpoint, our goals remain relatively unchanged; we are still striving to accomplish portions of our legislative agenda before the Legislature adjourns for the year in March.

Whether in person or on Zoom, I often get confused looks when I say the Legislature is wrapping up its activity for the rest of the year in March. "Aren't these people supposed to be working for us year-round?!" The answer is yes, but they'll stop meeting for floor sessions and committee meetings on

» See p. 8 for a recap on WBA's most recent Capitol Day held on January 18.



Advocacy Update

John Cronin

bills and resolutions. But don't worry, legislative staff work year-round on research and constituent service.

So why will state legislative activity come to a halt in just a few weeks? It is an election year! And a very significant one at that. Believe it or not, candidates are going to be on the campaign trail in April already, a full seven months ahead of the general election on November 8. This is Wisconsin after all; we live in a purple state and from the bottom of the ticket to the top, races will be resource-intensive and highly competitive.

Our goals remain unchanged; we are still striving to accomplish portions of our legislative agenda before the Legislature adjourns for the year in March.

WBA and our member bankers will certainly be interested observers for many state and federal races this fall. We will also be supporting pro-banking candidates whose interests are aligned with those of our industry.

With that, I would like to highlight a few key races, and take a way-too-early look at what we may wake up to and see in the news on November 9.

U.S. Senate

As I write this column, Sen. **Ron Johnson** has just announced that he will seek a third term in the U.S. Senate. Johnson's decision was one nearly every political observer in Wisconsin was waiting for. Given the split in the U.S. Senate and the competitiveness of this race, Johnson's bid will ensure the national, political spotlight will remain on Wisconsin. Sen. Johnson is a polarizing figure for sure, but Republicans are enjoying a 2010-esque tailwind in the political environment right now. If that holds, I can see Johnson retaining his seat by a razor thin margin.

Governor

Johnson's announcement will undoubtedly have a ripple effect on races down the ticket and could play a role in the state's other high profile race — Governor. I predict odds-on favorite **Rebecca Kleefisch** will be the GOP nominee facing off against incumbent Democrat Gov. **Tony Evers**. Since defeating **Scott Walker** three years ago, Evers has not done much to upset the apple

cart in the eyes of the public and will benefit from being the incumbent. He has also delivered on key topics such as increased education funding and tax relief. Kleefisch will be running on her experience and accomplishments during the eight years she was Lieutenant Governor and has already rolled out a concise, but high energy approach to the campaign. Kleefisch will benefit from statewide name recognition and the same strong GOP tailwinds. I'm going to weasel out and put this in the too-close-to-call bucket for now.

Redistricting

Lastly, let's take a quick look at the Legislature, where the GOP holds a 61-38 edge in the Assembly, and a 21-12 margin in the Senate; strong majorities but not quite veto-proof. The redistricting process remains before the courts, but the GOP has achieved wins that point to generally favorable outcomes for the maps they drew and passed before they were vetoed by the Governor. If the political climate holds, I predict the GOP will pick up additional legislative seats this fall and extend their majorities.

It is going to be an action-packed year, and I'm confident we will see some of the most expensive races in Wisconsin history this fall. Our political "coverage" will continue to ramp up, so stay tuned to all of WBA's publications for the latest.

Please contact the WBA Government Relations team, **Lorenzo Cruz** at lcruz@wisbank.com or 608-441-1206 or **John Cronin** at jcronin@wisbank.com or 608-441-1215, if you have any advocacy questions or concerns.

Cronin is WBA director – government relations.

Advocate for Your Industry

Join WBA and other bankers at the Washington, D.C. Summits

Add your voice in support of our industry on the federal level by attending a WBA Washington Summit. WBA is working in conjunction with both the ABA and ICBA to coordinate our federal advocacy efforts. As a WBA member, you can choose one or both federal events to attend either virtually or in person.

Join WBA representatives and other Wisconsin bankers virtually or in person:

- » **March 7-9 — WBA/ABA Washington Summit** (in person or virtual); and/or
- » **May 3-5 — WBA/ICBA Capital Summit**

Watch for more details coming soon!

If you have questions or want more information about the Summits, please contact either WBA's **Lorenzo Cruz** at lcruz@wisbank.com or **John Cronin** at jcronin@wisbank.com.



New Interest Rate on Residential Mortgage Loan Escrow Accounts

Wisconsin DFI sets escrow interest rate at 0.09% for 2022

Has the Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions set the Interest Rate on Required Residential Mortgage Loan Escrow Accounts for 2022?

Answer: Yes. The Wisconsin Department of Financial Institutions, Division of Banking (DFI), has calculated the interest rate required to be paid on escrow accounts for residential mortgage loans subject to Wisconsin Statute Section 138.052(5) to be 0.09% for 2022. The interest rate shall remain in effect through December 31, 2022.

Note that while Wisconsin Section 138.052 previously required financial institutions to pay interest on the balance on any required escrow accounts, Wisconsin Act 340



Compliance Q&A

Scott Birrenkott

modified this requirement so that it only applies to loans originated prior to the effective date of the Act (April 18, 2018). Thus, financial institutions must continue to pay interest on required escrow accounts prior to April 18, 2018. Any escrow account associated with a loan originated after the effective date of Act 340, 138.052 no longer requires payment of interest. Wis. Stat. Section 138.052 applies to loans secured by a first lien or first

Visit www.wisbank.com to learn more about this topic and other compliance-related issues.

lien equivalent in a 1-4 family dwelling that is used as the borrower’s principal residence.

The escrow rate notice may be found at: https://docs.legis.wisconsin.gov/code/register/2021/792a1/register/public_notices/public_notice_notice_of_2022_interest_rate_on_escrow_accounts/public_notice_notice_of_2022_interest_rate_on_escrow_accounts.pdf

Birrenkott is WBA assistant director – legal. For legal questions, please email wbalegal@wisbank.com.

Note: The above information is not intended to provide legal advice; rather, it is intended to provide general information about banking issues. Consult your institution’s

Legal Hotline:

The WBA Legal Department does more than address legal concerns for the association; it provides tangible assistance to member banks via its free legal call program. The association’s team of attorneys work to relieve some of the industry’s compliance pressure as a timely resource for a wide variety of legal inquiries.

Submit your legal inquiry via email (wbalegal@wisbank.com) or by calling the legal hotline at 608-441-1200.

attorney for specific legal advice or assistance.

WBA In-House Legal Counsel Webinar Series

The WBA In-House Legal Counsel Webinar Series consists of six webinars that give in-house bank attorneys the content they need to keep up-to-date on legal



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Presenters: Paul Dombrowski, Husch Blackwell

Register at: www.wisbank.com/events/in-house-legal-counsel-webinar-series.

WBA Comments on CFPB’s Small Business Lending Data Collection Proposal

Summary of a recent comment letter below

Earlier this year, the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB) issued its long-awaited proposal for implementing Section 1071 of the Dodd-Frank Act, which requires collection of credit application data for small businesses, including women-owned and minority-owned small businesses. On January 6, WBA submitted comments on the proposal.



[View this and previous comment letters filed by WBA at www.wisbank.com/CommentLetters.](http://www.wisbank.com/CommentLetters)

The proposal would create data collection requirements

The WBA Legal Department advocates for the industry by writing comment letters to federal and state regulators on proposals affecting the industry and by filing friend-of-the-court briefs at the request of WBA members and per approval by the WBA Board of Directors.

for small business credit applications. As the first of its kind, the proposal presents a massive undertaking for covered institutions. WBA

commented that Wisconsin banks are already wholly committed to the statutory objectives of section 1071 and expressed concerns that if the proposal is not finalized in a way that is designed to minimize burden, then the rule will only serve to harm those small businesses Congress intended to support.

For copies of this or other WBA comment letters, please contact the WBA Legal Department at 608-441-1200 or visit www.wisbank.com/CommentLetters.

Inflation, Global Supply Chains, and Labor Top the List of 2022 Economic Trends to Watch

Minneapolis Fed President Neel Kashkari and Economist Dr. David Kohl Headline Midwest Economic Forecast Forum

By Cassandra Krause

On January 4, the Wisconsin Bankers Association hosted the 2022 Midwest Economic Forecast Forum in partnership with the Illinois Bankers Association, Michigan Bankers Association, Minnesota Bankers Association, Montana Bankers Association, and South Dakota Bankers Association. The forum, sponsored by BOK Financial Institutions Group, Bankers' Bank, and Wipfli LLP, brought together over 500 attendees.

Minneapolis Federal Reserve Bank President and CEO **Neel Kashkari** kicked off the virtual event. His presentation was followed by a town hall-style Q&A, moderated by WBA President and CEO **Rose Oswald Poels**. The conversation included topics such as the conditions in sectors like manufacturing, agriculture, and construction; the Fed's dual mandate from Congress; supply chains; an influx in bank deposits; and Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) modernization.

» Wisconsin's Recovery Slower Than Minnesota's, But Regional Recovery Mirrors That of the Nation

Kashkari said that overall, our region looks a lot like the nation, but there are differences. Wisconsin started recovering more quickly than Minnesota did, but then slowed down over the last six months to year. What happens with COVID will continue to matter because



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workers getting sick will be a disruption to economic activity.

Kashkari noted that economic recovery since initial COVID-19 shutdowns has been uneven. "On one hand, GDP is fully recovered... but different sectors have been affected differently," said Kashkari. "Many workers have found jobs... and while the unemployment rate has come down, we are still about 4-6 million workers short of where we should be, had there been no pandemic."

» Demand for Labor Has Recovered More Quickly Than Supply

The labor market was one of the main topics Kashkari responded to in the Q&A.

"One of the things that I learned before the pandemic was that the vast majority of Americans want to work," said Kashkari. "Every time

businesses told us 'we're out of workers,' as wages started to climb, workers came back in, and that was resoundingly positive for everyone... I still believe that's true."

Kashkari commented that people of all income levels have more savings and more options — and there's still a lot of fear of getting COVID or bringing it home to a vulnerable family member. The demand for labor has come back, but it's going to take longer for people to feel comfortable coming back into the job market.

» Two Rate Hikes Likely in 2022

With regard to inflation, Kashkari predicted it will be transitory, though it has been higher and has lasted longer than he had expected. He referred to his essay, titled "Two Opposing Risks," which was published just prior to his presentation, and said he foresees two interest rate hikes this year. The rate rises may require sacrificing some gains in employment in order to keep inflation under control.

» Role of Banks in Communities Highly Appreciated

Kashkari highlighted how community banks stepped up powerfully through the Paycheck Protection Program. "[Banks] have managed exceptionally well during the pandemic," he said, adding that he has nothing but admiration for community banks and the role they served. WBA's Oswald Poels expressed gratitude on behalf of community bankers for the recognition of their efforts.

» Economic Mega Trends 2022 and Beyond

Dr. David Kohl, a highly anticipated speaker at events hosted by WBA and state banking associations around the country, discussed ten global macro-economic mega trend disruptors. The renowned economist and professor emeritus at Virginia Tech also responded to audience questions in a dialog moderated by Oswald Poels.

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Midwest Economic Forecast Forum

(continued from p. 6)

» Disrupters Present Both Challenges and Opportunities

Some of the major disruptors Kohl highlighted in his presentation were globalization; environmental, social, and governance (ESG); and technology and automation. He provided a recent historical overview of inflation and provided a watch list for short- and long-term inflation. “Uncertainty concerning inflation, geopolitics, supply and marketing chains creates challenges but also presents opportunities,” said Kohl. “This is true for businesses and individuals with a high business and financial IQ that follow the process and execute a business plan.”

» Global Perspective Key to Success

Kohl gave an overview of markets around the globe to keep an eye on, including Asia/China and Europe/Russia. “‘Think globally, but act locally’ is a theme for success in the decade of the 2020s,” advised Kohl. “Observe economic mega trends from afar and connect the dots to determine how they impact your bank, business, employees, and customers’ lives.”

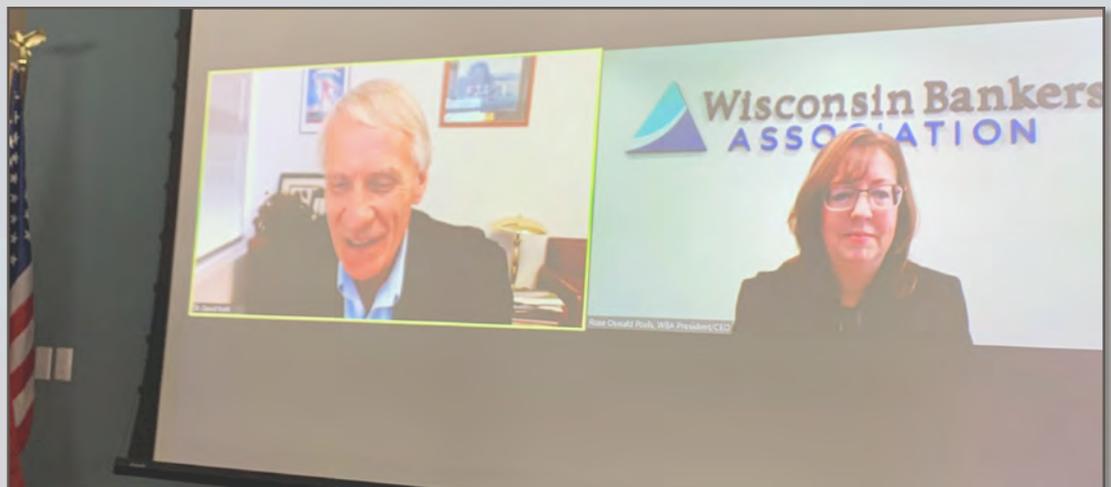
» Wisdom for Banking

Like any good educator, Kohl had words of wisdom to share with the audience beyond what can be found in textbooks and data reports. “Success in life and business is about managing the controllables and managing around the uncontrollables,” he explained. “From the board room to business front

lines, one cannot manage what happens in Washington, D.C., Beijing, or Brussels, but can attempt to manage around

uncontrollable factors using scenario planning. Focus energy and strategy on the controllable elements with

tactics that are agile and adaptive given the economic landscape.”
Krause is WBA communications manager.



More than 500 bankers and business leaders tuned in virtually for the 17th annual Midwest Economic Forecast Forum on January 18, 2022. Minneapolis Federal Reserve President and CEO **Neel Kashkari** (top photo) kicked off the virtual event. His presentation was followed by a town hall-style Q&A, moderated by WBA President and CEO **Rose Oswald Poels**. **Dr. David Kohl** (above photo), economist and professor emeritus at Virginia Tech, then shared his insight on domestic and global indicators to watch. A Q&A with Dr. Kohl rounded out the event.

Wisconsin Experts Offer Sector Forecasts

As an extension of the Midwest Economic Forecast Forum, WBA has compiled eight sector-specific reports from industry experts on what 2022 will hold for Wisconsin. The reports include insights from **Rose Oswald Poels**, Wisconsin

Bankers Association; **Robb Kahl**, Construction Business Group; **Kevin Krentz**, Wisconsin Farm Bureau Federation; **Brandon Scholz**, Wisconsin Grocers Association; **Eric Borgerding**, Wisconsin Hospital Association;

Kurt Bauer, Wisconsin Manufacturers & Commerce; **Michael Theo**, Wisconsin Realtors Association; and **Tom Still**, Wisconsin Technology Council.
To read the reports, please visit wisbank.com/2022Forecast.

It's a Wrap on Cap Day 2022

More than 100 bankers gather to meet with their state legislators

Each day, bankers work for the economic well-being of their customers and communities. On January 18, those efforts were brought to the forefront at the State Capitol. Over 100 bankers attended WBA Capitol Day (a.k.a. "Cap Day") in Madison; for some, it was the first time stepping foot into a legislator's office, and for others, it was an opportunity to build on established relationships with their elected officials.

The day kicked off at the Monona Terrace with a panel discussion moderated by WisPolitics President **Jeff Mayers**. Participants heard straight from Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos**, Senate Majority Leader **Devin LeMahieu**, Assembly Minority Leader **Greta Neubauer**,

and Senate Minority Leader **Janet Bewley**. Discussion topics included: an outlook for the final two months of the legislative session, the state's economy, the impact the COVID pandemic continues to have on their communities and constituencies, and ways the Legislature can work to address workforce issues.

Scott Jensen and **Chuck Chvala**, "The Insiders," covered many political topics and focused on what this fall's election likely has in store. They covered the Governor's race, the U.S. Senate race, and how the candidates in those races will affect other races down the ballot. They also took us back in time to the **Tommy Thompson** heyday several times to illustrate how much

Wisconsin politics has changed over the last 25 years.

Over the lunch hour, Department of Revenue Secretary **Peter Barca** provided perspective on the state's economy and outlined several of **Gov. Tony Evers'** ongoing priorities as we enter the final year of his first term.

The WBA Government Relations team gave a rundown of state legislative topics, a state government 101 review, and an overview of key 2022 political races to watch. After the prep session was complete, participants headed to the Capitol to advocate on key issues with the unique perspectives only bankers can provide. Legislators learned directly from bankers how issues like credit union expansion, banking regulatory

modernization, credit card swipe fees, and elder financial exploitation affect their local economies and constituents. Thank you to the attendees and sponsors (*below*) who made the event a success:

- » Bankers' Bank
- » FHLBank Chicago
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- » Visa

This event is the culmination of the work that the WBA Government Relations staff, Government Relations Committee, Advocacy Officers, and civically engaged bankers do year-round. The positive impact is evident in the feedback WBA receives from legislators and bankers alike — Capitol Day makes a difference!

January 18, 2022 ★ WBA Capitol Day ★ Monona Terrace | State Capitol



WisPolitics President **Jeff Mayers** moderates the opening legislative panel discussion. From left to right: Mayers, Assembly Minority Leader **Greta Neubauer**, Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos**, Senate Minority Leader **Janet Bewley**, and Sen. Majority Leader **Devin LeMahieu**.



From left to right: WBA Board Chair **Ken Thompson**, Assembly Minority Leader **Greta Neubauer**, Senate Minority Leader **Janet Bewley**, WBA President/CEO **Rose Oswald Poels**, Sen. Majority Leader **Devin LeMahieu**, and Assembly Speaker **Robin Vos**.



Capitol Day attendees standing on the Capitol steps before afternoon meetings with state legislators.



Member bankers discussing WBA's legislative agenda with with Senate Majority Leader **Devin LeMahieu** (left).

Watch Out for These Signs of Business Check Cashing Fraud

By Dave Oldenburg

Business check cashing fraud, dubbed “operation homeless” by law enforcement, continues to impact our industry. Furthermore, it can negatively affect customer perception when fraudulent “on-us” checks are cashed at your bank.

Although there are many kinds of check fraud schemes, business check cashing fraud begins when a customer’s legitimate business checks are taken from commercial mailboxes. Often times, the compromise occurs when a customer’s outgoing mail or the recipient’s mailbox is breached. These mailboxes are often unsecured — making them an ideal target to steal checks. Once the checks are stolen, the ringleader produces quality counterfeit checks that closely resemble the features of legitimate checks. In this type of fraud, the intent is to cash as many checks as possible at numerous bank branches — sometimes pocketing tens of thousands of dollars in just one day.



Guest Column

Dave Oldenburg

To help mitigate your institution’s risk of loss, it is recommended that checks presented by non-customers be handled with additional scrutiny.

The ringleader creates the checks, but recruits individuals (mules) to cash the checks if they have current and valid identification. In turn, the mules receive a small portion each time a check is paid out. In an organized fashion, these criminals travel around the state with counterfeit items, drawn on many accounts from different banks.

Front-line staff best practices

Fortunately, there are ways to stop fraud in its tracks. Here are some suggested “best practices” for front-line staff:

- » Compare the check to recently cleared checks as well as the signature card on file.
- » Looks for signs of traced, forged, or scanned signatures that appear irregular.
- » The current check range

on recently cleared items may be considered — however a counterfeit check is often in the current range.

- » Look for recently issued identification (sometimes mules will obtain identification for the sole purpose of committing check fraud).
- » Refuse to cash the check when presented with worn or damaged identification that omits information.
- » Refuse identification that doesn’t appear to match the individual presenting the check.

Common “red flags”

Be aware of some common “red flags” that may be indicators of business check cashing fraud such as:

- » The branch location is “out of the way” from the

non-customer’s address listed on the check or listed on the identification presented.

- » The person presenting the check came to the branch on foot or was dropped off.
- » The person presenting the check appears anxious, rushed, overly chatty, or name drops.
- » The person is in contact with someone on their mobile phone while the transaction is being performed.

To help mitigate your institution’s risk of loss, it is recommended that checks presented by non-customers be handled with additional scrutiny. Most importantly, if the maker of the check does not have positive pay services, consider adopting procedures where an authorized signer is contacted to validate checks over a certain dollar amount.

Oldenburg is the fraud officer at Bank First, N.A., Watertown and a member of the WBA Financial Crimes Committee.

Please contact WBA staff liaison Scott Birrenkott at 608-441-1200 to learn more about the WBA Financial Crimes Committee.

WBA COMMITTEES

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WBA needs your expertise to help shape the industry’s future

WBA’s committees and advisory boards help shape the industry by supplying fresh ideas, expert insight, and valuable networking connections

to key decisions the association is involved with.

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experience on one of the committees listed below, and find out for yourself how much *you* can impact Wisconsin’s financial

services industry.

To volunteer, please fill out the committee nomination form found at www.wisbank.com/community/get-involved.

COMMITTEES, SECTION BOARDS

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- > WBA BOLT Section Board
- > WBA Financial Crimes Committee
- > WBF (Wisconsin Bankers Foundation) Financial Literacy Advisory Board
- > FIPCO® Software Users’ Committee
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- > WBA Human Resources Committee
- > WBA Marketing Committee
- > WBA Mortgage Lending Committee
- > WBA Retail Banking Committee
- > WBA Technology and Operations Committee
- > WBA Trust Banking Section Board

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WBA extends our gratitude to our Gold, Silver, and Bronze Associate Member companies for standing by and supporting the banking industry and the association during these continued difficult times. Despite addressing their own challenges, these companies also provided services, information, and products that help Wisconsin banks serve their customers and communities. *Thank you.*

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- ✓ In many circumstances we accept bank capital growth instead of loan principal reduction
- ✓ We will come to you! Most loans initiated and closed at the borrowers home or office.

Deal directly with a lender/owner who is a CPA who understands the banking industry. Although we cannot give direct advice, we have 35 years of industry experience and can make your job far less stressful and time consuming. We will understand your transaction. You do not need to educate the lender.

Our belief is to make the loan and then stay out of the banker's way and let you do your job. You will only see us when you choose to.

Call Rick Gerber at 1.866.282.3501 or email rickg@chippewavalleybank.com



Wisconsin Bankers Foundation

WBF Scholarship Set Careers in Motion

By Hannah Flanders



Wilson

In 2008, **Leah Wilson** was awarded the Wisconsin Bankers Foundation (WBF) Spring Scholarship,

which, at that time, was the Wisconsin Bankers Association's (WBA) Retail Banking Section "Technical College" Scholarship. While a lot has changed since the mid-2000s not only in Wilson's career, but also in the banking industry; some things remain absolutely the same — bankers' commitment to their communities and to the future success of the banking industry.

Between her junior and senior year in high school, Wilson began her career



in banking as a teller at Mid-Wisconsin Bank in Neillsville. Shortly after, she had decided that a career in banking would align well with her passion for business and math, while also allowing her to work within the office setting she had always envisioned.

In the last several years, Wilson has held many positions throughout the bank, from teller to personal banker and now as the assistant vice president – mortgage lender and assistant branch manager at Citizens State Bank of Loyal

in Neillsville. Her expertise in the industry is a result of her dedication to bettering her community and understanding how to navigate her career path.

As she looks back upon the last 14 years in the banking industry, she credits WBA's scholarship for her ability to further her education at Chippewa Valley Technical College (CVTC) in Eau Claire. While in the business management program, she was able to complete many courses that continue to be beneficial to her career.

In addition to the CVTC courses she pursued with the scholarship, Wilson has attended several courses offered by WBA, including Residential Mortgage Lending School and Lending Boot

"I have learned a lot through the education opportunities provided by the WBA. I would encourage people to familiarize themselves with these opportunities and use them."

— Leah Wilson
assistant vice president
– mortgage lender and
assistant branch manager
Citizens State Bank of Loyal

Camp, that have allowed continuous growth in her career. "I have learned a lot through the education opportunities provided by the WBA," says Wilson. "I would encourage people to familiarize themselves with these opportunities and use them."

(continued on p. 13)

SCHOLARSHIP

Wisconsin Bankers
FOUNDATION

Four awards of \$2,000 each
will be given to qualified 2021-2022 high school seniors,
adults returning to college, or current college students.

Visit wisbankfoundation.org/scholarships to download
all application materials or contact Hannah Flanders at
608-441-1237 or hflanders@wisbank.com.

Submit Your Photos to Scenes of Wisconsin Calendar Contest

Enter for a chance to see your photo featured in the popular calendar

The Scenes of Wisconsin Calendar — cherished by bank customers around the state — will be entering its 16th year with the 2023 edition. The calendars are a high-quality, cost-effective marketing tool sold exclusively to banks across Wisconsin, and each bank customizes the calendars with their own logo.

All of the photos submitted for the contest are captured by Wisconsin bankers, their family members, bank directors, or bank customers. Last year, WBA received over



230 photo submissions, which enabled the selection panel

Submit photos for the 2023 calendar and place your order at wisbank.com/ScenesOfWI.

to curate a stunning calendar featuring seasonal images, sampling both urban and rural scenes throughout Wisconsin's geography. Photo submissions for the 2023 calendar are being accepted now through **May 1, 2022**, and winners will be notified by June 1, 2022.

If you are interested in submitting your photography for the photo contest or would like to place an order for your bank's supply of calendars, please visit www.wisbank.com/ScenesOfWI.

WBF and GSB Scholarship Opportunities Available

WBF Spring Scholarships

Four \$2,000 scholarships are now offered through the Wisconsin Bankers Foundation (WBF) each spring. This year's application period is currently open, and WBF will continue to accept applications from high school seniors and college

students through Tuesday, March 15, 2022.

Applications for **WBF's Spring Scholarships** can be found at <https://wisbankfoundation.org/scholarships>.

Please contact WBA's **Hannah Flanders** at hflanders@wisbank.com if you have any questions!

GSB Human Resource Management School

Applications for The **GSB Human Resource Manage-**

ment School Scholarship are due by February 18. Visit <https://www.wisbank.com/gsb-scholarships/> to apply!

Congratulations to UW-Platteville student **Alexis Boston** from Milton, Wis. and UW-River Falls student **Joseph Schlies** from Denmark, Wis. who each received WBF's second annual Agricultural Banking Scholarship in January!

WBF Scholarship

(continued from p. 12)

Within the community banking environment, in which she has spent much of her career, Wilson has been able to take advantage of many opportunities offered in the bank to further explore several different departments and discover which career path was best suited for her goals and interests. The opportunities, provided in part by WBA and her bank, have allowed Wilson to take ownership of the career path she desired as well as continue to grow alongside

the industry — long after the scholarship was awarded.

Ultimately, the opportunities have provided Wilson access to what she considers to be some of the “endless benefits of working in a community bank,” including the ability to build strong relationships with customers, develop deeper connections within the community, and develop her own path that aligns with her goals and interests.

Flanders is WBA writer/editor.

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WIPFLI



Bulletin Board

News about people working in Wisconsin's financial institutions

Promotions and New Hires

Horicon

Horicon Bank announced the promotion of two employees, **Fred C. Schwertfeger** (pictured) and **Robert B. Traylor** (pictured), to executive vice president.

Madison

Bankers' Bank, a WBA Gold Associate Member, is excited to announce the promotion of **Jeff Niesen** to executive vice president.

First Business Bank is pleased to welcome **Joseph Matte** (pictured) as the senior director of IT security and compliance.



Schwertfeger



Traylor



Matte



Soderquist



Gorecki

New Richmond

FNC Bank is excited to announce the promotion of **Sheri Soderquist** (pictured) to chief operating officer.

Union Grove

Community State Bank is pleased to announce the following staffing updates in the Lake Geneva and Kenosha markets: **Sherri Gorecki** (pictured) as Lake Geneva

retail manager, **Barbara Fish** (pictured) as Lake Geneva universal banker, and **Julie Schrader** (pictured) as Kenosha and Paddock Lake retail manager.

Waukesha

Waukesha State Bank has hired **D. Rodney Hathaway** (pictured) as chief investment officer. The bank has also promoted **Juliet Martinez**

(pictured) to bank manager of its Muskego office and **Tyler Kern** (pictured) to investment officer.

Wauwatosa

The Equitable Bank has hired **John Udvare** as assistant vice president, treasurer/controller.

Congratulations



Smit

Fond du Lac **Chris Smit**

(pictured) celebrated 30 years of service with National Exchange Bank & Trust on December 9, 2021.

(continued on p. 15)

Honoring Banking Professionals for Years of Dedicated Service



On December 14, WBA President and CEO **Rose Oswald Poels** presented five Lifetime Service Awards and one 50-Year Club certificate to long-time banking professionals at First Citizens State Bank (FCSB), Whitewater. Photo at left (left to right) are: **Nate Parrish**, FCSB president; **Mary Lou Ward** (36 years), and Oswald Poels. Above (left to right) are: **Karen Sourile** (35 years); Parrish; **Barb Schoppe** (47 years); Oswald Poels; **Jim Caldwell**, FCSB CEO; **Mike Mikkelsen** (50 years); and **Mary Nicoson** (47 years). **Kathy Riese** (33 years) is not pictured.

BS Recruiters
155 E Capitol Drive Suite 5
Hartland, WI 53029
www.bsrecruiters.com

BS Recruiters is an executive search firm providing placement services to banks in the Wisconsin market that seek top-caliber talent.

The keys to our long success are our industry experience, personal commitment, and professionalism of our recruiters. We enjoy long-term relationships with the great majority of our clients because of our commitment to provide them with the highest level of service.

Erick Gorecki
262-369-7007

Del Garcia
262-369-8109

Have good news? To submit a notice, please email bulletinboard@wisbank.com or mail entries to *WBA Bulletin Board*, 4721 South Biltmore Lane, Madison, WI 53718. Send photos as JPEG files. Questions? Contact WBA's **Hannah Flanders** at 608-441-1237 or hflanders@wisbank.com.

Bulletin Board

News about people working in Wisconsin's financial institutions

Bulletin Board

(continued from p. 14)

Announcements Columbus

On December 6, Farmers & Merchants Union Bank (FMUB) employees, **Shaina Hannaman** and **Samantha Petrie**, spoke to a group at the Columbus



Fish



Schrader



Hathaway



Martinez



Kern

Senior Center regarding scam basics: what to look for, charity scams, and grandparent scams.

Marinette

Throughout 2021, The Stephenson National Bank & Trust (SNBT) made monetary

donations totaling \$200,000 to non-profits in Marinette, Oconto, and Brown Counties in Wisconsin, and Menominee and Marquette Counties in Michigan, shared year end contributions with 84 local non-profit organizations, and helped 46 employees pledge 5,098 hours to 110 organizations for 2022.

Farmers & Merchants Union Bank Donates \$30,000 to Prairie Ridge Health in Columbus



Farmers & Merchants Union Bank in Columbus donated \$30,000 to the Prairie Ridge Health (PRH) Foundation to fully fund a new cardiac central monitoring system for the PRH Cardiac Rehabilitation Program in support of the PRH Foundation's 2021 Heart Healthy Community Appeal. Pictured (left to right) are: **Toni Wizner**, PRH ATC/L; **Melissa Mangan**, PRH vice president of finance/CFO; **Kristi Line**, executive director of PRH Foundation; **John Russell**, PRH president/CEO; **Luanne Gould**, PRH RN; **Katy Geiger**, PRH RN, director of outpatient services; **Anne Donahue**, PRH Foundation board member; **Alie Hayes**, PRH RN, cardiac rehab; **June Waterworth**, FMUB board chairwoman; **Randy Bobholz**, FMUB president and CEO; **Amanda Emery-Morris**, FMUB training and marketing director; and **Samantha Petrie**, FMUB retail banking supervisor.

One Community Bank Donates \$50,000 to Non-profit Little John's



One Community Bank (OCB) is proud to continue investing in its communities. In honor of this year's Giving Tuesday, OCB is proud to announce a \$50,000 donation to Little John's to allow **Chef Dave** and his team to renovate and open a new commissary kitchen at 5302 Verona Road in Fitchburg. This donation goes directly to assisting in Little John's mission to eliminate food insecurity in its communities. Pictured (left to right) are: **Marc McMerty**, OCB vice president commercial banking officer, **Jennifer Zisser**, Little John's director of business development, **Scott Hoerth**, OCB senior market president, and **Maegan Cassel**, Little John's business development coordinator (Little John's).

Forward Awards \$55,000 to Local Charities from Guide Our Giving



Forward Bank — including Forward Insurance and Forward Investment Services — has given away \$55,000 to 11 local non-profits and charities to help further their mission! Using social media channels and printed materials, Forward encouraged its communities to vote and help guide its selection of one charity per community to receive \$5,000. Pictured (left to right) are: **Lindsey Safford**, **Chrissy Walczak**, **John Kaprelian**, **Megan Genteman**, **Rob Mort**, **Sandy Klatt**, **Bill Sennholz**, **Tricia Fancher**, **Sheri Dick**, **Carissa Miller**, **Chris Damerell**, and **Jennifer Sobotta**.



Your EDUCATION Calendar

Conferences | Summits

Schools | Boot Camps

Seminars | Workshops

WBA Webinars

Other Events

FEBRUARY 2022

- **Bank Executives Conference**
9–11 Wisconsin Dells
- **In-House Legal Counsel Webinar: Session 4**
17 6-Part Webinar Series; \$750/attendee
- **Compliance Forum: Session 3**
22 Wausau; Membership (*pricing options vary*)
23 Madison; Membership (*pricing options vary*)

MARCH 2022

- **WBA/ABA Washington Summit**
7–9 Washington, D.C. or virtual
- **Introduction to Commercial Lending School**
14–16 Madison; \$795/attendee
- **Call Report Review & Update Workshop**
15–16 Virtual half-days
- **Security Officer Workshop**
17 Wisconsin Dells or virtual; \$175/attendee
- **Advanced IRA Workshops**
22 Wausau area; \$245/attendee
24 Madison; \$245/attendee
- 3/29 • **Residential Mortgage Lending School**
–4/1 Madison; \$1,095/attendee

APRIL 2022

- **Loan Compliance School**
4–8 Madison; \$1,295/attendee
- **Agricultural Bankers Conference**
6–7 Wisconsin Dells; \$300/ag section member or \$350/non-section member attendee
- **Real Estate Compliance School**
6–8 Madison; \$795/attendee
- **In-House Legal Counsel Webinar: Session 5**
7 6-Part Webinar Series; \$750/attendee
- **HSA Workshop**
12 Madison; \$245/attendee
- **Power of Community Week**
18–23 www.wisbank.com/BanksPowerWI
- **FIPCO Software & Compliance Forum: Deposit**
21 Madison
- **American Mortgage Conference**
25–27 Pinehurst, N.C.
- **Women in Banking Conference**
26 Wisconsin Dells or virtual

APRIL 2022 (continued)

- **Community Bankers for Compliance (CBC) — Session II**
26 Stevens Point; Membership (*pricing options vary*)
27 Madison; Membership (*pricing options vary*)

MAY 2022

- **Personal Banker School**
3–4 Wausau; \$495/attendee
- **WBA/ICBA Capital Summit**
3–5 Washington, D.C.
- **School of Bank Management**
9–13 Madison; \$1,395/attendee
- **BSA/AML Workshop**
12 Wisconsin Dells; \$245/attendee
- **FDIC Bank Directors College**
18 Stevens Point
19 Madison
- **In-House Legal Counsel Webinar: Session 6**
26 6-Part Webinar Series; \$750/attendee
- **Principles of Banking Course**
TBD Locations TBD; \$550/attendee

JUNE 2022

- **BOLT Summer Leadership Summit**
9–10 Wisconsin Dells; \$200/attendee
- **Credit Analysis Boot Camp**
22–23 Rothschild/Wausau; \$495/attendee

JULY 2022

- **Community Bankers for Compliance (CBC) — Session III**
26–27 Virtual half-days; Membership (*pricing options vary*)

» Visit www.wisbank.com/education for more information and online registration.
» Or email WBA Education at wbaeducation@wisbank.com or call 608-441-1252.

What Agricultural Bankers Can Expect in 2022

The WBA Agricultural Bankers Section Board is excited to announce that registration is now open for the annual **WBA Agricultural Bankers Conference**, which will return in person on April 6-7, 2022 at the Kalahari Resort & Convention Center in Wisconsin Dells.

This year's conference will help prepare ag bankers for the many conversations that take place between farm client and banker. Whether good times or bad, high prices or low, the perfect weather or the most unusual weather events in history; Wisconsin ag bankers continue to provide those "value-added conversations" beyond the traditional financing discussions.

In addition to the dairy and commodity market outlook sessions that have become staples of the annual



conference, attendees will hear from attorney **Dan Purtell** on the topic of farm transition planning. Each family farm presents unique challenges and opportunities when it comes to transition planning, and Purtell has seen it all. Sharing best practices learned from experiencing the good, the bad, and the ugly, Purtell will also include time for audience Q&A in his presentation.

Farmer Mac economist, **Greg Lyons**, advises bankers to "ride the bull with a helmet" as he shares his agricultural

economic outlook for 2022. Farmers and ranchers are entering 2022 with strong market prices, surging land values, and more cash on hand than at any point since the commodity supercycle. This session will cover early indications of 2022 incomes for producers in Wisconsin, as well as what pitfalls could knock this bull market on its heels. How deeply will inflation cut into producer profitability? Can we rely on strong agricultural exports if China is a top trade market?

Will a rising rate environment end land value growth? Lyons' session will review these and other questions as we seek to answer just how comfortable lenders can be with the current strong state of the agricultural sector.

In addition to a great lineup of speakers and presentations, attendees will enjoy the valuable networking that takes place throughout the conference. An exhibit hall of trusted partners will showcase the latest in ag finance products/services and provide a place for value-added conversations during breaks and meals.

Make plans to join your fellow ag bankers in the Dells, April 6-7. You can find more information on the conference agenda, room block details, and more at www.wisbank.com/ag.

women in banking
 conference

Invest in Your Women Leaders.

» **April 26, 2022**
 Glacier Canyon Lodge & Convention Center
 45 Hillman Road
 Wisconsin Dells

» Visit www.wisbank.com/Women to learn more or to register online.

Invest in Your Women Leaders

» Send your bank's top performing women to the WBA Women in Banking Conference as an investment in their futures with your bank.

WBA Associate Members

New Associate Member Services Available for WBA Members

The WBA has approved the following service providers as new WBA Associate Members.

Agrograph Inc.

www.agrograph.com

Madison, Wisc.

Contact: **James O'Brien**

Tel: 608-515-8010

info@agrograph.com

Agrograph is a global agri-finance company focused on data-based solutions that help industries supporting farmers. Agrograph's powerful A.I. solutions help companies anticipate trends, manage risk, and trigger important business decisions with boundless technology.

Arctic Wolf

www.arcticwolf.com

Eden Prairie, Minn.

Contact: **Haley Kaprielian**

Tel: 831-595-8602

haley.kaprielian@arcticwolf.com

Arctic Wolf® is the global leader in security operations, delivering the first cloud-native security operations platform to end cyber risk. Powered by threat telemetry spanning endpoint, network, and cloud sources, the Arctic Wolf® Security Operations Cloud ingests and analyzes more than 1.6 trillion security events a week across the globe,

For more information, please contact WBA at sales@wisbank.com or visit www.wisbank.com.

enabling critical outcomes for most security use cases and optimizing customers' disparate security solutions. Now deployed to more than 2,300 customers worldwide, the Arctic Wolf® Platform delivers automated threat detection and response at scale, and empowers organizations of any size to establish world-class security operations with the push of a button.

Bank Holding Company Association

<https://thebhca.org>

Minneapolis, Minn.

Contact: **Tom Bengston**

Tel: 952-835-2275

tom@nfrcom.com

If you are a bank owner, the Bank Holding Company Association is the right organization for you. Whether your ownership consists of a few shares or 100 percent, you will find BHCA membership delivers unique value to bank owners like you. The Bank Holding Company Association exists to provide education and business connections critical to the vitality of bank holding companies.

Hilltop Securities, Inc.

www.hilltopsecurities.com

Grafton, Wis.

Contact: **Aaron D. Schmanski**

Tel: 414-852-4265

aaron.schmanski@hilltopsecurities.com

hilltopsecurities.com

Hilltop Securities, a 75-year-old financial services firm part of Hilltop Holdings Inc. (a diversified financial holding company publicly traded under HTH), provides an array of financial products and services through our broker-dealer, mortgage origination and insurance segments. As a national leader in municipal sales and trading, an originator of Mortgage-backed Securities, and active in underwriting and structuring agency debentures, Hilltop Securities is able to meet liability management needs of community bank clients. The expertise of the Hilltop team guides the development of relative value investment strategies, including yield curve analysis, sector/security trends, and strategic outlooks. With the addition of Hilltop BancSystem, they are able to offer customized services for depository institutions to assist them in interest rate risk analysis, investment portfolio management, and asset/liability management.

Open Lending

www.openlending.com

Austin, Texas

Contact: **Julie Knoble**

Tel: 512-892-0400

jknoble@openlending.com

Open Lending (NASDAQ: LPRO) provides loan analytics, risk-based pricing, risk modeling and default insurance to auto lenders throughout the United States. For 20 years they have been empowering financial institutions to create profitable auto loan portfolios by saying "yes" to more automotive loans.

Primax

www.primax.us

St. Petersburg, Fla.

Contact: **Mitch Prashak**

Tel: 866-820-5400

mprashak@primax.us

Primax provides community banks with payment processing services and an expansive array of value-added technology and solutions. With a longstanding commitment to service excellence, Primax has been designing and providing support services for banks throughout the U.S. and the Caribbean for more than 40 years. For more information, visit www.primax.us.

WIN Technology

<https://wintechnology.com>

Eau Claire, Wis.

Contact: **Michael Mattiuz**

Tel: 715-832-3750

mike.mattiuz@wintechnology.com

WIN Technology tames technology so you can thrive. Leveraging technology to clearly advance your business is complex, and they make it simpler. Since 1997, WIN Technology has focused on serving the Upper Midwest with valued IT infrastructure expertise. The applications you use to run your business run best on WIN Technology's infrastructure, collaboratively co-managed by your team and theirs. WIN Technology delivers an uncommon blend of private fiber-line network transport combined with IT professional services, managed services, and cybersecurity. Orchestration of Network, Servers, Help Desk, Hosted Infrastructure, Co-Location, VDI, Backup, SD-WAN, PBX, IT Procurement, Public Cloud, and more.

WBA Associate membership should not be construed as an endorsement of the company's products or services by the WBA.

WBA Associate Member Program

The WBA Associate Membership program offers three membership package levels in addition to the standard membership: Gold, Silver, and Bronze. Through their investment in a package-level membership, these WBA Associate Members not only streamline their involvement with the association through advertising, sponsorships, and exhibit opportunities, they further demonstrate their commitment to supporting Wisconsin's banking industry as a whole.

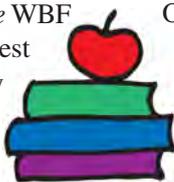
To learn more about the WBA Associate Member Packages, visit www.wisbank.com/associates/associate-member-packages.

WBF Offers Reading Kits for Teach Children to Save Day

Reading Raises Interest Kits are now available

Every year, bankers from around the state of Wisconsin join forces in teaching the importance of saving and spending wisely to the youngest members of their communities. In conjunction with WBA's Power of Community Week, April 18–23, and National Teach Children to Save Day on April 28, the Wisconsin Bankers Foundation

(WBF) provides a *free* WBF Reading Raises Interest Kit to each and every member bank branch at their request.



This year's kit features the book *It's a Habit, Sammy Rabbit!* by **Sam Renick**, which also includes lesson plans appropriate for engaging students in Grades K–2 (ages 5+) in the concepts of saving money and habits. The kit also features a separate activity and coloring book to leave behind in the classroom.

Online resources will also be offered to help further benefit the various capacities of classrooms.



The Foundation is excited to continue to help members spread the word on the importance of financial literacy throughout their communities. Visit www.wisbankfoundation.org/reading-raises-interest-kits today to **order your free kit by March 1** to be shipped

in time for National Teach Children to Save Day on April 28.

Please direct questions to WBA's **Hannah Flanders** at 608-441-1237 or hflanders@wisbank.com.

» Visit www.wisbankfoundation.org/reading-raises-interest-kits today to **order your free kit by March 1** to be shipped in time for National Teach Children to Save Day on April 28.

Gearing Up for Power of Community Week, April 18–23

Every year, bankers, WBA Associate Members, and WBA staff look forward to getting out into their communities for a week that shows our collective impact in a meaningful way. While we know that the banking industry is committed to serving Wisconsin communities throughout the year, the Power of Community Week is a major highlight that demonstrates to the public our ongoing commitment to those local communities.

The **2022 WBA Power of Community Week will take place April 18–23, 2022** and will be followed by **National Teach Children to Save Day on April 28, 2022**. Activities in late April and early May still count toward a bank's participation in the WBA Power of Community Week. Examples of participation in the WBA Power of Community Week include volunteering at nursing homes, hosting shredding events at the bank, running a food drive, or giving

financial literacy presentations in K–12 classrooms (including virtual presentations). We invite all members to participate in this effort to show how much Wisconsin's banking industry supports the communities in our state.

Create team spirit by ordering Power of Community t-shirts for your company! The shirts feature the campaign logo and hashtag (**#BanksPowerWI**). A company logo may also be added to the back of the t-shirts. T-shirt

orders are due March 1, 2022.

Visit www.wisbank.com/BanksPowerWI to

- » order t-shirts,
- » designate a Power of Community Week contact for your organization, and
- » let WBA know about your planned activities, so they can be added to the interactive map of activities statewide.

We look forward to an impactful week of serving the communities we are proud to call home!

Wisconsin Bankers Association

Power of

COMMUNITY

#BanksPowerWI

GET INVOLVED

DATES:
APRIL 18–23, 2022

What is the WBA Power of Community Week?

The WBA Power of Community campaign brings our member bankers together to celebrate your commitment to the communities you serve. During the week, we encourage all bankers to engage in one or more community service activities.

Commit to participating online at
www.wisbank.com/BanksPowerWI

Questions: Contact WBA's Lori Kalscheuer at lkalscheuer@wisbank.com or at 608-441-1250.

Service Culture

(continued from p. 1)

How the banking industry can nurture a culture of service

Culver's was founded in 1984 in Sauk City and, after nearly 40 years of serving fast-food throughout the U.S., their mission of "putting people first" has led to nationwide success. To **Craig Culver**, co-founder of Culver's, the success of the organization has always been attributed to the

This [scholarship] program allows us to retain our talented, ambitious team members. It also ensures our mission continues to spread through new owner-operators who understand, value, and passionately display our dedication to guest service.

— Craig Culver
Culver's co-founder

team members and owner-operators. By treating staff like part of the Culver's family, Culver has given thousands of people the opportunity to continue growing as individuals and as professionals.

Hospitality is at the core of the service culture at Culver's. Team members feel passionately about delivering the highest quality service to every guest. This passion shown by team members is essential for earning trust and loyalty among customers. However, the passion doesn't start or end at the frontline; since its foundation, Culver's has been committed to creating team-centric environments that develop responsibility, leadership, and teamwork skills that benefit every member of the team, personally and professionally.



The Culver's Foundation Scholarship Program was founded in 1993 as a way to recognize the commitment of Culver's team members. According to Culver, the program has awarded over \$5 million in scholarships to more than 3,000 team members. Along with offering scholarships, the Culver's mentorship program allows for the continued growth of managers into owner-operator positions.

"This program allows us to retain our talented, ambitious team members," says Culver. "It also ensures our mission continues to spread through new owner-operators who understand, value, and passionately display our dedication to guest service."

By ensuring that all staff at Culver's feel satisfied with their environment, they are able to continue the Culver's promise to show genuine care for the service they provide.

Vortex Optics was founded in 2002 to provide the best optics, apparel, and service in any industry. Headquartered in Barneveld, Vortex's customer-centric approach to business and mission in success has created a following of devoted clientele around the world. The four core values of Vortex are rooted in "aligning [themselves] with the needs

and interests of others," which requires the company to value the expectations and feedback of every customer to measure their own success.

"When we say serving others, we mean serving others from *their* perspective," says Vortex CEO **Joe Hamilton**. "We would never suggest we are perfect, but we make a concerted effort to serve others based off what *they* want and *their* expectations and then monitor our progress based off *their* feedback."

The Vortex team encourages their team-members to go above and beyond professionally and personally. Vortex offers a list of development opportunities for staff members as well as benefits including an on-site preschool, oil changes, chiropractic care, massage chairs, and much more. These services provide nearly endless opportunities for staff to deepen their engagement and loyalty to the business and services they are delivering.

More than engagement activities, though those regularly occur in the Vortex office, Hamilton highlights celebrating the wins of customer "love letters." The letters are regularly shared with team members. Not only do they reward the team for

Understand the needs and experience of the customers. These initiatives relate to "ride the ride the riders ride," or "the best service is no service." If you can fix the problem before the customer has to contact you about it — that's how you begin to raise the bar and exceed their expectations.

— Morgan Ramaker
executive director
BCycle

their excellent service, but to serve as motivation when they approach the next customer. The personal touch of a "love letter" puts everything into perspective, and spotlights the success of team members along with their impact on the Vortex community.

Vortex continually puts the interest of others first, even if it impacts their bottom line. By prioritizing the health, security, and balance of their team, staff feel compelled to do the same for their customers. By caring for the individual, Vortex is ultimately fostering an environment where people feel inspired to go above and beyond.

» Nurturing the Culture of Service in Banking

Customer service is a fundamental aspect of the banking industry. Staff, no matter their position in the bank, play a key role in offering each consumer the service that creates a trusted and safe institution that community members come to rely on.

The success stories of BCycle, Culver's, and Vortex demonstrate that creating, first, a people-oriented organization in which fairness and respect for the individual

(continued on p. 21)

Service Culture

(continued from p. 20)

have greater prioritization than the operational or financial outcome is incredibly important in establishing the culture. Wisconsin companies have shown that their efforts in service culture have not only led to exceptional growth within their business, but greater satisfaction among both customers and employees in terms of retention and loyalty. This orientation towards people encompasses both respect for customers as well as for employees and leads to the foundation of a strong community within the organization.

Vortex's Hamilton advises that companies deeply embed their mission with shared

values. "Don't make 'service' an initiative or flavor of the month project," he says. "Either make it a value or don't do anything at all. By making it a value, you are going to weave it into everything you do and every interaction." He recommends considering service not only as something to the greater community but also as something offered internally. Welcoming staff members into a safe, inclusive environment invites them to not only perform their best but exceed in the overall mission of the institution to serve its community. When people feel valued, they are more likely to put that value back into their work.

Along with the opportunities given to team members, businesses that

strive for a culture of service understand that what may be initially considered a financial burden on the company, could lead to a more positive experience that attracts and retains customers and employees. Personal interactions, for example, leave lasting impacts and stand out among competitors.

Expansion upon a culture of service continues to show in Wisconsin-based businesses the ability to increase employee productivity and engagement all while providing the high-quality service that Wisconsinites have come to expect in every industry. Service culture is not something that simply develops on its own — it takes company-wide intention and commitment.

When we say serving others, we mean serving others from *their* perspective. We would never suggest we are perfect, but we make a concerted effort to serve others based off what *they* want and *their* expectations and then monitor our progress based off *their* feedback.

— Joe Hamilton
CEO, Vortex

In today's competitive hiring market, employees are looking for more than just a job. Now's the time to set your company apart in the eyes of talent seeking a new way of approaching service.

Flanders is WBA writer/editor.

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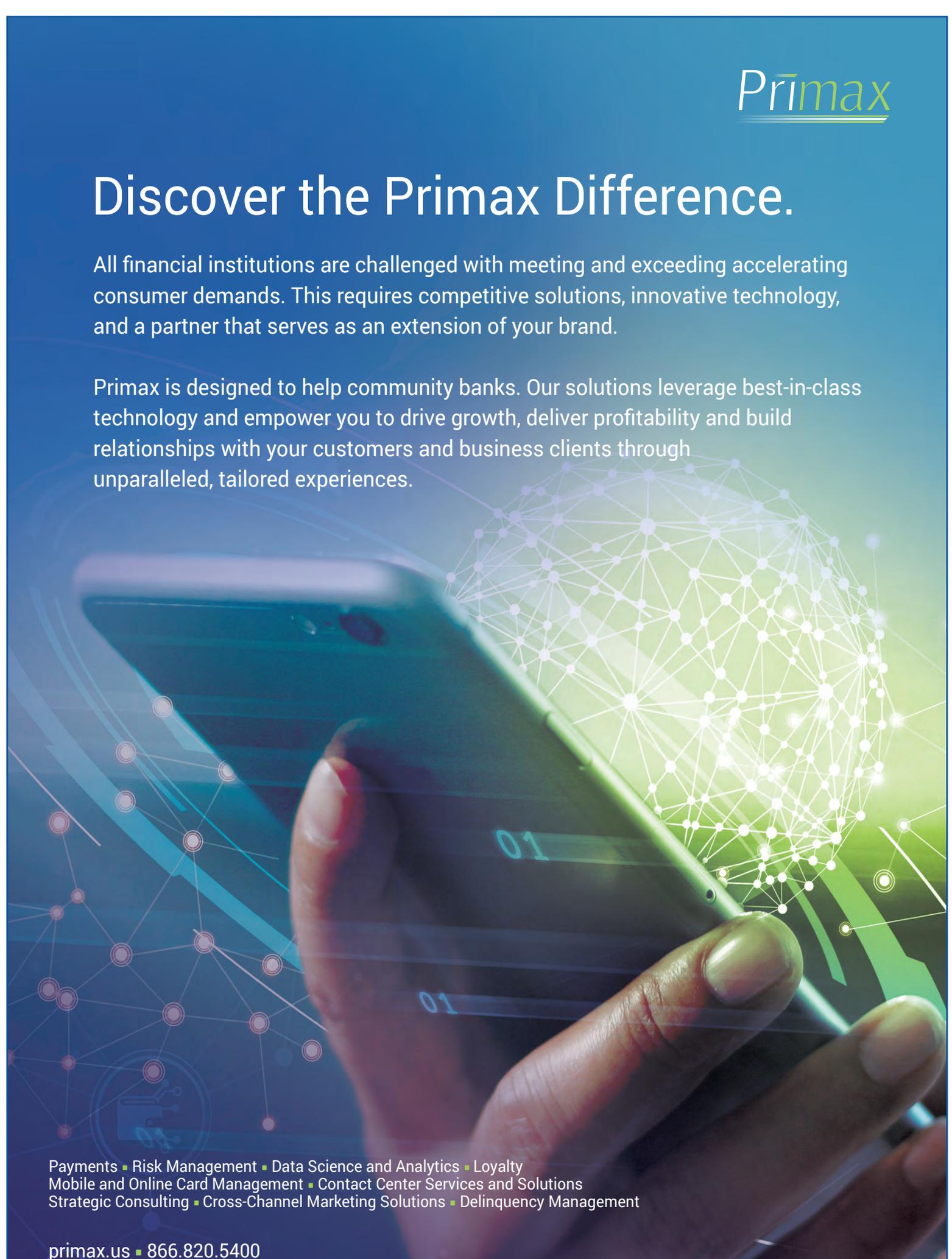
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The Primax logo is located in the top right corner. It features the word "Primax" in a white, sans-serif font. The letter "i" is stylized with a horizontal bar extending to the right, and the letter "x" has a horizontal bar extending to the left. The logo is set against a dark blue background with a subtle network pattern of white dots and lines.

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The background of the advertisement is a dark blue gradient. In the center, a hand is shown holding a smartphone. Overlaid on the phone and the background are various digital graphics: a network of white dots connected by thin lines, a glowing green sphere, and several blue and green arrows pointing in different directions. The overall aesthetic is modern and tech-oriented.

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interface.ai was founded with the mission to help every financial institution efficiently scale and help their customers achieve financial wellness using artificial intelligence (AI). **Srinivas Njay**, founder and CEO of interface.ai, understands that the success of an institution lies not only in the services provided, but in the experiences of employees and customers alike.



Learn more... Contact FIPCO Sales at fipcosales@fipco.com.

Banks will also be one of the first to combat hiring and retention while also providing added assistance to their frontline staff. Although interface.ai's intelligent virtual assistant (IVA) is able

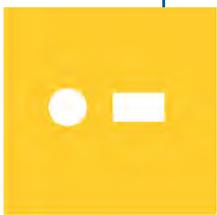
to bank functions to customers no matter the time of day, interface.ai still encourages banks to be cautious when approaching AI technology. As many vendors may compromise aspects such as maintenance and authentication for their own ROI — interface.ai, however — prides itself on helping banks offer the best customer service, highest safety standards, guaranteed ROI, as well as ongoing support and maintenance.

Security requirements and compliance laws are a top priority in ensuring that the solutions provided to banks are certified, follow appropriate guidelines, are protected and backed up at two different levels, and are audit logged. Along with

this, all maintenance — including setup, ongoing AI training, support, and any new system integrations — are at no additional cost to the bank. interface.ai firmly believes that AI will be the solution to an improvement in customer and employee experience, efficiency, and revenue throughout the banking industry and wants to allow access to banks of all sizes to experience and profit from the future's technology.

To learn more about the solutions interface.ai offers, visit <https://interface.ai/> or email **Srinivas Njay** at srinivas@interface.ai.

interface.ai is a WBA Associate Member.



» Leap from digital to intelligent as interface.ai demonstrate their human-level natural language understanding system in two upcoming webinars on **February 18** and **February 22, 2022**. Register now at <https://www.fipco.com/training/sales-marketing-events>.

interface

Stepping into the future, with the help of AI, interface.ai's assistants automate many services that the bank is already offering. From phone banking to debt collection, banks are able to rely on up to 60 omni-channel solutions that support operations and enhance experiences. Along with this, customers would benefit from "smart" assistants whose focus is simplifying discovery and transaction experience through conversation.

to answer frequently asked questions 24/7 and relieves staff to offer greater support to specific inquiries and improve productivity. Products provided by interface.ai are designed to enable banks to operate with high efficiency even during testing circumstances.

As AI becomes increasingly more popular, there is no doubt bankers have concerns about how AI technology will impact their business. While AI allows continuous access

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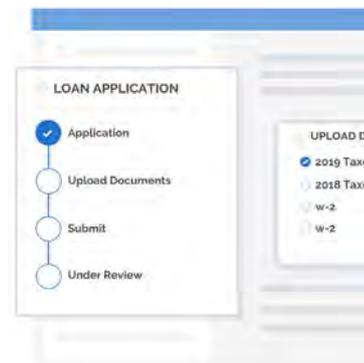
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A (Great) Picture is Worth a Thousand Likes

Tips for creating more visually captivating photographs with just a cell phone

By Daniel Rivera

Once upon a time, all a business needed to grab a consumer's attention was a catchy tagline. In today's world, media channels are constantly evolving, and battling brands are always looking for ways to make their content stand out over the competition. Your social media posts reflect your bank's brand and for your brand to stand out, your posts must

» Happy people want to work with happy people. So, regardless of whether you're trying to attract new customers or new employees, make sure those in your photos are showing you their best smiling faces.

do the same. We all know (at least we *should* know) that a social media post cannot rely solely on witty text to draw the attention of anyone scrolling through. At the same time though, just posting any photo will not do the trick either.

Despite what you may believe, you don't need a fancy



Strategic Connections

Daniel Rivera

professional camera to take stellar photos. Most of the time, your smart phone will do the trick. Here are some simple tips for creating more visually captivating photographs with just your cell phone:

Look for the Light

The first step to taking a great photo is to find the best light source and to adjust your shot accordingly. You want to make sure that your subject is well-lit while also not having them stare directly into the sun. Sometimes your options are limited, and your phone will adjust accordingly. However, if your phone is automatically setting the exposure too low, tap the screen on the area that is appearing too dark as you're setting up your shot, and your phone will adjust the overall exposure to compensate for that part of the image.

Tell the Story

Getting a great group photo isn't just about gathering everyone for a quick picture. You'll want to incorporate some elements into the frame that help tell the story. If you are raising money for breast cancer awareness, make sure everyone is wearing pink. If you're sponsoring a concert in the community, be sure to show the musicians on stage by your bank's banner. And if your bank is taking part in the town's parade, show off the colorful float as well as anyone walking by it, ready with goodies to throw out to the crowd.

Make 'em Smile!

Happy people want to work with happy people. So, regardless of whether you're trying to attract new customers or new employees, make sure those in your photos are showing you their best smiling faces.

Enhance Your Photos

Sometimes, you can get a great-looking shot straight out of the camera that needs no additional work — but many

times — your photo could use a little enhancing. Adjusting the brightness, contrast, color saturation, and crop of your photo are all you need to make your photo pop. You don't even need to purchase a software subscription to make these simple edits either. Adobe has free mobile versions of their Photoshop and Lightroom programs, while Snapseed and PicMonkey are also great photo-editing options worth looking into, all available for Android and iOS devices.

Media and its impact on consumers is constantly evolving. So, now that you're ready to take your smartphone photography to a whole new level, just imagine what you can do with your bank's brand once you've taken it a step further with video!

Rivera is marketing coordinator at The Bank of New Glarus and a member of the 2021–2022 WBA Marketing Committee.

This column is published bi-monthly in Wisconsin Banker and is written by members of the WBA Marketing Committee.



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Wisconsin Bank CEOs Report Positive Economic Conditions

WBA releases results of Bank CEO Economic Conditions Survey

In the Wisconsin Bankers Association’s biannual **Economic Conditions Survey** of Wisconsin bank CEOs, 79% of respondents rated Wisconsin’s current economic health as “excellent” or “good.” This marks a significant increase since December 2020, when only 42% of survey respondents gave “excellent” or “good” ratings. Sixty-four percent of Wisconsin bank CEOs who completed the most recent survey predict that the economy will stay the same in the next six months, while 21% predict it will grow and 15% predict it will weaken.

“Wisconsin bank CEOs are in a unique position to gain insights into the micro-economic activities in their markets given the critical roles they play as lenders, advisors, and community leaders. As such, they often see developments occurring before economic trends are widely identified,” said WBA President and CEO **Rose Oswald Poels**. “As industries rebound — including tourism, manufacturing, construction, and agriculture — economic stability is taking hold.”

Many bank CEOs highlighted bright spots in their local economies such as low unemployment rates, strong

consumer demand, a strong housing market, high commodity prices, growth in health care technology, and increased manufacturing and construction. Among the sources of economic concern for bank CEOs were inflation, new variants and waves of COVID-19, and workforce shortages and supply chain issues preventing businesses from realizing growth.

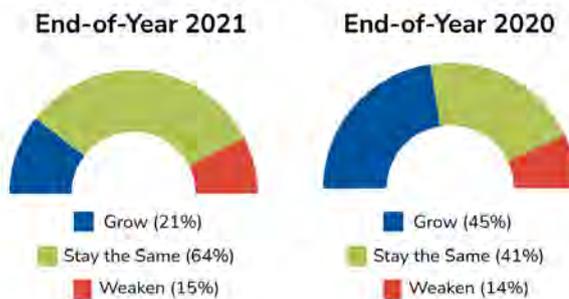
The end-of-year 2021 survey was conducted December 14–24 with 80 respondents. Sums may not equal 100% due to rounding. Below are some highlights of the survey questions and responses.

Wisconsin Bank CEO Economic Conditions Survey Results

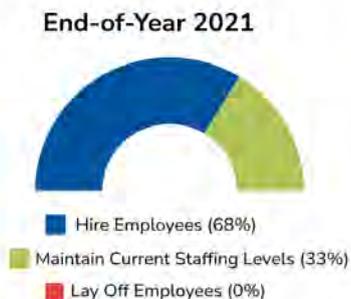
How would you rate the current health of the Wisconsin economy. . .



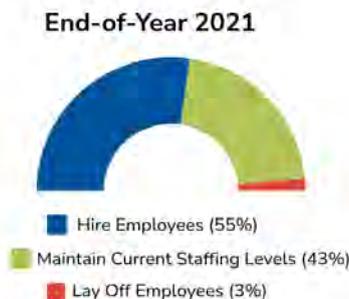
In the next six months, do you expect the Wisconsin economy to. . .



In the next six months, are the businesses in your bank’s market area likely to. . .



In the next six months, is your bank likely to. . .



Rate the current demand in the following loan categories. . .

End-of-Year 2021



Wisconsin Supreme Court Finds Garage is Part of Residence Used by Consumer as Dwelling under WCA

By Rose Oswald Poels

In a four to three opinion filed last month, the Wisconsin Supreme Court concluded that a “dwelling used by the customer as a residence” under the Wisconsin Consumer Act (WCA) includes a garage attached to the residential building in which the customer lives for purposes of rules that need be followed when creditors proceed with nonjudicial repossession.



WBA President and CEO

Rose Oswald Poels

On behalf of the membership, WBA participated as an *amicus curie* in the case of *Duncan v Asset Recovery Specialists, Inc.* as the case involved the interpretation of statutory language used within the repossession rules of the WCA.

The facts of the case were undisputed by the parties and include that Duncan purchased a vehicle from a dealership;

she financed the purchase with a loan. Duncan failed to make payments that were due and eventually was in default. The vehicle served as collateral for the loan, and the bank followed the procedure allowed under Wisconsin law for a “nonjudicial” repossession under Wis. Stat. §425.206(1)(d). The bank met all statutory requirements to proceed with nonjudicial repossession and ultimately retained Asset Recovery Specialists to repossess Duncan’s vehicle. At the time, Duncan rented an apartment unit in a multi-story apartment building. The ground floor of the building consisted entirely of a private parking garage for tenants, and Duncan sometimes kept her vehicle in it.

The central dispute between the parties is whether Asset Recovery Specialists violated Wis. Stat. §425.206(2)(b) when they entered the garage shared by residents in Duncan’s apartment building to repossess her vehicle. The court reviewed language within §425.206(2) which provides in full: In taking possession of collateral or leased goods, no merchant may do any of the following: (a) Commit a breach of the peace. (b) Enter a *dwelling used by the customer as a residence* except at the voluntary request of a customer. The court focused its review on the statutory language in italics.

Although “dwelling” is undefined in the WCA, the court looked to the word’s ordinary, dictionary definition, and to the use of the word in other sections of the WCA and its Administrative Code. In taking that approach, the court concluded a “dwelling” means, at minimum, a building in which at least one person lives. In proceeding in this manner, the court concluded that

“While I’m disappointed in the court’s opinion, I do not regret WBA’s involvement in the case as an *amicus* on behalf of the membership as the court’s opinion does offer clarity of the term dwelling.”

“dwelling used by the customer as a residence” in Wis. Stat. §425.206(2)(b) includes a garage attached to the residential building in which the customer lives. In making its conclusion, Asset Recovery Specialists was found to have violated §425.206(2)(b) when they repossessed Duncan’s car from the parking garage of her apartment building without her consent.

While I am disappointed in the court’s opinion, I do not regret WBA’s involvement in the case as an *amicus* on behalf of the membership as the court’s opinion does offer clarity of the term “dwelling.” This in turn helps members further fine-tune any nonjudicial repossession procedures. Fortunately, Wisconsin’s banks are not heavily engaged in nonjudicial repossession of vehicles, so the impact of the court’s decision in this context I believe is likely minimum. That said, as the effect of the court’s decision broadens the plain language of Wis. Stat. §425.206(2)(b), banks need be aware of the court’s new interpretation to ensure there is no violation of the WCA when repossessing vehicles in a similar setting.

The Wisconsin Supreme Court opinion may be viewed at: <https://www.wicourts.gov/sc/opinion/DisplayDocument>.

Oswald Poels is WBA president and CEO and can be reached at ropoels@wisbank.com.

See the Wisconsin Supreme Court opinion at: <https://www.wicourts.gov/sc/opinion/DisplayDocument>.




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With the WBA's newly remodeled Engagement Center used regularly for training and events, the Wall of Excellence is a top focal point for the many visitors who pass through the building.

The WBA Leaders in Banking Excellence celebrates exceptional bankers from

throughout Wisconsin's history. Through this program, current and former banking leaders who have helped shape our state's banking industry are honored with recognition as a fixture on the Wall of Excellence. Your honoree's plaque will give today's bankers a

glimpse of those who have made our industry what it is today.

The WBA is accepting nominations from now through **May 13, 2022** for the third-year class of the WBA Leaders in Banking Excellence. To nominate yourself or another banker for this honor, please

visit www.wisbank.com/excellence and complete the application form. Or contact WBA's **Rose Oswald Poels** at 608-441-1205 or ropoels@wisbank.com for more details.

A few candid photos (*below*) from the **Class of 2021** Leaders in Banking Excellence award presentation on October 29, 2021.



Above, left: Honoree **Bob Gorsuch** (Oak Bank, Fitchburg) and his wife, **Carol Gorsuch**. Above, center: Honoree **Mary Staudenmaier** (The Stephenson National Bank & Trust, Marinette) and WBA's **Daryll Lund**. Above, right: Honoree **Merlin Zitzner** (Baraboo State Bank) and WBA's **Rose Oswald Poels**.

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Wisconsin Banker is published by Wisconsin Bankers Association, 4721 South Biltmore Lane, Madison, WI 53718; Telephone: 608-441-1200; Fax: 608-661-9381; www.wisbank.com.

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