

The Financial Leaders of Southwestern Illinois

First National Bank in Staunton grows with region, exec VP says

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

First National Bank in Staunton got an experienced banker back in 2001 when Brian Ury took on the role of executive vice president and senior loan officer.



Ury

“When I went to college, I had an idea to go into financial planning. But I ended up one summer being provided an internship opportunity as a bank examiner while I was in college. I did that for two summers and really enjoyed it, so I ended up staying in the banking field,” he said.

After college, Ury spent 15 years in banking roles in Collinsville and Edwardsville before he moved to Staunton.

“In 2001, I was not looking for a job, I was happy where I was, but First National Bank was in the search for a senior lender to come in and begin cultivating a more commercial focus into its loans. I came on board with that purpose.”

Ury worked to begin diversifying the loan portfolio into commercial businesses and commercial real estate, largely in the Metro East area. Shortly thereafter, First National acquired Hamel State Bank, allowing it to have locations in Hamel and Maryville. Bank acquisitions in the 1990s had already led to locations in

Bethalto and Troy.

Today, the bank has nine locations. The others are the FNB Banking Centers in Mount Olive, Benld, Livingston and Holiday Shores.

The bank, founded in Staunton in 1934, remains locally owned by members of the Oltmann family, whose predecessors go back to the original board. The bank is around \$540 million in assets.

Ury said smaller acquisitions have allowed the bank to expand in a natural progression out from Staunton. Now, the focus is more on what’s in place.

A big focus is on digital security.

“We’re working very hard with our customers to inform them of the risks that are out there in this new dynamic of business,” he said. “We’re identifying ways and working with our service providers to deliver the types of protections and communicate with our customers to try to limit the ability for fraud to take place.”

Ury said one of the things he likes best about the bank is its ability to foster relationships that serve every need in a customer’s life, from home loans, to car loans to student loans. And, he likes the ability to establish banking relationships with the children of customers, noting that those relationships are now “transportable.”

Lasting relationships are created by the bank’s own employees, many of whom have been there years.

“You’d be amazed at how many stand up to be recognized for 15, 20, 30 and even 40 years of service,” he said.

Ury and his wife Kimberly have two sons, Jacob and Jared, a sophomore and a seventh-grader. Ury is originally from the Anna-Jonesboro region near Carbondale.

Town and Country puts community first, Metro East market president Hopkins says

By DENNIS GRUBAUGH

The service and style of a good community bank are what drew David Hopkins to the job at Town and Country Bank, and he believes those characteristics are vital for getting and keeping customers, too.



Hopkins

“In a community bank environment, you have a role in the decision making, and we can turn around the decision quickly. That’s really what we pride ourselves on — taking information and getting back to customers as quickly as

possible,” he says. “That’s something we drill on.”

Hopkins, 59, is community bank president for the Metro East Region, where Town and Country has two locations, one at 303 Fountains Parkway No. 100 in Fairview Heights, where Hopkins is based, and one at 10 Terra Verde in Edwardsville, where Paul Abert is the community bank president.

Hopkins came aboard in the summer of 2017, one year after Town and Country entered the Southwestern Illinois market. Town and Country is based in Springfield and all of its assets are in Illinois.

Previously, Hopkins was with First Bank for 26 years. He started his banking career in 1982, working for what was then Bank of St. Louis, while in college.

A lifelong resident of St. Clair County, he was originally from East St. Louis and has

for many years lived in O’Fallon with his wife Beth. They have three grown children, Gus, who lives in Centralia; Johanna, who lives in Kansas City; and Sam, of O’Fallon.

Town and Country is a 62-year-old institution that just eclipsed \$800 million in assets.

“That puts us slightly larger than average for community banks,” Hopkins said, adding that the bank “has a big appetite for growth. The company moved to Metro East specifically for growth.”

There are no immediate plans to establish other branches in Metro East.

“Our immediate concern is growing what we have. What we are really focused on here is in the Metro East, is commercial lending and our mortgage side,” he said.

The most important thing, he said, is getting the right people and have them know the area and its people.

“I think we’ve done a good job of putting together a team of people that know the area well,” he said.

The banking environment has changed in lot in Hopkins’ time in banking.

“Incrementally, some of the larger banks have really moved away from community bank style,” he said. “Trying to do it with processes and technology rather than people, and I think those are both extremely important. It still comes down to treating people the way they want to be treated, paying attention to them, and trying to anticipate needs rather than addressing them when they happen to come up.”

Hopkins holds a bachelor’s degree in business administration with a concentration in economics and finance and a master’s in business administration from Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

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