

BankNotes



Second Quarter News

The Importance of Symbols

What symbols unite your team?

The Case for Inflation

Why are economists targeting low inflation?

First Merchants Private Wealth Advisors

First Merchants Trust Company is excited to announce its new identity.

Enhance Your Practice Management Skills

Don't cringe when it comes to practice management: it defines you as a business owner.



**First Merchants
Bank**

THE STRENGTH OF BIG THE SERVICE OF SMALL

Quarter 2 of 2016 | firstmerchants.com | 614.583.2200



The Importance of Symbols

By Jennifer Griffith

around the globe to currently feature a woman on its paper money.

Martha Washington was on the \$1 Silver Certificate for five years and, before that, Pocahontas was featured on the \$20 note from 1865–1869. Since then, women have been featured on the coin, but not on notes.

Since the announcement, the Treasury has been seeking input from the public. Per law, the individual must be dead. Per guidance, the individual must be a “champion for our inclusive democracy.”

Some early polling suggests that Harriet Tubman, an abolitionist and humanitarian may receive a lot of support. Eleanor Roosevelt seems to be a solid contender for the honor as well. You can share your input with the Treasury by using #TheNew10 or visit <https://thenew10.treasury.gov>.

If you’d like to be heard, I suggest posting your opinion soon. The Treasury is going to be under a time crunch to announce. The new note is expected to be in circulation by 2020.

Last summer, Treasury Secretary Jack Lew announced plans for a redesign of the \$10 bill, marking the first time in more than a century that a woman will be featured on a United States bill. We will be joining ten other countries

Pull a \$10 bill out of your wallet and take a look. If it was issued after 2006, then you’re looking at the design created to portray the United States as a source of stability and freedom. The addition of Lady Liberty and “We the People” undoubtedly grab your heart and celebrate patriotic pride. Symbols of our great country instantly unite us as Americans.

What symbols unite your team?

At First Merchants, the Gold Shield is our promise to each other, our promise to our communities and our promise to our shareholders. It is the symbol of our culture.

From a historical perspective, the shield depicts the design of the founding bank’s main office building located in Muncie, Indiana. The roof over the three pillars is First Merchants Corporation, the holding company. Together they combine to create a powerful shield that reflects the strength of First Merchants as a whole. The color gold is used to give a sense of success, prosperity and confidence along with richness and warmth to enhance the brand of First Merchants. “The Strength of Big, The Service of Small.”

What is your story? How do you capture your past, present and future in frequently replicated, highly visible symbolic demonstrations? Does your logo tell the story of who you are and what the future can expect? Does it create pride? 🏰



Jennifer Griffith is the Ohio Regional President of First Merchants Bank. Jennifer would love to hear your story and would love to share ours. Please feel free to contact her directly at 614.583.2050 or by email at jgriffith@firstmerchants.com.



The Case for Inflation

By Mike Hicks

As 2015 ended, the most common measure of inflation, the Consumer Price Index, ended on a negative note, with year-over-year decline of 0.2 percent. Normally, this would scare economists, who fear deflation above all things.

However, core inflation, a measure that strips out short run changes attributable to food and energy prices ended the year at 2.1 percent. This is close to the rate at which the Federal Reserve claims to target, so most of us rest easy. An important question many would ask is, why are economists targeting low inflation?

There is a great deal of evidence that high rates of inflation are especially damaging to an economy. The classic examples are the bouts of hyper-inflation in Germany in the 1920s, Argentina in the early 1980s and Zimbabwe today. All of these ended, or will end badly, for reasons far beyond economic dynamics. This



is an argument against any inflation, but there are three good arguments for targeting a small level of inflation.

First, as bad as inflation may be, deflation is far worse. Under-inflationary pressures, households and businesses spend now to avoid higher prices in the future. Under-deflation, the reverse, occurs and the common belief is that unattended deflation means a

deep recession. So, it is better to err on the side of least harm, which is modest inflation.

Second, we cannot really measure inflation well. Our best attempts track the price of goods overtime. This process cannot readily account for three non-inflationary factors that should impact price: changes in cost, quality and demand. Innovations over the past several decades that reduce the cost of producing a good will cause inflation to be over-stated. The best example is the impact Walmart's supply chain improvements have had on the actual cost of goods. Quality changes, even in simple products, may appear as inflation. Think of all the changes to safety in automobiles that lead to higher price unrelated to inflation. Finally, as consumers change tastes, buying, say, less steak and more chicken, prices may follow in ways unrelated to inflation. Altogether, most economists think the consumer price index overstates inflation by something like one or two percent. This means some modest measured inflation may not be inflation at all.

The third reason why a small level of inflation may be beneficial is due to the notion that wages and prices are downwardly sticky. This means that businesses and workers are very reluctant to drop prices and especially wages, even when market conditions suggest they should decline. There is a great deal of evidence that this is the case, and often, firms cut production or employment instead of adjusting prices. This can result in a recession.

Constant, low levels of inflation act to reduce real prices and wages. It is easier for firms and workers to resist a price or wage increase under weak market conditions than to actually cut prices or wages. So a modest level of inflation allows firms and workers more



flexibility than would constant prices. This allows markets to better clear, equalizing supply and demand.

In a real sense then, low, but stable inflation can accomplish many positive goals. They allow us to buffer against a policy mistake that might be deflationary, they allow us some protection against the mis-measurement of inflation and, finally, they guard against our seemingly irrational penchant for fearing a 2 percent salary cut over a 2 percent increase in prices.

Today, the Federal Reserve continues to weigh global economic conditions as well as labor markets across the United States in judging their policy steps.

They also consider inflations, weighing the risk of deflation in that calculus. The rapid decline in energy and commodity prices across the globe over the past few months is troublesome, coming as it does against a backdrop of a slowing international economy. This likely makes the Fed far more cautious about raising interest rates, which could further slow the economy.

At this point, it seems unlikely the Fed will raise rates a full percentage point as they suggested last year. I think at least one more increase seems plausible, given the strong state of United States labor markets. Whatever the decision they make, it is certain that the cost of inflation will weigh little on their minds. 🏠

Michael J. Hicks, PhD is the Director at the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University. Dr. Hicks' views do not necessarily reflect the opinion of First Merchants Bank and First Merchants Corporation.

Cristo Rey Columbus High School Work-Study Program

The Olentangy office in The Ohio Region is in its third year of partnering with Cristo Rey Columbus High School. They have four students this year. Each student works five days a month. The students take turns working in all different departments including marketing, credit, accounting, business banking and reception. The students answer phones at the front desk, greet customers, help with wires and in lockbox, help out with monthly reports and have all taken a financial literacy course.

Cristo Rey Columbus High School is a Catholic, college-preparatory high school with a Professional Work Study program. Cristo Rey Columbus targets under-served youth in Central Ohio.

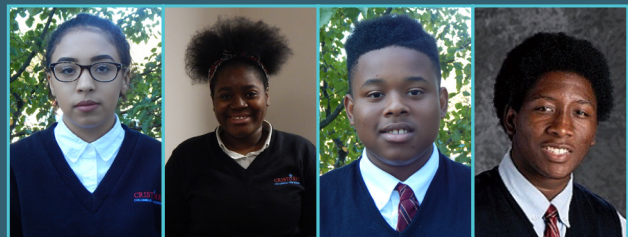
We asked the students to give us some feedback on how they like working for First Merchants. Below are their responses.

"The main thing I really enjoy about working at First Merchants is that I am always learning something new and everyone is so friendly. The people here make the most out of something small. It has influenced me to always approach things with positive thoughts." – Ilyse Barber

"I like working at First Merchants because the people here are nice and know how to handle working with other people." – Claudia Addico

"The work-study program allows me to gain knowledge of the real world and its problems. Each week I go to my work site and get assigned to different tasks in different departments. I love going to my work site because of all the encouraging and nice people to help me even when I mess up. I also love the feedback I get, even if it's bad. It gives me a chance to do better in my future." – Aaron Thomas

"Everyone at First Merchants has a smile on their face and they always make me feel welcome and are so helpful. It's like family here." – Jae'vel Jones



Pictured above: Ilyse Barber, Claudia Addico, Aaron Thomas and Jae'vel Jones



First Merchants Private Wealth Advisors

By Jim Keene

The origin of “trusts” dates back to the 12th and 13th Centuries when landowners left England to fight in the Crusades.

Landowners conveyed ownership for someone else to take care of the land on the understanding the land would be conveyed back on their return.

Through the centuries, the use of trusts evolved, with many different types of assets being conveyed to trust in order to achieve certain objectives. Not so many years ago (20th century), a trust company or trust department’s primary service was the administration of trusts. First Merchants Trust Company does so much more than administer trusts. For that reason, our senior management team, with input from our employees, clients and the marketplace, went to the drawing board last Spring.

First, we wanted to make sure our name accurately reflected who we are and what we do for our clients. Second, we needed to be able to tell our story and highlight what makes us different than our competitors. Internal surveys and research of our competitors’ branding started the process. Meetings took place to review all data gathered with the help of the Strategic Advisory Solutions team at Goldman Sachs. Each and every word was scrutinized and dissected by our team. A name, a mission, and a consistent story were born.

We are now excited to announce that we will change our name from First Merchants Trust Company to **First Merchants Private Wealth Advisors.**

Our mission — We partner with individuals, families, and organizations to provide comprehensive solutions



and personal service in pursuit of a secure financial future.

We accomplish our mission through the following three value drivers:

Powerful Local Resources – First Merchants delivers broad advisory capabilities and expertise through local, engaged and empowered leaders.

Comprehensive and Coordinated – First Merchants surrounds our clients with a team of experts to deliver financial solutions focused on our clients’ long-term financial success.

Standard of Excellence – First Merchants delivers proactive service and client advocacy as we look to build powerful, inter-generational relationships.

We are excited about this rebranding and look forward to the opportunity to share more about how we can benefit our bank clients. We would love the opportunity to share more about our story and learn yours as well.

For more information, please contact Jim Keene, Senior Personal Trust Officer, at 765.962.7696 or by email at jkeene@firstmerchants.com.

Investment products are not deposits, not FDIC insured, not guaranteed by the bank, not insured by any federal government agency and may lose value.



First Direct Benefits You and Your Employees

By Lisa Higginbotham

Many business owners are looking for ways to provide additional benefits for their employees without affecting their bottom line. Are you one of them? First Merchants Bank offers a complimentary employee Workplace Banking financial

benefit package called First Direct. Our First Direct program will increase job satisfaction by providing you and your employees with the convenience of opening accounts on-site with no cost to you. Our accounts can't be beaten, and your employees will be thanking you for giving them the opportunity.

So what is First Direct? First Direct is a free financial benefit package with no cost to the employer. This package is designed specifically to meet the current and future financial needs and goals of employees, at all levels of the organization and in various stages of their life. The First Direct account checks all of the boxes, literally!

Employees will be able to earn interest, CD bonus, 2 NSF/OD waived occurrences, free standard checks and money orders, discount on first mortgage closing costs, 25% off safe deposit box, 5 free foreign ATM transactions, and a 0.25% loan discount with a First Direct account. All the employee has to do is have Direct Deposit set up on the account in order to receive these benefits. As an added bonus, you will be able to offer financial benefits besides the typical checking and savings options. Your local bank advisor will provide additional knowledge with educational seminars which will allow your employees and their families to better their financial health. We have a variety of seminars and can customize the presentation to fit your needs!

How do you enroll? Simply offer direct deposit to your employees and we do the rest! We provide a dedicated team of First Direct partners that will come to your location as often as needed to assist employees in establishing banking services. You can customize the benefit communication to employees through a department meeting, new-hire orientations, "Lunch and Learns" or your internal benefits webpage, to name a few. We can even open the First Direct employee accounts on-site.

Lisa Higginbotham is a Client Relationship Services Manager and a First Direct advisor in the Ohio market. If you are interested in learning more about First Direct, call Lisa directly at 614.583.2072 or email her at lhigginbotham@firstmerchants.com.

First Direct Checks All of the Boxes!

- Eligibility - for those whose employer has a benefit bank agreement with First Merchants Bank
- Earns Interest
- CD Bonus
- 2 NSF/OD Waived Occurrences*
- Free Standard Checks/Discounts on Upgrades - first order only
- Free Official Checks and Money Orders
- Discount on First Mortgage Closing Costs
- 25% Off Safe Deposit Box Discount
- 5 Free Foreign ATM Transactions*
- .25% Loan Discount***

Monthly Service Fees - There is a monthly Direct Deposit requirement of at least \$200 to avoid a maintenance fee of \$10 or \$13 with Paper Statements. If you meet the monthly Direct Deposit requirement there is a \$3 fee for Paper Statements. Multiple deposits of less than \$200 will not qualify to waive the monthly maintenance fee. *Foreign ATM transactions are: inquiries, transfers and withdrawals at a non First Merchants ATM and do not include surcharges that may be assessed by the ATM's owner. All personal checking accounts opened in the Ohio county of Franklin receive 5 free foreign ATM transactions and 5 rebates of the ATM operator's fee up to \$20 per statement cycle and \$4 per transaction. **Bill pay is available to customers 18 years of age and over only. ***With automatic payment from a First Merchants checking account. Subject to credit approval. Excludes mortgage real estate loans and lines of credit. Offer valid for consumer purpose installment loans only. † Two NSF/OD fee occurrences will be waived per rolling 12 month calendar. An NSF/OD occurrence is defined as 1 or more items presented to an account with non-sufficient funds on a business day.





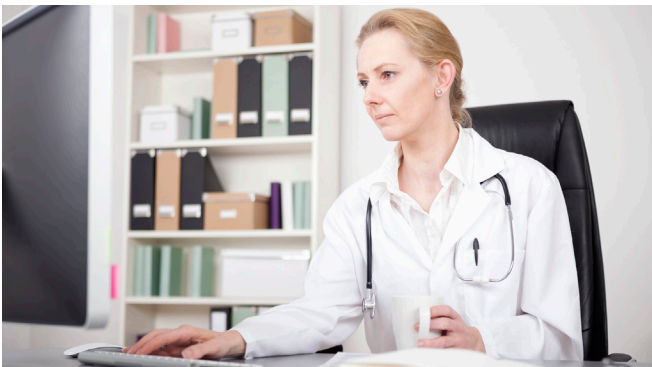
Enhance Your Practice Management Skills

By Mark Engle

When it comes to practice management, many doctors cringe. Your passion is much more clinical, providing the highest level of patient care, and continuing to master your art in order to enhance your practice. That is exactly how it should be! You have invested a considerable amount of time and money into your profession. Your clinical expertise is going to define your ability as a quality healthcare provider. However, your practice management skills are also going to help define your ability as a business owner. Let's take a very focused, yet simplistic look at a couple of management tactics you face daily, and how you can effectively address these so that you can concentrate your efforts on what you do best.

Marketing

Break this down into three areas: 1) online presence; 2) internal marketing; 3) community involvement. Invest in building a sharp and user-friendly website that speaks to the patient. Address typical patient concerns and your interest for their best health, services your practice offers, and make your practice appear welcoming and convenient. This very well could be where patients form their first opinion of you and your practice. Make sure your practice is on LinkedIn and Facebook. This will allow you to network by staying in



touch with current patients and gaining exposure with potential new patients.

Internal marketing really comes down to hiring the right people and adequately training your staff. Your best marketing and most cost-effective source is your current patient base. If they are fans of your attention to their healthcare needs and your staff is helping you provide an efficient and enjoyable patient experience, they will talk about you to their friends and family. Use technology for recall purposes (text and email), but don't over-do it.

You don't have to be involved in every event in the community, but you should identify a few things where you get involved, either through financial sponsorship or volunteering your time. Make yourself seen by participating in school or church functions, or possibly parades or festivals. Maintain an annual budget for these types of marketing tactics.

Expense Management

Meet with your accountant and/or banker regularly, and expense management will not become a burden. Instead, this will help you understand the trends in your practice and identify ways to increase cash flow and improve practice value. Your business financial statements tell the story of your practice. A growing topline demonstrates your ability to produce and collect. A growing bottomline demonstrates your commitment to managing your overhead and operating efficiently. Once you have a routine and become familiar with analyzing your financial statements, this exercise will prove to be invaluable. Consistent cash-flow is what drives practice value, which you will appreciate when it is time to retire or sell your practice.

Expense Management

Don't let your practice management responsibilities create anxiety. Have a game plan and let your advisors



help you. The key to operating an efficient practice is your staff. Implement systems and then carefully hire and train enthusiastic people that will help you achieve success. Place attitude and desire over technical skills. 🏠

Mark Engle is the Manager for Healthcare Banking at First Merchants Bank. If you'd like to discuss practice management with Mark, call him at 513.794.7457 or email him at mengle@firstmerchants.com.

Questions or Comments?

We hope you are enjoying the newly redesigned BankNotes. If you have any questions or comments, please contact Brittany Lang at 614.583.2040 or blang@firstmerchants.com.



Multi-Family Projects in Central Ohio

By Dan Apple

There has been a lot of media discussion around the number of newly-constructed multi-family projects in Central Ohio. The big question is concern over whether the Central Ohio area has reached a saturation point with new multi-family projects. Multi-family is defined as residential properties containing five or more units. The increase in new multi-family construction projects started in 2010 and has been growing ever since. The supply of new product was fueled by low apartment vacancies and an increase in average asking rent.

An article written on January 8, 2016 by Evan Weese of Columbus Business First cites statistics from Berkadia Real Estate regarding the apartment construction boom in Central Ohio. The 2015 year-end findings report the following: Apartment vacancies are low and getting lower despite the continued construction up-turn. The vacancy rate for Central Ohio apartments in 2015 remains flat at 4.9%

compared to the national vacancy rate of 5.2%. Average asking rent in Central Ohio has increased from \$784 in 2012 to \$845 in 2015. Berkadia Real Estate projects rent to grow to \$867 in 2016.

The fourth quarter 2015 analysis from Dividend Capital Research indicates that the metropolitan Columbus market has reached the demand supply/equilibrium point in the expansion quadrant. This point in the expansion quadrant represents where rent growth is still positive and new construction rents are still cost-feasible. The demand supply/equilibrium point also represents where vacancy is declining, despite the new construction. The Columbus market has further room to expand before being in the hyper-supply quadrant. The hypersupply quadrant represents where new construction of multi-family units causes increases in vacancy and rent growth declines.

Overall, the conclusion can be made that the Central Ohio market is still in a good position to adequately absorb new multi-family units with low vacancy rates and increasing asking rent. The Columbus market



will be faced with higher rents and less availability in prime areas. The good news for renters is that many older multi-family projects are being renovated and priced competitively to compete with the new units. 🏠

For more information regarding multi-family projects in Central Ohio, contact Dan Apple, Sales Manager for First Merchants Bank in Ohio, at 614.408.0237 or by email at dapple@firstmerchants.com.

should be able to lease all of the new multi-family projects that are under construction at the beginning of 2016. This assumes that the projects are well-located and the rent is in line with the location. This is good news for multi-family developers and owners of multi-family real estate. Renters of multi-family real estate

Save the Date: May 12 at the Fawcett Center | Biennial Spring Seminar & Network



Alison Levine

*adventurer
explorer
mountaineer*

Having served as team captain of the first American Women's Everest Expedition, Alison Levine combines her knowledge of mountaineering with 20 years of business experience in order to deliver a customized relevant message. Her breathtaking visuals will take you on a journey to Mt. Everest, the North and South Poles, and up the slopes of mountains from every continent on the planet; where determination is every bit as important as skill when it comes to survival... and willpower is the most essential piece of equipment.

Showcase Your Business at the Network Fair

There are so many reasons why you should showcase your business at the Network Fair. For a fee of \$100, meet First Merchants Bank clients and other business community partners, gain leads for your business, develop new and strengthen existing relationships, enjoy drinks and hors d'oeuvres, and receive a signed copy of *On The Edge* by Alison Levine, compliments of First Merchants Bank!

This year, the \$100 booth fee should be made payable to "Otterbein University Kyle Miller Scholarship" in memory of Kyle Miller, son of Pam Miller, a First Merchants Bank employee whose son passed away in a tragic kayaking accident in 2014. The family and friends of Kyle Miller now host an annual 5K Run/Walk in memory of Kyle called Get Wild for Wildlife. Kyle was enjoying his Zoo and Conservation Science major at Otterbein and volunteering at the Ohio Wildlife Center. He was also a gifted athlete at Hilliard Davidson and Otterbein, making a race a perfect fit! You can find more information at kylemillermemorialfund.com.



Your Business Here

To reserve a booth, please call Brittany Lang at 614.583.2040 or email blang@firstmerchants.com.



Arm Yourself Before Buying or Selling

By Nathan Rish

Buying or selling a business can be both exciting and scary. Below are several things you can do to arm yourself before entering into a potential transaction.

Value The Business

Research how companies in a given industry are valued. Most businesses are valued using a multiple—often between three and five times of annual cash flow—called Earnings Before Interest Taxes Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA), while others may be valued as a multiple total revenue. Independent research is a great starting point and can lead to productive, non-emotional discussions between buyers and sellers. Taking it a step further, there are certified valuation experts that can be hired to provide an unbiased third-party valuation. I highly recommend



obtaining an indication of value from one of these professionals before buying or selling a business.

Determine the Amount and Type of Capital Needed

Different types of capital serve different purposes and come with different costs. Bank loans, also known as senior debt loans, are typically less expensive, but are also the most restrictive in terms of covenants,

collateral and cash flow requirements. Subordinated debt, which is typically in the form of seller financing or mezzanine debt, is nearly always more expensive than senior debt. However, this type of capital is typically less restrictive, often with limited or no collateral and, in most cases, very “patient” in terms of current payment obligations. The third and most expensive type of capital is equity. The most common types of equity are company cash and third-party cash. In the case of company cash, the expense is derived by the opportunity cost of not having the cash to support other possibly more profitable activities. Third-party equity is expensive due to the likely forfeiture of ownership, essentially giving up the rights to some portion of the company’s future earnings and overall market value.

Carefully Select Advisors

It is important to align yourself with subject matter experts in the areas of law, accounting, and mergers and acquisitions. Just as business owners understand how to run their businesses, these advisors are well-versed in running purchases and sales of businesses. I wouldn’t recommend that a business buyer or seller attempt to do it all by themselves. The size of the transaction should dictate the extent of the engagement of outside advisors. As the old adage says, “A lawyer that represents him or herself has a fool for a client.”

Should you have questions about anything above, or have a desire to discuss the process of buying or selling a business, I would recommend contacting your banker or other trusted advisor. 🏠

Nathan Rish is a Relationship Manager in the Ohio market for First Merchants Bank. If you would like to connect with him, please call 614.583.2142 or email nrish@firstmerchants.com.



Considering an ESOP

By Tom Dunson

An Employee Stock

Ownership Plan (ESOP) is one of the many options available to business owners considering succession planning options.

There are many reasons why an ESOP may be the right option for your business:

- it generates shareholder liquidity by maximizing total after-tax cash proceeds and by maximizing after-tax cash at closing;
- it provides tax savings by making the company federal and state tax-free and by allowing the company to use its increased cash flow to pay off a seller more quickly to fund growth;
- allows the company to maintain corporate governance or “effective control,” through covenants, for a period of time, and maintain the legacy of the company;
- incentivizes management and employees by creating valuable incentives and retirement savings, offering job security for valued employees, and it is a valuable tool for retaining key employees.

ESOPs are not for everyone, however. First Merchants Bank finds that they work best for companies that generate a sustainable Earnings Before Interest, Taxes, Depreciation and Amortization (EBITDA) of \$1.25 million or greater. The current ownership stays engaged until seller notes are retired, the transaction is not over-leveraged, and the company has in place or is in the process of training the next generation of key management.

First Merchants has financed several ESOPS over the past several years, which have resulted in increased productivity, retaining and hiring key employees and by

allowing the seller to “take some money off the table” while still directing the business. The tax-free treatment of income is a real incentive and can help provide working capital and position companies for acquisitions. 🏠

If you would like more information regarding an ESOP, please contact Tom Dunson, Relationship Manager in the Ohio market at First Merchants Bank, at 614.583.2032 or by email at tdunson@firstmerchants.com

Contact Information

Our Customer Service Center at 888.716.1514 is available extended hours: Monday – Friday 7 a.m. – 8 p.m. and Saturday 9 a.m. – 3 p.m.
Account Inquiries & Research
ATM & Debit Card
Personal Online Banking

Business Solutions Group
866.833.0050
ACH Origination
Business Online Banking
Remote Deposit

**Cash Management
Merchant Services**
Jennifer Wehrly

Commercial Loan Payoff Requests
Jacqueline Walls

Commercial Wires
Mindy Beck

Commercial Wires Fax Line
614.583.2157

Courier Pickup
614.583.2150

Customer Suggestions
Cathy Dieckman
Todd Patrick

Lockbox
614.583.2155

Security Concerns
David Benjamin

Telephone Banking
Toll Free 866.714.4634



First Merchants Bank

3650 Olentangy River Road, Suite 100
Columbus, Ohio 43214

BankNotes

Visit One of Our Convenient Locations

Clintonville: 3245 N. High Street – 614.408.0470

Graceland: 5090 N. High Street – 614.408.0480

Grandview: 1669 W. 5th Avenue – 614.408.0250

Karl Road: 1616 E. Dublin–Granville Road – 614.408.0410

Olentangy: 3650 Olentangy River Road – 614.583.2200

Reynoldsburg: 6950 E. Main Street – 614.408.0375

Sawmill: 5811 Sawmill Road – 614.408.0274



Friday April 22, Recycle-O-Rama!

Spring cleaning and don't know where to get rid of your stuff? Drop it off at Recycle-O-Rama on Friday, April 22 from 11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m at our Olentangy location, 3650 Olentangy River Road. Items will be accepted by The Salvation Army, Community Computer Alliance, Big Brothers Big Sisters for their Camp Oty'Okwa, The Big Green Box and Shred-It (5 box minimum on Shred-It materials). Stay afterwards and grab lunch from the Sweet Carrot food truck! 10% of all lunch proceeds will go to Cristo Rey Columbus High School! We hope you can make it out and celebrate Earth Day with us!



Spring is Here and It's Time to Sell!

By Greg Valentino

Last month we had over 1600 houses on the market, which is 6% higher than the previous month. Houses in Central Ohio are selling as soon as they are placed on the market. We are suffering from low inventory.

This low inventory has created a seller's market. Houses are able to be priced aggressively and are moving quickly! The average home is on the market for less than 60 days right now. Sales prices are at record highs, exceeding prior peak values of 2007. The average sales price is \$185,000, which is 4% higher than last year. If you are thinking of selling your home or condo, now is the time!

If you are thinking about purchasing a new home, the first thing you want to do is be pre-approved. The pre-approval process will answer all of your questions in regard to buying a home. It is important to be pre-approved because the seller will want assurance you

have financing lined up. The pre-approval process takes about ten minutes. It consists of completing a short application, pulling your credit report and seeing what product is the best fit for you and your family.

The pre-approval process can be surprising at times, and some of our customers are not aware that their credit score may be so low. If you have damaged credit and are concerned that you will not be eligible for a mortgage loan, still give us a call. We cannot repair your credit, but we can give you advice to get you back on track. There are credit restoration companies online, but this may not always be the best route to go, as you can do what they will do for you on your own. Being fiscally responsible is a huge part of restoring credit. The process may take longer, but it will be better for you in the long run, especially if you are considering purchasing a house. 🏠

Rates are still near record lows. Now is the time to buy! If you have any questions about buying, selling or refinancing your home, please contact Greg Valentino, Mortgage Sales Manager in the Ohio market, at 614.583.2148.