

Voters name Benchmark "best bank"

Top vote getter for banks in Brunswick, Halifax, and Mecklenburg Counties

Benchmark Community Bank has been voted "Best Bank" for 2017 in three Southside Virginia counties. Sponsored by news outlets covering Brunswick, Mecklenburg, and Halifax Counties, the contests recognized outstanding Benchmark performance by branches in Lawrenceville, Halifax, South Boston, and South Hill.

In Halifax County, Benchmark branches won top honors from readers of the *Gazette-Virginian*. The newspaper announced its award recipients in early February.

"Our employees were really excited to receive this honor," VP/Market Leader Robert Bates of Halifax said. "Everyone works hard to make sure each customer's Benchmark experience is the best it can be each day. We really do go the extra mile to provide top-notch service."

After the *South Hill Enterprise* announced Benchmark's South Hill branch as its "Best Bank" winner in February, VP/Area Manager John Webb, South Hill, echoed Bates' sentiment.

"Our employees are some of the hardest working people in the Benchmark network," he commented. "What I really enjoy is seeing how much they enjoy working here and interacting with our customers. It's really a family atmosphere."

"If anyone comes in that we don't know," he added, "they're part of the Benchmark family by the time they leave. That's the kind of service we make part of our every day."



Nicole Young, Lawrenceville Branch Manager, said that her employees make it a practice to always "go the extra mile" as we promise in our Benchmark pledge.

"Our staff is so proud to be recognized for their efforts," Young said. "Every member of the Lawrenceville Benchmark team takes to heart our commitment to be part of the community, support local businesses and activities, and to get to know each of our customers as our neighbors and friends. They trust us to do our best to help them find solutions for their financial needs."

In South Boston, Branch Manager Jennifer Throckmorton and her Benchmark team were pleased with their "Best Bank" recognition shared with the Halifax branch.

"The South Boston team is so appreciative of our customers for taking the time to vote in the *Gazette-Virginian* contest," Throckmorton said. "Benchmark is such a great place to bank and to work. We work hard to create a welcoming environment that invites the community to trust us with their finances. To know those efforts are appreciated is gratifying to us all."

"Peoples' Choice-style awards are presented annually in several markets throughout the Benchmark network," remarked SVP/Retail Banking LeAnne Emert. "Being recognized by the community is a true testament to our commitment to delivering on the Benchmark pledge and the people who bring it to life on a daily basis."



NC Business Banking expansion highlights first quarter 2017

An expanded loan portfolio and new lenders were the hallmarks for first quarter 2017 activity at Benchmark. President Jay Stafford reports (see *President's Message*, pg. 2) a 5.83% increase in loans over the same time period in 2016. According to Neil Burke, SVP/Chief Financial Officer, "Benchmark focuses on building our loan portfolio in a slow, steady progression. This allows us to better respond with personnel to meet market needs."

January was highlighted by the promotion of Candace Lenderman to VP/Commercial and Construction Business Banker. Quarter's end brought the addition of Dawn Bynum, VP/Business Banker in Wake Forest and the active negotiation for a market executive whose addition complements the team rounded out by VP/Business Banker Kim Jordan in Henderson.

SmartStart Scholarship winners to be announced in the Summer edition of "Inside Benchmark"