

## Stafford/Exec/Senior Team take helm

Benchmark Community Bank entered a new era in May when Jay A. Stafford was named President/CEO by the Board of Directors of Benchmark Bankshares, Inc., holding company for the bank.

Stafford's election as President/CEO was the culmination of the succession plan initiated by the Board of Directors in 2013 as longtime President/CEO Michael O. Walker's eventual retirement was anticipated. Walker's retirement became effective June 30, 2017.



Jay A. Stafford



LeAnne R. Emert



E. Neil Burke

Board Chair Ernest R. (Randy) Lail said of Stafford's election, "The Board of Directors is pleased that Jay has accepted the role of President and CEO of Benchmark Community Bank. We believe his experience in Southern Virginia and Benchmark will serve our shareholders, communities, and employees well. We are excited about the future opportunities and the management team that has been assembled."

"I am honored to have this opportunity to guide Benchmark in the coming years," Stafford said. "This is an institution that sincerely cares about the people and communities we serve. We have wonderful Benchmark Team employees who truly enjoy contributing to their hometowns individually and through the bank's involvement."

Stafford's elevation to the top spot followed announcement of Benchmark's first comprehensive Executive/Senior Leadership Team representing all aspects of the bank's operations. Included in the strategy are the areas of Benchmark's retail banking, finance and accounting, information technology, credit administration, human resources, and business banking. The Executive Vice President (EVP) level is composed by E. Neil Burke, EVP/Chief Financial Officer, and LeAnne R. Emert, EVP/Retail Banking. Senior Vice Presidents (SVP) are: Jennifer M. Clark, SVP/Human Resources; Steve Creedle, SVP/Business Banker; Mike Arthur, SVP/Credit Administration; and Lee Minix, SVP/Credit Officer.

In announcing the formation of the Senior Leadership team, Stafford paid homage to Walker: "With twelve Virginia branches and a growing North Carolina loan operation, I believe it strategic to Mike's legacy and Benchmark's future to put in place a comprehensive senior management team of Benchmark leaders to provide vision and direction for the years ahead," he said. "It's facing the future with a restructured leadership philosophy supported by a team approach."

With home offices in the bank's Kenbridge Administration building, the new team is also represented throughout the Benchmark network as they work to support branch operations and perpetuate the Benchmark culture of connectivity in the branches and the communities they serve.

## Houser named SVP/NC Market Executive *Bynum joins Wake Forest office as VP/Business Banker*

Rick L. Houser joined Benchmark's North Carolina operation as Senior Vice President/North Carolina Market Executive on April 1st. Based in the Wake Forest loan production office, Houser has assumed responsibility for implementing a growth strategy focused on business and mortgage lending. A 30-year banking veteran, Houser previously served the Wake Forest area and, along with his wife Lisa, is excited to return to the area.



Rick L. Houser

On March 30th, Dawn Bynum joined the Wake Forest office as its newest Vice President/Business Banker. A resident of the Raleigh area since 1999, Bynum's expertise in tailoring lending packages to meet client needs fits perfectly with Benchmark's lending philosophy, according to President/CEO Jay Stafford.

"One of the things that impressed me most with both of these professionals is their commitment to providing outstanding customer service, team building, and listening to the needs of their customers. They're a great fit for us," Stafford said.