

FINANCIAL LITERACY ROUNDUP

TEXAS BANKS SHARE SUCCESS IN EDUCATING COMMUNITIES

By Chris Hawkes, Editor

Banks across the Lone Star State agree that financial literacy classes improve the communities they serve. By investing in financial education, banks enable community members to make better decisions about their finances. Sharing information strengthens the bonds between members and banks. As a result, a strong relationship will likely manifest, and, in turn, benefit the community. The Department of Banking reached out to several banks to discuss their success with financial literacy.

NDBT, DALLAS

Director of Community Engagement for NDBT, North Dallas Bank & Trust Co., Lisa Rushing, relayed that just this year, the bank launched NDBTech, a program that teaches older adults about cybersecurity awareness, computer literacy, troubleshooting technological issues, and other concerns. Information Technology (IT) professionals from NDBT meet with older adults and answer any questions or assist them with technology-related issues. Whether that is assistance on how to access an app or teaching them how to use their mobile phone.

The bank has also formed a partnership with the Willie B. Johnson Recreation Center (Rec Center) in the Hamilton Park area. The Rec Center has access to technology such as 3-D printing machines, computers, a pod cast station and a T-shirt press machine, but lacked the money to staff the center. By partnering with local banks and schools, the Rec Center was able to obtain the staff to operate these stations.

Also, as part of the NDBTech program, IT officers visit the Senior Center of the Rec

Assets at a glance

North Dallas Bank & Trust Co. has operated in the Dallas community since 1961. The bank holds about \$1.7 billion in assets and employs around 180 people. NDBT has five banking centers located in Dallas, Las Colinas, Addison, Frisco and Plano.

Center and assist older adults in the computer lab with other machines each week. By doing so, IT officers can ascertain where each person was technology-wise, access the situation, and assist from there. In addition to being a great benefit to the community, Rushing mentioned that the partnership has been very successful and rewarding.

NDBT's event, Banking Bingo, brings awareness to scams and terminology older adults might not be familiar with in a fun way. Instead of calling out numbers, like a normal game of bingo, organizers call out

banking terms. This allows NDBT staff a chance to speak about these different terms or topics, educating players along the way. Even if something is considered common knowledge, players not familiar with banking can learn what terms mean and why they are important.

NDBT's goal is to prevent customers from becoming victims of financial exploitation by focusing heavily on cybersecurity education. Scammers and fraudsters continue to develop new tricks to target older adults. To combat this, NDBT employees take proactive measures by educating customers about potential threats when they visit the bank. For example, a customer might come into the bank and say he received a text message or phone call claiming his grandson is in jail and needs money wired instantly. Bankers are trained to identify red flags, intervene, and alert customers to potential risks. The staff may also suggest alternative actions, like contacting the grandson directly or gathering more information before proceeding with a transaction.



Photo Courtesy of North Dallas Bank & Trust

One of North Dallas Bank & Trust's staff members, Norman, teaches older adults about online safety.

When older adults first walk into the bank, many struggle to understand where they are financially. They might find it challenging to comprehend changes in their mortgage payments or make sense of loan statements. NDBT will take the time to sit with them and explain various documents like bank statements, bills, and invoices.

“Ultimately, bankers are there to help,” Rushing said. “Don’t be afraid to reach out to your personal banker and your local community bank. I know, it can be really intimidating seeing how fast technology evolves. Just ask your banker. There’s a lot of people out there that are willing to take the time to help.”

For more information about NDBT, visit ndbt.com.

VERITEX COMMUNITY BANK, HOUSTON

Veritex Community Bank (Veritex), founded in 2010, has been around for 14 years. The bank serves diverse populations, but focuses on helping older adults since this particular group is often targeted by scammers. Courtney Taylor, Community Development Officer for Veritex, explains the bank is committed to combat this issue through its financial literacy program.

Veritex partners with non-profit organizations and invests resources in community organizations to educate older adults on fraud prevention, recognizing scams, and safeguarding against identity theft.

In the Dallas area, Veritex cooperates with the Wesley Rankin Community Center to provide financial education. In the Houston area, Veritex collaborates with Northwest Assistance Ministries, Star Hope and Volunteers of America to address identity theft. Some bank employees are also going the extra mile by teaching classes in Spanish to expand their community outreach.

Veritex has observed an increase in the sophistication of scams with schemes appearing more legitimate than ever before. While scammers continue to deceive people through phone calls and emails, they are increasingly turning to text messages as a preferred method. Financial literacy instructors from Veritex often play a crucial role in educating people to prevent them from falling victim to these disingenuous tactics.



Photos Courtesy of Veritex Community Bank

ABOVE, Veritex Community Bank's newest bank opened in the Cedar Crest Community Center in Southern Dallas in May. The bank not only offers banking services to community members, but also provides financial literacy courses for students and adults. INSET, Courtney Taylor, Community Development Officer, presents at a financial literacy workshop.

Assets at a glance

Veritex Community Bank, a mid-sized community bank, has its headquarters in Dallas. The bank also has branch locations in Houston, Fort Worth, and Dallas and holds more than \$12 billion in total assets. The name “Veritex” is derived from the Latin word “veritas,” meaning truth and “Texas.”

For example, older adults often ask what to do when they receive an unknown text. Veritex employees recommend not responding to the text and deleting it immediately. They go on to emphasize customers should never click on a link, regardless of whether it appears in an email or text message.

Calls from unknown numbers also create problems for some older customers. Bank representatives reflect that older adults remain skeptical about receiving a call from an unknown or unrecognizable number, especially when the caller claims to represent a bank. If a caller threatens to close an account unless specific demands are met, the bank’s staff recommends the customer hang up immediately and contact a trusted banker as they are likely talking to a scammer.

Taylor explains that financial literacy instructors and bank representatives try to remind people to be cognizant about everything. They reiterate to customers that it is ok to investigate scenarios and or to reach out to the bank to double-check on things.

“If a number doesn’t look right, or you know an email doesn’t look right, take some time to do some research for yourself,” Taylor said. “Call your banker, call the folks that you know and ask, is this something legitimate or not? Don’t necessarily just give your information out over the phone.”

In May, Veritex opened a branch inside the Cedar Crest Community Center in Dallas. By bringing bank services there, the institution hopes to attract people of all ages, young, middle-aged or older adults, to the area. Not only that, but the bank also wants to provide financial literacy classes to all demographics to better educate the surrounding community about banking.

Veritex prioritizes financial literacy through interactive classes. By sharing expertise and valuable insights, participants are empowered to make better decisions. The knowledge gained does not stop there as attendees pass it on to family members, who further spread awareness within their circles. This

domino effect benefits everyone, whether they are regular customers or just curious visitors seeking advice. Serving members of the community by educating and assisting them helps foster solid relationships and rapport among all stakeholders involved.

For more information about Veritex Community Bank, visit veritexbank.com.

TEXAS SECURITY BANK, DALLAS

Texas Security Bank, a community bank based in the Dallas/Fort Worth area, touts themselves as the champions of free enterprise. While primarily working with commercial customers, Michael McIntosh, Bank Secrecy Act Officer, said the bank seeks out opportunities to serve its local community.

McIntosh, a dedicated employee at the bank, has been making a significant impact by providing financial literacy classes to Spanish-speaking members of the community. Taking the initiative, he started teaching these classes near the Turtle Creek branch in West Dallas. The community center, Brother Bill's Helping Hand, sought assistance in teaching Spanish-speaking residents about financial literacy. Texas Security Bank obliged. By implementing the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation's (FDIC) program, Money Smart, McIntosh was able to aid the group by providing financial guidance. Through comprehensive modules, Texas Security Bank offers classes on topics ranging from budget management to home-buying.

Many people in the community from South or Central America vocalized a need for financial education as they navigate to a different financial landscape in the U.S. Transitioning from their home countries, they face unfamiliar concepts that are more prevalent here like credit management, understanding available financial products, and planning for retirement.

Initially, classmates expressed a strong resistance to banking due to unfamiliarity with how it works and what protections it offers. Some preferred cash transactions and even

Assets at a glance

Texas Security Bank was founded in 2008 and grew into a multiple branch organization with locations in Dallas, North Dallas, Garland, and Southlake. Texas Security Bank employs 91 people and has \$1.2 billion in assets.

stored money at home. However, one session was offered that highlighted the risks associated with storing cash at home and the safety of using banks where funds are FDIC insured.

Some lessons turned into eye-opening moments for students. After teaching about what to look for in a credit report, participants came in the following week and revealed errors discovered in their own credit reports. As a result, McIntosh advised students to contact the companies directly to dispute the errors to get them corrected. Because of his initiative, the student's credit score would end up higher than before they took the class.

"I congratulated them for using what they learned in the module to improve their financial situation," he said. "It was a real big win

for them in that regard and for us as a bank."

Texas Security Bank's leadership team encourages staff initiatives to support communities aiming to educate residents and make a positive impact on where individuals live. Courses offered will empower individuals to enhance their financial knowledge and improve their financial well-being.

McIntosh emphasizes the importance of giving back and educating the community financially. Banks should identify opportunities to provide support by teaching financial literacy or assisting other organizations that need help. Some programs are already in place, like the FDIC's Money Smart program. However, taking the time to teach really has a lasting impact on the life of every student.

"Teaching these classes can have generational effects, too," McIntosh said. "If they learn from financial classes, they can teach their family, their friends, even their children how to manage their finances, which improves the community overall."

For more information about Texas Security Bank, visit texassecuritybank.com.



Photo Courtesy of Texas Security Bank

Instructors from Texas Security Bank use the FDIC's Money Smart program to teach financial literacy courses to Spanish-speaking class members.

**If your bank has a financial literacy program you would like to share,
please contact financial.education@dob.texas.gov.**
