

A Time to Give Back



By Rebecca Calappi

Throughout Macomb County, there are many nonprofit organizations that focus on making our community a better place. Some focus on health, others on addiction, but all of them have one thing in common: they need more.

First State Bank, based in Macomb County for more than a century, recognized this need and decided to roll up their financial sleeves to help.

“We’ve done community giving in this way since 2017 because we wanted the program to be more accessible to the community,” explained Amy Persyn, first vice president and marketing director at First State Bank. “We also wanted the public to have a say. Anyone can nominate an organization and the community votes. The one with the most aggregate votes gets \$10,000, the others get the \$5,000 in their category.”

For nonprofits, this opportunity can truly make a difference. Richard Cannon, president and CEO, Hearts for Homes, knows the importance of having the support of the community. Hearts for Homes was the \$10,000 award recipient for Banksgiving in 2020.

“Our focus is primarily on helping homeless families get into their own homes,” said Cannon. “We expanded to helping at-risk families stay in their homes. We do that by providing resources about housing available. We don’t own any housing. We are trying mostly to make connections.”

“We’re providing security deposits and rent assistance to help people stay in their home. And we also offer motel assistance,” said Cannon. “We’re grateful to First State Bank for all the support they provide the community.”

First State Bank has a community and giving focus, so starting a program like Banksgiving was perfect. The first year First State Bank celebrated Banksgiving, there were just a little over a

handful of applicants. Since then, they changed the format; it now draws more than 400 applications.

“Many of the organizations were really under the radar, but there’s also some really recognizable nonprofits in our community doing great work,” said Persyn. “Something really beautiful came out of this. We created the Community Caring Guide as part of Banksgiving. So, it’s more than the one-time gift they get. We also raise awareness and use our social capital to bring light to the work others are doing.”

In October, First State Bank will put a call out for applications from nonprofits in Oakland and Macomb counties. A team at First State Bank uses a rubric to decide if the organization falls into one of four categories: arts/education/culture, human supportive services, children and families, or environment/community improvement. In all, First State Bank gives \$30,000 to local nonprofits through Banksgiving.

“We thought the timing of Banksgiving was important,” said Persyn. “We’re thanking the nonprofits that are somewhat behind the scenes to create a thriving community. We thought bringing that to light in a time of giving thanks was good timing. So, we announce the award recipients on Giving Tuesday.”

Past recipients include Single Family Living, Macomb Food Program, Assistance League of SE MI and TCB Youth Mentoring.

First State Bank is using Banksgiving as an opportunity to be even more giving in a time of thankfulness and generosity. More than a financial institution, First State Bank works within the community to make it a better place. “This is our way of thanking the nonprofits that are somewhat behind the scenes for helping create a thriving community,” said Persyn. For additional information on Banksgiving go to FSBCARES.com.