

San Francisco Business Times - April 30, 2010
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SAN FRANCISCO Business Times

Friday, April 30, 2010

Bay Area bankers kick off 'iBankLocal' initiative

San Francisco Business Times - by [Mark Calvey](#)

Bay Area community bankers are kicking off a campaign to urge people to conduct their banking at the region's smaller banks.

The initiative follows the popular "Move Your Money" grassroots campaign that has prompted some to move to community banks. But industry officials representing community banks said that campaign, and its web site, includes banks owned by larger institutions such as **Charles Schwab Bank** (NYSE: SCHW) and **Northern Trust**. (NASDAQ: NTRS)

"Community banks are true Main Street champions serving its customers, families and communities," said Brian Garrett, CEO of Oakland-based Community Bank of the Bay. (OTC BB: CBYAA.OB)

The "Move Your Money" campaign, which features an online video touting Jimmy Stewart-turned-banker in the movie "It's a Wonderful Life," also focuses on the nation's strongest community banks and excludes banks less than 3 years old, bankers say.

"Ironically, Jimmy Stewart's bank, the Bailey Bros. Building & Loan, would not qualify for the 'Move Your Money' database because it was insolvent," observed Nancy Sheppard, president and CEO at Western Independent Bankers, a San Francisco-based trade group.

Several Bay Area community banks are supporting iBanklocal, including **Mission National Bank**, Bridge Bank (NASDAQ: BBNK) and Charter Oak Bank. (OTC BB: CHOB.OB) Potential depositors seeking a quick sense of how a bank is faring through the worst financial crisis since the Great Depression by checking the San Francisco Business Times database (see below) on the health of California's banks. The database reflects figures from investment bank **Stone & Youngberg**, research firm **SNL Financial** and the Federal Deposit Insurance Corp.

Another source is **Bauer Financial** which provides star-ratings based on a bank's financial strength for free at its web site.

The iBankLocal campaign, which starts in Northern California with its own web site and radio commercials airing in June, is being conducted by the California Independent Bankers and the Western Independent Bankers. The two trade groups didn't disclose the cost of the initiative.

Sheppard says it was just coincidence that iBankLocal kicked off on April 27, the day of the **Wells Fargo** (NYSE: WFC) annual meeting in San Francisco and **Goldman Sachs'** (NYSE: GS) senior executives being grilled at a Senate hearing in Washington.

But Garrett at Community Bank of the Bay isn't shy about saying community bankers are striking while the iron is hot.

"With so many consumers fed up with the broken promises of Wall Street and megabanks, the iBankLocal message about the benefits of banking locally could not come at a better time," Garrett said.

The San Francisco Business Times has a database of the most recent financial data on every bank operating in California. Use this tool to check on yours.

<p>Enter any part of your bank's name. Leave box blank and click "submit" to refresh data on all California banks.</p> <p>Bank:</p> <input type="text"/>
<input type="submit" value="Submit"/>

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