

Remarks by
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The achievements of our award winners -- Rancho Vista National Bank and Vista Community Clinic, and Roma Federal Savings Bank and Project Freedom -- inspire us all.

The "FUND FOR MOMS" is the best creative financing idea I have had the good fortune to hear about. It is truly "a hand up, not a hand out." We regulators would like to see 100 percent repayment records in other areas!

Project Freedom is aptly named. It shows what can happen when vision and realism combine to fulfill a dream -- providing independent living, self-reliance and an ability to participate in society for those who might never have aspired to those goals.

Making a difference and making money -- something we can and should admire.

Vista, California, and Trenton, New Jersey, are a continent apart. In demographics and in economics, they differ greatly. They are, however, alike and fortunate in the fact that banks in the community have committed to make Vista and Trenton better places in which to live.

Such a commitment is not unusual.

I grew up in Smyrna and Murfreesboro, two small towns south of Nashville, Tennessee, where I witnessed first hand the contribution that banks can make to strengthening the community - particularly where they work hand-in-hand with local leaders.

In small towns, the bankers make things happen -- those things being growth, development, and prosperity.

It tells us something that the banks in Murfreesboro are involved in a "Main Street Program" -- a public-private partnership to rebuild the core of the town.

The program sponsors a \$5 million low-interest loan pool -- and to date it has financed 103 renovations in a town of 44,000 people. One of the town's bankers serves on the program's board of directors.

It should also tell us something that the largest thrift in Murfreesboro not only finances housing. Working with Habitat for Humanity, it has built housing.

One bank in Murfreesboro sponsors a hotline to help students with their homework.

Another is working to finance a cultural arts facility for the town.

Community service can take many forms.

Because every community is unique, every community has unique needs. No one is in a better position than the local banker to understand the needs of the community, and the resources the community can bring to bear to address those needs.

Certainly, Rancho Vista National Bank and Roma Federal Savings Bank went beyond the call of duty in addressing the needs of their communities. No regulator ordered them to help their neighbors in the way and to the extent that they have done so.

They contributed freely. They showed that institutions can invest in people as well as in loans and securities, and in doing so benefit the entire community of which they are so inextricably a part.
