



# Keeping the Community in Community Banking

## Commencement Bank • Tacoma, WA

With a picturesque Mt. Rainier setting, the waterfront city of Tacoma, WA sits on Puget Sound just 30 miles between Seattle and Olympia. The downtown’s revitalization since the 90s transformed the city into a cultural urban area amongst a historic background. In the midst of this downtown transformation, Commencement Bank opened its doors in 2006, with a mission that encompasses equipping clients with “innovative products, state of the art technology and the extensive expertise of employees.” Hal Russell, Chief Executive Officer at Commencement Bank, sat down with us to provide more insight on how they are Keeping the Community in Community Banking.



Commencement Bank Float for 2018 Enumclaw 4th of July & Olympia Capital Lakefair Parades



Olympia Branch Blue Friday

### What is your community most known for?

Incorporated in 1875, Tacoma, WA was selected as the western terminus for the Northern Pacific Railroad due largely to Tacoma’s deep-water port known as Commencement Bay. The name Commencement was selected as a tribute to the port for being the economic hub of our community as well as signaling a fresh start for local banking.

The city of Tacoma and Pierce County have grown substantially over the years. They are known for their active ports, local breweries, diverse culture, and thriving economy. From a recreational standpoint, we live in the shadow of beautiful Mt. Rainier and the Cascade and Olympic mountain ranges.

### How is your bank involved in the community?

The Commencement Bank motto is to do the right thing even if it’s not the most profitable. Our employees are encouraged to serve on local nonprofit boards or participate in volunteering opportunities. In 2017 alone, we supported over 75 local charities and nonprofits with financial contributions as well as 1,200 volunteer hours, all of this with only 48 employees.

We have opened our boardroom to local organizations that need meeting space and host a yearly community BBQ serving over 300 hot dogs to our customers, partners, and community members. In addition, we host complimentary Lunch & Learns for clients and community members with lunch and a presentation on relevant trends for small business owners.

### Do you have any goals or programs in place to encourage bank employees to be active in the community?

Each year we organize a program called “Denim Days for Charity” where our employees can wear



**Bank Name:**  
Commencement Bank

**Bank Charter Location:**  
Tacoma, WA

**Bank Representative:**  
Hal Russell, Chief Executive Officer

**Asset Size:** \$322 million

**Number of Locations:** Four

**Number of Employees:** 49

**Year Bank was Incorporated:** 2006

**City Population:** 211,000



President Hal Russell and Granddaughter Millie at bank sponsored S2 soccer field

jeans on Fridays for a \$5 donation to a local charity. Our employees submit names of charities that are important to them, and a different one is selected each month. We also participate as a team in community projects such as working at a local food bank, participating in downtown clean-ups, or supporting animal welfare.

### What makes community involvement important to you and your bank?

We don’t think of ourselves as “involved in our community”. Instead, we think of ourselves as representatives and advocates for it. That holds us accountable to our commitment to improve our community and to have a positive impact on those who live and work here.

We found that by connecting with our customers and being a part of their success, the bank is successful. We look at our community as a team. Everyone chips in and does their part to contribute. At Commencement Bank, the best interest of our community is the center of everything we do.

### What do you like best about your community?

That’s an easy answer. The people. We have so many passionate leaders who are dedicated to serving the best interests of our community and those who live and work within it.

### What do you like best about being a community banker at Commencement Bank?

There are so many advantages that come with working for a local bank. We are encouraged to do the right thing for each client and invest our time and resources in their success, allowing us to build relationships and work with customers to achieve their financial goals. Our philosophy of doing the right thing makes us feel good about who we are, how we treat our clients, and the impact we have on our community.