

Robert Holt
2023 J. Steven Walraven Winner
Essay

I have resided in Oconee County since 2012 and community banking has positively impacted my life. Prior to working at Oconee State Bank, I didn't know many people in the community in which I lived, and more importantly where my children attended school. If I must be honest, it was a total of fewer than 20 people whom I knew by name; the majority of which were faculty and staff at the schools my children attended. I knew the names of my children's teachers, principals, and the name of the Director of their daycare. Since I have been employed by Oconee State Bank, this has all changed. I now know local business owners, members of the Chamber of Commerce, the Sheriff of Oconee County, faculty and staff from the entire Oconee County School District, and people who work, live, shop and worship in and around the community. There is a substantial difference between residing in an area and being a part of a community. Not only do I know their names, but I know who they are. This has been an absolute blessing to me. Being an employee of a community bank has attributed to an invaluable sense of interconnectedness. The joy of this experience has led me to become more involved in my community.

My increased involvement and my growing desire to contribute as much as I possibly can to the community have allowed me to grow personally and professionally. My contributions are not always monetary, for, time spent is more precious than any gift money can buy. One way that I currently give back to my community is by being a mentor at one of the middle schools. I have three children of my own, and I am very passionate about supporting our youth. Our youth are like seeds, they require certain levels of nurturing and nourishment to grow into responsible and respectable young adults who will one day be advocates for their community. I was also a Captain for The Boy Scouts of America to support our local Troop. The funds raised were to sponsor Scouts whose families were unable to make certain financial commitments in order for that Scout to attend summer programs. My duties as Captain were to recruit Enrollers, and to help facilitate communications with previous donors, assisting with any future contributions they were willing to make. The children are an essential part of any community and it would not be the same without them.