Anne Hofstede, Heart and Soul of UBB Operations, Retires After 41 Years of Dedicated Service

After 41 years, Anne Hofstede will retire in August as head of UBB Operations and ride off into the sunset ... literally! You see, Anne is passionate about horses and plans to devote more time to riding her beloved Missouri Fox Trotter, Emma, and Dancer, her American Paint. Meanwhile, our staff and customers alike are left to reflect on an incredible career that helped power UBB Operations from "red pens, blue pens and ledger paper" to digital imaging and near real-time online banking.

Congratulations!
On your retirement.
Thank you for 41 years of service.

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Anne with her best buddy, Dancer
Anne Hofstede

Bill Rosacker
A Note from the President

During her four-decade career in Operations, Anne Hofstede played a central role in every major chapter of the UBB story. If we look just at the changes in backroom technology from 1977 to today, it is analogous to transitioning from the stagecoach to the Tesla! As you will read here in this special tribute issue of The Independent, through it all, Anne has exemplified the very best in what all of us strive for here at UBB: hard work, dedication, loyalty, leadership, authenticity, humor, compassion, humility and above all, an uncompromising commitment to exceptional customer service. To just say we are going to miss her is simply inadequate, but because of Anne’s legacy, the Operations team, led by Mary Williams with three-plus decades of experience herself, won’t miss a single beat.

I’ll share a story Anne told me not long ago about her dad, Frank Pecchia, a community banker well known and loved at Northeast Bank in Minneapolis. Anne talked about how gratifying it was for him to help neighbors and businesses succeed, regularly taking his family around to the local grocery, restaurants and hardware store to show his support. At Frank’s funeral, Anne said the owner of one well-known restaurant walked in, looked at her and her brothers, and said, “I don’t know why all these people are praying. Your dad’s already in heaven.”

This one powerful experience represents the very essence of community banking and why it means so much to Anne, to all of us and to all of you. While the residents and business owners of the hundreds of small towns and neighborhoods served by our customer banks wouldn’t recognize Anne Hofstede, she can leave here knowing her work these past 40 years has had a profound effect on their success. Frank would be very proud.
The daughter of a banker, Anne grew up with a keen sense of the impact community banking has on small towns and neighborhoods. Her dad Frank Pecchia, who rose through the ranks to become Executive Vice President of Northeast Bank in Minneapolis, gave 16-year-old Anne her first job, telling her then, “You can come to work now.”

“I loved working for Dad,” Anne reminisced recently. “He always patronized customers at the bank. On Saturdays, we’d go shopping at the grocery store that did business with the bank, and when he took the family out to eat, we’d go to restaurants that were customers. They were always so happy to see my Dad.”

Since job prospects for school teachers – Anne’s first career choice – didn’t look good after high school, Anne decided she liked banking enough to apply for a bookkeeping job at UBB, then known as Independent State Bank of Minnesota. That was in 1977 when Jimmy Carter was President, the Chevy Impala was the best-selling car and just two years after UBB was founded as a hedge against the encroachment of the big systems banks that had always provided correspondent services to community banks in the past.

“We had a president, a loan officer, an investment guy, a cashier, a receptionist and me,” Anne recalls. “When I interviewed and they told me their general ledger was posted by hand, I thought: “Anne is a strong woman who can handle as many of its rural customer banks struggled to survive. “It was really sad when a customer would move their accounts to the Fed because of concern about our soundness,” Anne said. “When it really got bad, I was using both sides of my adding-machine tape just to save money.”

The crisis would also serve as a major inspiration to Anne, who was still in her 20s at the time. “It was amazing to me to watch Bill Rosacker [UBB president], Chuck Blair [former head of lending], and Chuck Hokans [former head of marketing] go out and sell or raise capital. I was thinking, “How the heck can you get money from people who don’t have any money?”’ she said. “But, it proved to me that community banks believed in what we were doing.”

Once past the crisis, Anne rose from bookkeeper to assistant vice president to vice president to senior vice president to executive vice president, guiding UBB Operations through a string of backroom breakthroughs along the way. It started with automated ACH in the late ‘80s, online banking in the ‘90s, and real-time reporting today on most transaction and management activities [See Milestones on pages 6 and 7 for more]. But, what really fuels success at UBB Operations is a legendary customer service ethic and reputation for hard work. Ask customers, Board members, and staff where that comes from, and they all agree: Anne.

“We were so small when we first started,” Anne said, “to compete against the big banks we had to focus on extremely high quality service because it was really the only thing that could set us apart. That meant the customers came first, and the customers still come first. That’s really been the most important thing to me, just always putting your best foot forward so the customers and shareholders would continue to have confidence in you.”

“I Wish I Could Bottle Her Laugh!”

Since Anne HATES talking about herself, we asked several of Anne’s colleagues and customers (who LOVE talking about Anne) for thoughts about her legacy at UBB.

Karen Krafka, UBB Chief Financial Officer, calls Anne the Queen of Customer Service. “When Anne started with UBB, a culture of customer service was born,” said Krafka. “She practiced and nurtured that culture every day, mentoring all who worked for her and with her. For Anne, there was always a way to solve a problem, to stretch a deadline for a customer, and she always did it with patience and grace.”

Krafka, who worked beside Anne on the UBB Executive Team for 16 years, said Anne’s distinctive and frequent laughter would always make her smile on even the most challenging days. “Anne’s laugh takes away all of one’s cares,” she said. “You could hear her laugh before she entered the department. I wish I could bottle it!”

“Despite not being a high-tech person even though she managed a high-tech department, Anne knew how to hire and nurture people who did understand technology,” said Mary Williams, brought on in 2007 to spearhead a new imaging service that would become a stellar success as UNETexchange.

“Anne is one person of a handful of people I’ve had in my career that gave me the opportunities to grow and expand, and really trusted my ability to succeed. You’d hear the same talking to other people that she’s hired along the way,” said Williams, who as Senior Vice President will succeed Anne as head of Operations.

“Her years of experience on the front lines also meant that Anne understood what happens underneath all the technology, where everything comes from, and exactly what should happen when the button is pushed.”

Ben Eskierka, Senior Vice President of UBB Securities, weighed in with this thought: “Anne is a strong woman who...
is a powerful role model in what has been a male-dominated banking industry. She taught me more about how to provide exceptional customer service than anyone else in my career,” he said. “I am so thankful that she hired me 32 years ago and remains my good friend to this day.”

Chuck Hokans, retired Executive Vice President of Marketing, recalls Anne’s incredible work ethic: “I can’t begin to tell you of the countless hours that Anne has spent working on specific projects or simply trying to resolve an extended problem that surfaced that day. Never a complainer, she just tucked her head down and moved forward.”

He also added that Anne is an expert at “telepathing” a smile through the telephone. “No one was ever better at connecting with people over the phone than Anne,” he said.

Not surprisingly, customers echo these thoughts in their assessment of UBB Operations. Here’s a sampling:

“UBB was there soon after we opened our doors,” recalled Patrick (Pat) Corrigan, President of Access Bank in Omaha. “Their level of expertise on the operations side is second to none. Having big-bank experience myself, I know how good U.S. Bank’s back room is. I’d say UBB rivals that in many respects.”

Adds John Calendar, President of The State Bank of Faribault, Minnesota, “For us, in talking to my CFO and my IT people, they couldn’t live without the operations backroom that UBB provides to us. It’s crucial; it’s effective; it’s excellent.”

Last Words Go to Anne

When asked about the future of UBB Operations, Anne was genuinely effusive about the people that will step up to fill her shoes. “Mary [Williams] has the perfect background; twelve years here at UBB, 35 years total in community banking, technology and mergers. She’s perfect to take over this department,” Anne said. “And, she’ll have incredible support from the rest of a very dedicated and accomplished Operations staff. Customers should know we aren’t losing a step after I leave.”

But, that doesn’t mean Anne, Emma and Dancer gallop off with no regrets. “I’m really going to miss the people I work with, the customers I talk to all the time, the initiatives we’ve worked on so hard for the future,” she said. “I just take great pride that it’s all going to happen for UBB, and I couldn’t be prouder.”

Family Members: My husband - Bill, one son - Jerry, two stepsons - Tony & Nick, 2 daughters-in-law Bre & Marie and 5 grandsons - Jack, Tommy, Will, Theo & Hank. One very special grandson, Oliver & his mom, Micky. My Mom, two brothers and the rest of the extended family too.

Pets: My cat - Palmer & horses - Emma & Dancer.

What do you listen to on your drive to work: Mostly Country but I listen to and love all types of music.

Interests: Family, horses & trail riding at county and state parks, gardening (mostly flowers and perennials), music, reading & time at the lake. I also enjoy watching the grandkids as they do what our kids did; and seeing them grow in so many ways.

If I could live anywhere in the world, I would live: Wherever the kids & grand kids are. Where the temperature is never lower than 60, there is no humidity, no bugs and I could ride my horses everyday…Hawaii??

If I could have one super power (besides flying) it would be: Knowing then what I know now.

Many people don’t know that I: Watch some really goofy reality TV shows.

If I was not working in banking I would: Have been an elementary school teacher.

I started working at UBB in: March of 1977.

My favorite part of working in banking is: All the customers and coworkers I met and worked with for so many years are just unforgettable. Getting to be part of an organization that is a partner and resource in helping to keep community banks strong in their communities.

The best advice I ever got was: From my Dad. When I was anxious or worried, he could tell & would ask me, “Can you change it? Is there any way to change what happened or the outcome?” He would then tell me if the answer is no, you have to forget it and let it go. This helped me so many times, and I can always hear his voice.

First For Your Success means: Consistently going the extra mile, answering the phone with a smile in your voice and finding ways to assist UBB customers even if it isn’t the norm.
UBB Operations – 4 Decades of Accomplishment

By embracing change, UBB has often led the way in correspondent banking technology here in the Midwest – and in many respects – nationwide. Anne Hofstede and her Operations team were never afraid to try new concepts, which more often than not resulted in big payoffs for efficiency, cost-effectiveness and customer service. Many of those milestones are highlighted below:


1977: Anne Hofstede hired as an assistant bookkeeper, joins five other employees

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1992: UNET introduced, one of the earliest online banking systems in the country custom designed for correspondent deposit services, including ACH, wires and Fed fund reporting (originally DOS-based and accessible through dial-up modems)

2003: Biometric fingerprint recognition implemented for secure login

2008: Anne promoted to Senior Vice President, Chief Operations Officer

2010: UNETExchange reports explosive growth in just over two years, clearing more than 75 million items for 491 members, $38 million within a network of 7,700 endpoints; Member savings exceed $500,000

2011: UBB granted a prestigious seat on the Electronic Check Clearing House Organization (ECCHO) Board of Directors to promote community bank interests within the global imaging and electronic payment systems

2013: UStore launched, an online archiving service for customer storage, search, analysis and retrieval of ACH transactions, imaged cash letters and wires

2016: Anne promoted to Executive Vice President, Chief Operations Officer

2016-2017: Merger announced with Great Lakes Bankers’ Bank in July 2016; UBB Operations successfully on-boards more than 200 Ohio and Michigan banks by early 2017; UBB now serves more than 1,000 customers in 14 states, from Conneaut Savings Bank in Conneaut, Ohio, in the east to Lewis & Clark Bank, in Oregon City, Ore., 2,556 miles to the west

2017: Certified UBB Operations staff offer customer training for the prestigious National Check Payments (NCP) certification from ECCHO

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2018: UBB Operations prepares to offer international payment services via UNET.web

2019: Anne Hofstede promotes to Vice President, Operations

2020: Anne Hofstede promotes to Senior Vice President, Chief Operations Officer

2020-2021: Merger announced with Great Lakes Bankers’ Bank in July 2020; UBB Operations successfully on-boards more than 200 Ohio and Michigan banks by early 2021; UBB now serves more than 1,000 customers in 14 states, from Conneaut Savings Bank in Conneaut, Ohio, in the east to Lewis & Clark Bank, in Oregon City, Ore., 2,556 miles to the west

2021: UBB Operations prepares to offer international payment services via UNET.web

2022: Anne Hofstede promotes to Executive Vice President, Chief Operations Officer

2022-2023: Merger announced with Great Lakes Bankers’ Bank in July 2022; UBB Operations successfully on-boards more than 200 Ohio and Michigan banks by early 2023; UBB now serves more than 1,000 customers in 14 states, from Conneaut Savings Bank in Conneaut, Ohio, in the east to Lewis & Clark Bank, in Oregon City, Ore., 2,556 miles to the west

2023: UBB Operations prepares to offer international payment services via UNET.web

2024: Anne Hofstede retires as head of UBB Operations after 41 years of exemplary service. Why did she stay so long? “I’m just one of those people. I dig in, and I stay put.” Mary Williams, with 35 years of experience in community banking – 12 at UBB – becomes the new director of UBB Operations.