



AAA Scholarship Foundation Bank Advisory Board

Frank Gonzalez and MBAF hosted the AAA Scholarship Foundation Bank Advisory Board on October 17th at MBAF's headquarters in Miami.



Members also learned how the Community Reinvestment Act applies to banks' involvement in disaster recovery from Lisa Mifflin, Community Affairs Officer, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

AAA Scholarship Foundation Bank Advisory Board (pictured above) consists of banking experts, currently working in any aspect of the banking field, interested in improving the educational opportunities of economically-disadvantaged children in their communities. The board meets twice per year. For more information, please contact Kerri Vaughan at (786) 367-0823/ kerri@aaascholarships.org.

Federal Reserve Bank Senior Examiner, Danny Santivasci gave board members an overview of the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) regulation and provided information on exam preparation, identifying community development opportunities, developing a CRA action plan, assessing community needs, and determining performance context factors.



Danny Santivasci, Sr. Examiner, Federal Reserve Bank and Lisa Mifflin, Community Affairs Officer, Office of the Comptroller of the Currency.

Banker of Excellence



When asked for a *Pearl of Wisdom*, Nancy L. Merolla shares, "If you ever run into someone who isn't smiling, give them one of yours. It will make a difference." Nancy has been doing just that her entire life - giving a smile and making a difference.

Nancy is an accomplished leader with a proven record of success in administering both public and private non-profit organizations serving the community's needs. With over 30 years in the banking industry, she's held such diverse positions as Vice President CRA Manager for Comerica Bank, Vice President, Branch Management for Glendale Federal and Vice President, Statewide Non-Profit Relationship Manager for BankAtlantic.

Her work with non-profits includes serving as President and CEO of Broward Housing Solutions, working with the Broward Partnership for the Homeless and The Starting Place, Inc., and in 2009, she was appointed Circuit Administrator of the Florida Department of Children and Families for Broward County by Secretary George Sheldon.

Since 2012, Nancy has served as Vice President and CRA Manager of Florida Community Bank (FCB), focusing on the Bank's community reinvestment activities throughout Florida.

Because of her leadership, passion, performance and innovation, Nancy was named as one of the *South Florida Business Journal's* Influential Business Women of 2017. "I was humbled to be nominated by Florida Community Bank and truly honored to be the recipient of this award," she says.

"Florida Community Bank continues to support our communities and gives employees a chance to contribute both personally and professionally. I currently serve on twelve boards and advisory councils as part of my community commitment through my role as CRA Officer for Florida Community Bank."

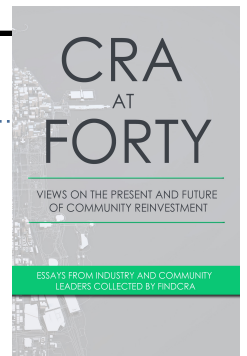
In 2017, Nancy became a founding member of the AAA Scholarship Foundation Bank Advisory Board. FCB also participates with AAA Scholarship Foundation (AAA) through the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program. FCB's contributions to AAA over the past two years have provided close to 75 educational scholarships to low-income Florida children.

"It's always been a true passion of mine to work with nonprofits. The AAA Scholarship Foundation understood the importance of supporting the communities around us, and this partnership was all-in-all a "win-win" for me."

CRA at FORTY

As the Community Reinvestment Act reaches its 40th anniversary, findCRA has collected a book of original essays that takes a close look at community development from the perspective of the people working throughout the nation. They share their real-world experiences, knowledge and passion about the most critical problems that our communities of need face everyday. Their stories provide a lens to see CRA at work, ideas for its future and more importantly, what it means in people's lives.

An essay from Bank Advisory board chair Erbi Blanco-True is featured as well as essays from board member Shelia Etchen and AAA Managing Director Kerri Vaughan. You can read their essays or order a copy of the book today at www.findCRA.com/CRAat40.



CRA Questions Answered



Q. In order to receive CRA credit for a community development activity in a Federally Designated Disaster Area (such as parts of Texas, Florida and Puerto Rico after the recent hurricanes), does the activity need to be in an LMI census tract?

A. The short answer is “no.” The regulators will always give more consideration to activities (loans, investments, services) that directly serve LMI residents or LMI geographic areas, however all community development qualified activities that help revitalize or stabilize a disaster recovery area will be given positive consideration under CRA. For example, a loan to repair a business which suffered hurricane damage and is therefore unable to operate because of the damage, will be considered even though that business is located in a middle- or upper-income area. Or a loan for a property that will be housing displaced residents suffering from the effects of Hurricane Irma, Maria or Harvey (regardless of the income of the residents or location of the property) will be considered a community development loan. This is effective up to 36 months from the date of the disaster designation. Remember to document, document, document!

Erbi Blanco-True, professional CRA consultant to the banking industry, CRA advisor to Gibraltar Private Bank and Trust, serves as AAA’s voluntary CRA specialist. Ask Erbi a question at eblanco-true@gibraltarprivate.com.

This Q&A segment is intended to assist CRA Officers with common CRA-related questions. All answers are based on the opinion of a CRA expert, however, bankers are encouraged to contact their regulator if they need detailed answers on specific cases.

Tax Credits Still Available

AAA Scholarship Foundation provides banks with an innovative CRA investment opportunity at no cost to the corporation. You can earn CRA credit by simply redirecting your state tax liability to AAA to fund scholarships for low-income children. Participating corporations receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit for their redirection.

We are still seeing a tremendous need for scholarships. Children are seeking an environment that will help them overcome the struggles they are facing, while parents are desperate to break the cycle and save their children from an uncertain future. With your help, we can make their dreams come true. By simply redirecting your state tax liability, you can provide valuable educational options for low-income children.

Tax credits are still available in Florida, Arizona, Alabama, Georgia and Nevada. For more information go to <http://www.aascholarships.org/donors>.

Updated CRA Information for Bank Contributors

Since the community development purpose of the Tax Credit Scholarship Programs is to serve low-income children (only those that qualify for the national free or reduced lunch program), over 85 percent of AAA Scholarships are distributed to children at or below 185 percent of poverty. Below are the demographics of the children served (this information is updated every quarter):

Average Family Size: 4

Average Family Income: \$32,265*

Single-Parent Home: 60%

**This income needs to be compared to the area median income (“AMI”) of the bank’s assessment areas to determine whether it’s at or below 30 percent (extremely low), 50 percent (low) or 80 percent (moderate) of the AMI to insure qualifying as a CRA investment.*

Scholarship Family Spotlight



Both originally from the West Indies, Deborah and Irwin Moore met in New York and, after marrying, settled down in Georgia to raise their two daughters, Brianna and Bethany. When it came time for their oldest, Brianna, to start school, however, they were unsatisfied with the educational environment offered at their local neighborhood school. Deborah, who studied education prior to moving to the United States, had a keen knowledge of the importance of a quality education and was determined to ensure that her daughters started off on the right foot.

Limited by the educational offerings in their area, Deborah opted to put her teaching skills to use and home-schooled both girls through the Georgia Cyber Academy (GCA) program, a free online public school program.

As the girls grew older, however, Deborah and Irwin realized that they needed something more than the homeschool program could offer if they were truly going to reach their full potential. Unfortunately, around this time Irwin lost his job as a HVAC tech, putting a strain on the family's finances.

With their options seemingly slim, the Moore's faced a dilemma on what to do about their daughters' educations. The family found their solution in the form of Georgia Qualified Education Expense Tax Credit Scholarships, which enabled them to find the right academic setting for both girls, providing both financial and emotional relief at a time that the family needed it the most.

Over the last several years, both Brianna and Bethany have flourished in their parent-selected schools. Brianna, now 18, graduated from Georgia-Cumberland Academy with high honors in the Spring of 2017. As a result of her excellent grades, she was also inducted in the national honor society and received several scholarship offers to different colleges. She elected to attend Southern Adventist University in Tennessee, where she is currently pursuing a degree in elementary education. With a strong passion for writing, Brianna also hopes to publish a book in the future.

Bethany, now in the 8th grade at Lithonia Adventist Academy, has grown tremendously over the past few years. She had some slight struggles at first as she adjusted to her new school. However, she has transitioned from mostly making C's to now bringing home A's and B's in all her subjects. She has also developed a love of performing arts and participates in her school's drama club. When asked about her future plans, Bethany has a wide range of interests that include being a judge or a movie director.

"I am extremely grateful to the AAA Scholarship Foundation and its donors," says Deborah. "Your donations have without a doubt made a tremendous difference in my children's lives. Through your support, you are helping to keep so many children inspired, motivated and encouraged so that they can realize their goals and dreams. A million thanks from the bottom of my heart!"

SAVE THE DATE

March 18 - March 21, 2018
National Interagency
Community Reinvestment Conference
Miami, FL

The 2018 Conference is the premier training and networking event for community development professionals, including CRA officers and staff from CDFIs, nonprofits and government agencies.

Featuring: Innovations in community development policy and practice, CRA examination training and community development tours of Miami .