



Rallying for a Good Cause

A Cure the Blue prostate awareness campaign taps community banks

By Michael Blankenheim

The Independent Bankers Association of New York State and a western New York community bank, Lakeshore Savings Bank, have helped launch a nationwide campaign to support prostate cancer research and awareness. And they hope to rally community banks across the country to help the cause.

A project with the Buffalo Bills alumni association, the Cure the Blue campaign is the brainchild of Booker Edgerson, a retired National Football League Buffalo Bills player and two-time prostate cancer survivor. Former Buffalo Bills and Super Bowl-winning coach Marv Levy, who also had a prostate cancer is involved as well.

Edgerson, a longtime advocate for prostate cancer prevention and research, was inspired in part to start the blue-ribbon campaign by the Susan G. Komen pink-ribbon campaign to fight breast cancer, explains John Witkowski, president and CEO of the Independent Bankers Association of New York State. Witkowski is encouraging community banks across New York State and across the country to get involved with Cure the Blue. Several expressed interest after the campaign was announced last month.

Also a former Buffalo Bills football player, Witkowski says the Cure the Blue campaign's goal is to get as many community banks involved as possible along with NFL player alumni associations in other cities. "Prostate cancer is so prevalent," he says. "Everyone knows someone who is impacted by it. If we can get this cranked up in the



Supporting the Cause—Dan Reininga, right, president of Lakeshore Savings Bank in Dunkirk, N.Y., shows community banking's support for the Cure the Blue prostate awareness campaign. Reininga greets Ed Rutkowski, president of the Buffalo Bills Alumni Foundation, a major organizer of the campaign, during a fundraising event.

community bank world, it will really grow like a wildfire.

"Whether it's just selling the ribbons or sponsoring a 5K run, we want community banks involved in this network. Helping people is what community banks do."

Lakeshore Savings in Dunkirk, N.Y., which serves a suburb of Buffalo, is the first community bank to join the effort. To promote the campaign, the \$480 million-asset community bank is selling blue-ribbon lapel pins for donations of \$5 at its 11 branches. Along with the pin, donors also receive a brochure with facts about prostate cancer, says Dan Reininga, the bank's president and CEO.

"When people get asked about the pin, we want them to have some facts to talk about it," Reininga explains.

"This is an opportunity to promote the fight against prostate cancer, which is the second-leading cause of cancer death among men," he adds.

"If we can partner the marketing skills we the banks have, along with NFL franchises across the country, we will have a grassroots effort to create awareness for this great program regarding the prevention and treatment of prostate cancer." ■

Michael Blankenheim is a freelance writer in Maryland.

On Cure the Blue

To find out more information about the Cure the Blue program, visit www.curetheblue.com.

John Witkowski, president of the Independent Bankers Association of New York State, encourages community bankers to contact him with questions and for information about the program. Reach him by phone at (716) 880-0518 or by email at johnw@ibanys.net.