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Congratulations to our "Best"!

Congratulations to HomeTown Bank of League City (top) and HomeTown Bank of Alvin (bottom)!
They were named "Best Bank" by the readers of the Bay Area Citizen and the Alvin Sun/ Advertiser!

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Awards From United Way

HomeTown Bank was presented with 3 awards at the recent United Way Campaign Celebration! “Loyal Corporate Contributor”, “Outstanding Employee Fair Share”, and “Charting New Territory”! Pictured are Sr. Vice President Rosie Garcia, Vice President Diana Ramos, and Vice President Stephany Cantu.

Getting into the Swing of Things

As the Madness of March comes to a close, it's time for me to put down the basketball and grab a bat. Baseball season is upon us! The time is now for the Boys of Summer to start getting in the "swing" of things.

Baseball has always been my first love since I was a kid. I loved playing the game and was always fascinated with baseball history and its players. Growing up, I collected baseball cards and we used to stick our favorite baseball players in our back pocket during games...to play like them, of course. Will Clark, Mark McGwire, Nolan Ryan, Craig Biggio, and Ken Griffey, Jr. were just a few of my baseball heroes.

I was always lucky enough to have my dad as my coach. I called him "coach" from the time I was 5 years old until I was 15. After seventeen years of working for HomeTown Bank, I guess he still is my coach. Looking back, those are, without a doubt, some of the best memories I have from my childhood. As I got older, I dreamed of one day having a son of my own to coach and work in a profession that allowed me to do so.

My oldest son, Aidan (9), is entering his first year of kid-pitch. I have been coaching him since T-ball and have had a blast doing it! Now, does it have its challenges? YES. I discovered early on in my "coaching" career that there is a very good reason why you have 2-3 coaches per team...I have found that most boys don't listen to their own dad, but they will listen to another "coach". I can certainly appreciate the time and commitment my dad put in over the years, and I hope one day my kids will feel the same. Dad still knows baseball and its awesome watching him play catch with his grandson.

Part of coaching a baseball team is knowing who your players are, what their talents are, and at what position they can best help the team. It is no different than managing our HomeTown Bank team. You coach them up, put them in the right position, and let them play. When your people are having fun, they are confident...and confidence usually translates into production and success.

When people ask me about HomeTown Bank and what our goals are, it really is simple...We want you as a customer. We also want your parents, grandparents, children, your business, all the way down the line. We want to make a generational impact. That's who we are and that's what we're about.

Need another example of generational impact? Watching your dad play catch with his grandson...

Play Ball!



Bill Provenzano speaks at Clear Falls High School

League City Branch Manager and Sr. VP Bill Provenzano recently spoke to a group of seniors at Clear Falls High School about credit and savings.

Tips for Getting Your First Mortgage

What to know when buying your first home

So you think you're ready to take the plunge and purchase your first house. Congrats! Homeownership is a big, exciting step — but getting your first mortgage can be quite complex, involving many steps. That's why it's important to prepare as best you can before shelling out the down payment.

Taking the right steps to start with make it far less complicated down the road. Before signing on the dotted line for your mortgage, take these steps to ensure that the process goes smoothly and efficiently.

- **Get a copy of your credit report** - You can retrieve a free credit report from each of the three credit bureaus at AnnualCreditReport.com.

"In addition, the standards are higher in terms of what score you need and how it affects the cost of the loan," said Mike Winesburg, a former mortgage planner with McKinley Carter Wealth Services in Wheeling, West Virginia. While it's beneficial to pay everything on time, that doesn't always mean your credit score is where it should be. The lower your utilization rate (your available credit limit) the higher your score will be — and in order to obtain a mortgage, you'll want to have a lot of credit available, with less than a third of it in use.



- **Get preapproved** - Ensuring that you're preapproved for a loan makes the home-buying process a lot easier on you.

"The first-time homebuyer needs to be very savvy and have an upfront preapproval letter that will help give the seller confidence that [the buyer] can close the loan and obtain the funds," explained David Norris, president and COO at nonbank mortgage lender LoanDepot.com. So before you even begin your search, make the process of getting preapproved mandatory. And along with that, be patient.

"[Buying a home] is really like finding a job — it's going to take a lot of time to prepare," said Cara Pierce, a certified housing counselor with ClearPoint Credit Counseling Solutions. "That way, when the deal comes along, you're ready to pounce on it."

- **Track your spending** - "If I were a first-time homebuyer and I wanted to do everything right, I would probably try to track my spending for a couple of months to see where my money was going," said Winesburg. Even if you aren't in debt and you pay your bills on time, it's important to evaluate how you spend your money. So, for example, are you able to sock away extra

funds at the end of each month or do you typically live paycheck to paycheck? When you're pursuing your first mortgage, it's important to have a good idea of what's coming in and what's still owed.

- **Get rid of debt** - It sounds simple, but it makes a big difference. Not only does being debt free make it more likely you'll get preapproved for a decent loan, but paying your mortgage each month is much easier if you aren't still paying off debt. It's also not wise to be purchasing expensive items around the same time as buying a home — for example, a car.

"It would be much easier to own a home if you can show a history of saving and not have gotten yourself into too much debt," Norris added.

- **Organize documents in advance** - Paperwork isn't the most exciting thing in the world, but lenders do typically require an array of documentation when issuing a mortgage — things like your W-2s, bank statements and tax returns. Gathering these items ahead of time can ensure that nothing gets delayed and you can move on to owning your home as quickly as possible.

"You need to be organized and be able to pull all this information together," said Cara Ameer, a Coldwell Banker real estate agent. "What can cause delays in the process is trying to track down various pieces of paper the lender is going to need."

Your financial institution is there to help and can walk you through the entire process, so if you're considering getting your first mortgage, call or stop by to find out the options available to you.

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Loan Definitions — Explained

Clarifications of some tricky loan-related words

A loan is a certain amount of money that needs to be repaid. Whenever you receive or need to take out a loan, you may hear certain phrases or words pop up that you're not aware of. Here's what some of them mean:

Amortization: The time when you pay off debt at the end of a fixed period. So, for example, if you took out a 15-year loan for \$30,000, \$2,000 would be recorded each year as an amortization expense.

Annual Percentage Rate (APR): If you're paying or receiving interest on a loan, the APR is the percentage rate of the interest.

Equity: The amount of money between how much your home is appraised for and the dollar amount in mortgage that you still have to pay off. For example, if your home is appraised for \$300,000 and you've paid off \$100,000, you still owe \$200,000. If you minus the balance owed (\$200,000) from the appraised value (\$300,000) you're left with your equity: \$100,000.

Escrow: Money being held by a reliable third party for the buyer and seller. The third party takes care of everything when it comes to closing or settlement, from paperwork to disbursement of funds.

Interest: When you borrow money and pay it back over a period of time, you have to pay interest for delaying the repayment — typically an annual percentage (see APR).

Principal: The amount of money remaining on a loan, *not* including its interest.

Private Mortgage Insurance (PMI): When you buy a house, if your down payment is less than 20 percent, you're required to pay a PMI payment. This payment protects the bank lending the mortgage in the event you're unable to make payments on your home in the future and you have to file for a foreclosure. Once you've paid 20 percent toward the principal amount of the loan, you no longer have to pay PMI.

Points: Points are a type of pre-paid interest — one point being one percent of the total amount of your mortgage loan. There are two types: discount points and origination points. Discount points are



paid during closing, which will give you a better interest rate for your loan's duration. With origination points, a broker processes the loan, and you and the lender pay for the service.

If you ever have any financial questions or need further explanation about any financial topic, don't hesitate to call or stop in.

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Green Spring Cleaning Tips

Spruce up your home in an eco-friendly way

It's that time of year again...everyone is busting out their cleaning supplies and partaking in the springtime spruce up. Rather than spending a bunch of time and money on materials and methods that harm the world around us, utilize these tips to be more environmentally-conscious and even improve your environment.

Dusting

One simple suggestion is the tip that keeps on tipping — use vinegar. Vinegar is the primary green cleaning solution for multiple uses. Mix a few tablespoons of vinegar in a bowl of water, soak a dishrag, wring it out and go to town on any surface. The solution not only cleans off present dust, but also sticks around to help repel future dust.



Carpet cleaning

Use the same ingredients in a steam cleaner (a borrowed one, if you want to save money) to deep clean your rugs. Fill the compartment with equal parts water and vinegar, then use the cleaner as directed and rinse with plain water. Don't worry about the vinegar smell, it disappears as the carpet dries.

Bathrooms

Save money by purchasing borax at the supermarket instead of the multitude of commercial cleaners out there. Mix it with water and lemon juice and then start cleaning. But you'll have to be more patient — because although it is more healthful, it doesn't cut through the grit as quickly as typical cleaners with chemicals, but eventually the job is done just as well.

Freezers

Don't forget about ridding your refrigerator of those stinky old leftovers. While you're at it, do the freezer, too. To avoid the freezer's contents thawing out and going bad while you are cleaning, simply remember to plan ahead. Take an inventory of what's in your freezer and list out a weekly menu utilizing the frozen food. Then clean out the fridge/freezer with the same solution you used to dust. Once your spring cleaning is done, go shopping for fresh food to refill your appliance.

Tapestries and bedding

Remove your curtains and strip the beds, then wash them on delicate with an eco-friendly, high-efficiency (or "honest") detergent. Afterward, take advantage of that springtime weather and hang them outdoors to dry.

Air filters

Install a living air filter in the form of houseplants. Not only do they add decor to your home, they also efficiently clean the interior air. To properly clean your home's air, the recommended number of plants is between 15-18 Spider plants, English ivy, rubber plants or peace lilies (in a 6-8-inch diameter container) for an 1,800-square-foot home. That might sound like a lot, but you can be creative with arrangements and also place more in rooms where you spend the most time.

Recycle clutter

If you have extra items that you no longer use, or clothes that don't fit, for example, put them aside for a yard sale or box them up for Goodwill or the Salvation Army. You can also list things on Craigslist or other social media for sale or giveaway.

If you have clothing items that are a little more-than-gently used, turn them into rags for dusting. This is much more eco-friendly than wasting single-use paper towels for cleaning.

Remember that these tips apply any time of year, not just in the springtime. Use these suggestions and start living more closely to nature all year round.

Galveston's Ambassador's Preparatory Academy Fundraising Gala



Pictured are Asst. Vice President Anthony Cristelli, Vice President Stephany Cantu, Asst. Vice President Jeanette Mack, Asst. Vice President Cynthia Gomez, Vice President Gayle Culling, Sr. Vice President Angela Brooks, Asst. Vice President Crystal Pena, Asst. Vice President Brandon Rogers, Asst. Vice President Elise Worthen, and Executive Vice President Scott Kusnerik.

The HomeTown team had fun supporting Galveston's Ambassador's Preparatory Academy at their Fundraising Gala.

Pearland ISD Education Foundation

Pearland Officers and Business Development Committee supported the Pearland ISD Education Foundation at their Inaugural Gala on March 5th. The community helped the Gala bring in over \$98,000 net profit!

