

## Local Bank in Kokomo Indiana finding Success in Putting the Community First providing Personal and Business Banking, Investment and Retirement Services



**Robb Blume**  
President & Chief Executive Officer

Community First Bank of Indiana  
[www.cfbindiana.com](http://www.cfbindiana.com)

Interview conducted by:  
Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor  
CEOCFO Magazine

**“We see our customers in the grocery store and church and the ball field so we want to make sure we treat everybody fairly and usually that results in a good outcome.”**

**- Robb Blume**

**CEOCFO:** *Mr. Blume, would you tell us the overall philosophy of Community First Bank of Indiana?*

**Mr. Blume:** We started our bank in 2003 with the thought that the community of Kokomo needed a good locally owned bank. Our philosophy has been to hire the absolute best people we can, people who appreciate the communities that they live in and are willing to serve in those communities. That philosophy has served us well.

**CEOCFO:** *How do you know if somebody truly understands the community approach or just wants a job?*

**Mr. Blume:** The senior management team has been fortunate to have been in this market for quite some time so we knew a lot of the people in the community and most of the bankers in the community so we got to hand-pick our starting team. We have tried to promote from within and hire through employee referrals throughout the course of our existence. We had zero turn-over in 2016 so we think that has been pretty successful.

**CEOCFO:** *Would you tell us how the communities you serve have weathered the storm?*

**Mr. Blume:** We serve two communities. We serve Howard County primarily Kokomo and we have recently expanded to Hamilton County in the Noblesville/Westfield area. They are two very distinct communities; Kokomo has historically been reliant on the auto industry for a good part of its economic growth and the economy has been cyclical with the automotive industry. We have seen ups and downs but it is also a very resilient economy. Over the last ten years we have seen a resurgence downtown. We have added a new YMCA and we have built a Kokomo municipal stadium which is a baseball stadium and it supports developmental baseball teams. College kids can play in the summers and community members house the kids so it has been a fun thing to watch and be a part of. It is a more stable town and there is probably less growth here than certainly in Hamilton County which is our other community that we are trying to grow into. That is just north of Indianapolis and it is one of the fastest if not the fastest growing county in Indiana. There is a lot of new home construction and a lot of industrial growth. They also have a strong sports link; they started a park called Grand Park which has numerous outdoor soccer, baseball, softball and football fields. In addition they have a huge indoor soccer facility and an indoor field house that serves the basketball community. They are different communities but the common thread is that neither one of them have a locally owned community bank other than us so we fill a niche.

**CEOCFO:** *Do people look for local community banks?*

**Mr. Blume:** Our customers do. There is a segment of the world that still places a value on personal service and somebody knowing you when you walk through the door. Consistency in staffing and that lack of turnover serves us very well with those people. We are not for everybody and our main goal is not to be a low-cost provider. We do not plan to have twenty or thirty branches in the community like some of the bigger banks can. We are a destination but we justify that through service and working with our customers, getting to know people and serving the community. We spent hours and hours of our employee time and bank time volunteering on boards and in different not-for-profit organizations and