

The Buckeye Beacon



Today & Tomorrow, Buckeye Community Bank is Your Partner for Growth

Vol 8 • Issue 2

Client Spotlight: **AIR FILTER FACTORY**

Every business owner knows that they will occasionally face adversity. It takes a special leader equipped with an unfailing determination to overcome numerous obstacles en route to building a thriving business.

That determination, mixed with optimism and pluck, allowed Dave and Dawn Skodny to build Air Filter Factory into a successful company while facing both professional and personal tests. The couple's company, founded in 2009, has been named among the Inc. 5000 list of America's fastest-growing private companies several times.

"You need to continue to work hard and push forward no matter what you are dealt. It is a learning lesson when you fail or struggle," said Dave.

The company, based in Wakeman, distributes air filters for commercial and residential use. Air Filter Factory has leveraged changing technology and its commitment to selling American-made products among its many advantages.

"We are both driven people, and we weren't going to let obstacles get in our way. When you stop learning and growing, you're in trouble," Dawn added in a recent podcast.

A year before the company's founding, Dave experienced a professional transition as he had sold his local fishing and bait shop. Dawn would later work to save her own company from questionable moves made by a partner. The couple was also raising a family.

Dave spent time learning more about online sales, audience targeting and the use of data to attract buyers. A side project during that time laid the path for the launch of Air Filter Factory.

After quickly outgrowing a bedroom office, the Skodnys' company moved into their garage, then several commercial spaces as it grew year over year. According to Dave, his working relationship with Dawn and the use of their diverse strengths in unison is considered the secret sauce to their success.



Today, Air Filter Factory focuses on a multichannel approach, promoting and selling products directly, through various platforms, and in partnership with larger retailers while delivering a consistent, coordinated customer experience. The couple credits the talented team that shares in the company's achievements and growth.

"One of our goals has always been creating great-paying jobs, sharing the rewards when we all succeed and creating a culture where people grow, succeed and have fun. Our staff is part of our family," said Dave, whose team includes 14 employees today. "We have a lot of things in the works and are making a big push for growth this year."

The Skodnys' first interaction with Buckeye Community Bank was not a match, but they were impressed with staff advice and kindness. Several years later, the two groups were able to work together.

"The entire Buckeye team makes you feel like you're their only client. We have been impressed with Buckeye, David Janowicz and the whole staff. We have appreciated their advice and help to ensure we were on the right path for the future," said Dave.

"Dave and Dawn Skodny have worked extremely hard to position their company and team for success. We were impressed by their diligence and commitment to ensuring the Air Filter Factory had a solid growth plan," said Buckeye Community Bank President and CEO Ben Norton. "At Buckeye Community Bank, we have committed ourselves to sharing the lessons we've learned over the years and being the partner that helps business owners achieve their goals."



A Letter from Ben P. Norton President and CEO

We are bombarded with the latest trends and technology meant to revolutionize business almost every day. No matter what the sector, a successful organization must be adept at adjusting strategy in response to rapid change.

However, no matter how much the world changes or how disruptive digital tools are, banking at its core remains a people-centric business. The financial well-being of our families and companies remains highly personal. Though technology may change our way of connecting, conversations remain vital to the community banker and the people we serve.

I often say that life happens one conversation at a time, which is undoubtedly true in banking. Every Buckeye Community Bank team member learns daily from different viewpoints, challenges, collaborations, and insights that save us from complacency. Community bankers continue to prove they understand the local marketplace better because of their relationship with their clients and those working to make the community vibrant.

While larger out-of-town banks work hard to personalize or humanize banking, we never forget that this is a people-to-people business. As our industry becomes more technologically advanced, it can sometimes seem disconnected from those it serves. Whether it's blockchain, big data, or artificial intelligence, these tools will help us become better bankers, but they won't replace the need to connect with people.

We thrive because we understand that a business is an entity created by real people who pursue

(President's Letter continued next page)



Buckeye Cares About Community



Valor Home Lorain

Contributing to the community and helping our neighbors succeed is at the core of the collective heart at Buckeye Community Bank. Our team has donated time and talents to support the mission of Valor Home Lorain over the past several months.

Members of our staff raised funds, collected supplies and volunteered to paint on site for the organization that supports homeless veterans with transitional housing and therapy services. Valor Home prepares its residents with life skills and advocacy for a successful future.



Valentine's Day treats delivered by the Buckeye team.



Valor Home mural



Team members painting at Valor Home

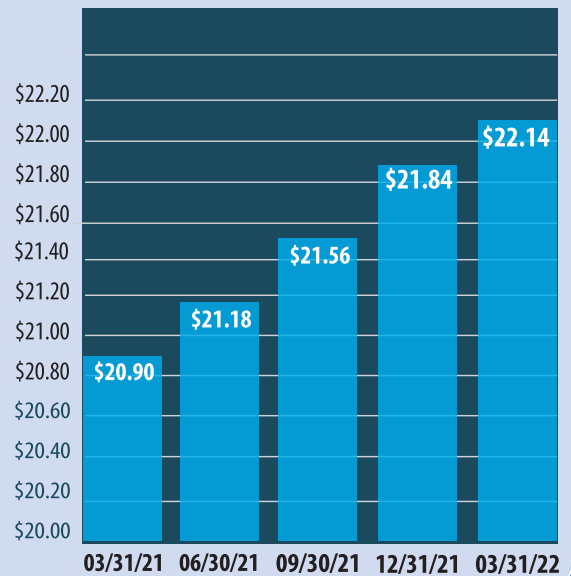
Additionally, the Buckeye team took time to brighten Valentine's Day for Valor Home residents by delivering cards with personalized messages and treats.

The Buckeye Employee Relations Committee members lead the outreach efforts to engage our staff with organizations working on community needs. The Buckeye team's commitment is based on the belief that when the community succeeds, everyone benefits.

Quarterly Book Values: Financial Position

Buckeye Bancshares, Inc. stock may be available for sale in the near future. If you are interested, please contact Ben Norton at 440-233-8807 or bpnorton@buckeyebank.com.

This is the increase in book value of Buckeye Bancshares, Inc. Due to the limited availability and inactive market of any community bank stock, market value may differ. This is a reflection of past performance of Buckeye Bancshares, Inc. and should not be considered a projection of future performance. Funds held in corporate stock are not insured by the FDIC or any other government agency. Investments involve varying degrees of risk, including loss of principal.



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innovation, a passion or a more secure future. Moreover, we recognize the challenges presented by unforeseen obstacles and the character and resiliency required to succeed.

Our Spotlight introduces Dave and Dawn Skodny, the epitome of hard work, resiliency, and entrepreneurship. Despite personal and professional

setbacks, the couple's Air Filter Factory has become one of the fastest-growing private companies in the country.

We also recognize Sarah Smith, who recently celebrated her 20th year at Buckeye. We appreciate her dedication not only for her tenure, but also her talent and accomplishments.

The foundation of banking has been and continues to be conversations between people. Though we look forward to innovations to improve service and products, we will not lose sight of the lessons and mission that make us your partner in an ever-changing world.



Happy Trails to Mary Hunkley



Mary Hunkley

A fond farewell was bid to Mary Hunkley by her colleagues at Buckeye Community Bank when she retired recently. A native of Elyria, she joined the bank in 2004 and retired as Buckeye Vice President and Portfolio Manager.

“My time at Buckeye has been valuable and filled with amazing people,” said Hunkley, who was responsible for analyzing the loan portfolio and serving as a critical component of shared risk management. “The Buckeye team is made up of wonderful people who provide friendship and support to each other and those they serve. While a lot has changed over the years, we have always

worked together to improve everything we do, and I enjoyed my job.”

Hunkley said she is looking forward to spending more time with her husband, Carroll, two children and three grandchildren.

“Mary Hunkley has been a valued member of Buckeye’s team and has positively impacted both the bank and the community,” said Ben Norton, Buckeye President and CEO. “She has been a fantastic example to our teammates, and we wish her a long and fulfilling retirement.”

Congratulations!

First Mate Sarah Smith



Sarah Smith

The interwoven success of thriving local businesses and a growing community motivates Sarah Smith’s work at Buckeye Community Bank. As Buckeye’s Treasury Management Specialist, Smith works alongside commercial lenders and professionals to assist business owners in various industries with working capital and cash management.

“It is rewarding to develop relationships with clients and be a partner in helping them grow,” said Smith, who celebrated her 20th year with Buckeye recently. “There is power in a community bank at a time when big banks tend to just see businesses as anonymous numbers.”

In her role, Smith provides business clients with insight into Buckeye’s offerings that can help them keep working capital flowing with tools to accelerate receivables, consolidate funds and gain more payment control.

“At Buckeye, you can expect to work with familiar faces who are dedicated to your success,” Smith added. “I enjoy working with my colleagues and watching Buckeye grow over the years.”

Smith, a lifelong resident of Elyria, enjoys the opportunities Buckeye provides to engage in the community, including serving on the Rotary Club of Lorain board and being an ardent supporter of the Lorain County Chamber of Commerce. She and her husband, Dennis, enjoy spending time with the couple’s three children and three grandsons.

Protect Your Company from Cyberattacks



Cybersecurity is now more critical than ever. Being aware can help you keep your business information secure.

Secure Your Networks and Databases

Set up firewalls and encrypt data to prevent criminals from gaining access to sensitive information.

Educate Your Team – Discuss with your employees their role in securing and protecting the information of their colleagues, customers,

and the company. Establish policies so everyone knows what is acceptable and what is not permitted.

Enforce Security Practices – Develop policies that protect your company against attacks and provide guidelines for resolving issues when they arise. Be sure to outline how various situations will be handled and the consequences if a policy violation occurs.

Identify Fake Notifications – Teach your team how to recognize fake warnings and alert your IT experts when they notice anything suspicious.



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Making your dream home a reality with Buckeye Home Mortgage

If you're buying a home, making improvements to your current abode or planning a retirement dream home, Buckeye Community Bank offers excellent terms, competitive rates and personal attention.

Buckeye Residential Mortgage Loans cover almost every home purchase or home improvement project. You can finance an owner-occupied family home or condominium, refinance your principal residence, pay for construction or cover acquisition costs.

Taking advantage of some of the lowest rates in years can help you make a new purchase or reduce your monthly mortgage payment. A lower mortgage interest rate means lower monthly payments and the ability to pay off your home loan faster.

Buckeye can help you make your goals a reality no matter where the property is located.

Work with Buckeye's experienced staff to find the right loan, rate and terms that meet your needs and budget. Find out what options are best for you with a conversation with Buckeye's Lou Calabrese at 440-233-3935 or ldcalabrese@buckeyebank.com.

Buckeye is an Equal Housing Lender.



QUOTABLES



"Life is like the monkey bars - you have to let go to move forward."

*Leah Busque,
TaskRabbit*

