



Rich Cooley/Daily

Dennis A. Dysart stands outside First Bank's headquarters at the corner of King and Holliday Streets in Strasburg. Dysart was recently named President and Chief Operating Officer [COO] of the Bank.

# Building atop success

Valley native Dennis Dysart will be guiding Strasburg-based First Bank into the future

By Kevin Green

STRASBURG – Valley native Dennis Dysart will be guiding Strasburg-based First Bank into the future as its newly promoted president and chief operating officer.

"I'm thrilled to death about it. The bank's been wonderful for me and for my family," Dysart said of his promotion from senior executive vice president and COO.

As president, Dysart will oversee every department and position in the bank, with the exception of its chief financial officer, M. Shane Bell, and its chief credit officer, Samuel Crow Jr.

Scott C. Harvard previously held the title of president and chief executive officer for the bank, and will remain its CEO moving forward.

Dysart said, "I think my challenge ... is to assist Scott [Harvard], assist the board

[of directors] in developing a strategic plan that really gets customers served in a manner in which they desire to be served."

Dysart, 43, is a Winchester native. He was raised in Woodstock, attended Central High School, and now resides in Edinburg with his wife and 11-year-old son.



# Success

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"I love the quality of life here and enjoy having my family locally," Dysart said.

Dysart credited the support and relationships from local communities such as Strasburg as part of the reason for First Bank's success.

"We're the largest bank headquartered in Shenandoah County, and frankly, the largest bank headquartered in the Northern Shenandoah Valley," Dysart said. "We couldn't do it without the support from the community."

He added that the bank tries to reach out to the community as much as possible.

"We obviously enjoy being actively involved in the Strasburg community," Dysart said, noting the company's involvement in its Mayfest sponsorship and its involvement in the Strasburg Community Scholarship Trust Fund.

The company, which has 18 locations statewide and a net worth of \$700 million, recently completed a \$185 million deal to acquire Bank of America banks in Farmville, Elkton, Waynesboro and Dillwyn.

Along with its recent expansion, Dysart said that First Bank is also looking to serve customers in an ever-evolving 21st century market.

"We think rural markets are still in transition to where they highly value

personalized customer service," Dysart said, adding that some of its customers still prefer more traditional face-to-face service.

He said the bank's recent deal with Bank of America will help them understand customer preferences even more, due to its experience with self-service applications such as mobile banking.

When he became a full-time employee in 1993, Dysart recalled that First Bank had just recently installed its first automated teller machine at its Strasburg location. Despite obvious advances in technology, he said it was not too aesthetically different to the one at the Strasburg bank today.

"Banking has just undergone phenomenal change," Dysart said, adding, "When I came here as an intern in 1989, we were hand-filing and hand-sorting checks."

Now, Dysart said, some customers prefer electronic banking that centers on e-statements for checks and debit cards, with few individual conversations about those transactions.

"Our ability to migrate and to navigate to meet these new customer needs is going to be extremely important," Dysart said. "We feel like we got the foundation built to do that."

Contact staff writer Kevin Green at 540-465-5137 ext. 155, or [kgreen@nvdaily.com](mailto:kgreen@nvdaily.com)