

suburban life



The team at **Mid Penn Bank** goes above and beyond for small businesses and other community members affected by the COVID-19 crisis.
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Pillars of Support



The women of Mid Penn Bank's Central Pennsylvania region worked tirelessly on the Paycheck Protection Program loans.

Mid Penn Bank goes above and beyond for small businesses and other community members affected by the COVID-19 crisis.

The past two and a half months have been a whirlwind for Rory G. Ritrievi, but he can barely contain his optimism for the future. He's awestruck by the dedication and creativity of his employees in the face of a global pandemic, and humbled by the staggering number of lives that have been forever changed by his team's efforts.

"This has been an opportunity to remind people that what we're really doing here is building relationships that the customer can count on when they need it most," says Ritrievi, the President and CEO of Millersburg, Pa.-based Mid Penn Bank and its parent company, Mid Penn Bancorp. "That's what we're here for, and that's the thing we do better than anyone else."

In February, Ritrievi and his leadership team formed a task force in response to the growing threat of the novel coronavirus, or COVID-19. The task force met at 9 a.m. every day to formulate a strategic plan and prepare for the unexpected. One of the task force's first decisions was to sanitize the lobbies hourly of its 39 branch locations in 12 Pennsylvania counties. It also issued employee guidelines for hand washing and sanitizing workstations and common areas to help protect anyone who stepped foot inside a branch lobby.

As the crisis deepened, Mid Penn Bank was among the first banks—if not the first—in Pennsylvania to close all of its lobbies to the public. Before doing so, the bank called every single

customer, whether the individual had \$5 in an account or more than \$50,000, to explain the decision and offer reminders of alternative forms of service, such as online banking, drive-up windows, and, if needed, banking by appointment.

The task force also began poring through its loan portfolio to consider which businesses would be most affected to see who might need deferrals on payment. All of these actions occurred before Gov. Wolf declared the statewide lockdown.

What happened next is what Mid Penn Bank will likely be remembered for years into the future.

When the U.S. government announced the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security

(CARES) Act, Ritrievi and his team saw an opportunity to play a key role in one of the act's central components: the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) administered by the Small Business Administration. Unlike many banks, Mid Penn Bank had significant experience in working with the SBA to secure loans for small businesses.

"On March 27, when they passed the act, I saw the language about the SBA," Ritrievi recalls. "I had dinner with my wife and three daughters that night, and I said, 'Guys, I'm probably not going to see you a lot over the next two months. There's a new government program we're going to be involved in, and I think it's going to be important, like nothing we've ever seen.'"

His words proved to be prophetic.

The next morning, a Saturday, Ritrievi called a meeting with a small leadership group, including Natalie Falatek, Mid Penn Bank's Director of SBA/Guaranteed Government Lending. His goal was to answer one question: "How are we going to do this better than anyone else?" Twelve people stayed in the room until they had a clear path forward. By the very next night, the bank had a loan application and a web portal for processing loans. The following Friday, as the SBA opened its E-Tran portal, Mid Penn Bank already had hundreds of applications queued up.

"From that point on, we were working 24 hours a day—literally," Ritrievi says. "Some people were working 20 hours straight, turning around applications and getting people approved in a matter of hours. We're not talking about loans to buy equipment or property; this was to keep businesses alive and keep people employed, paid, and covered by health care, at a time when everyone needs health care more than ever."

A Lifeline for Small Business

During the first round of the PPP, Mid Penn Bank approved 2,184 loans in the amount of \$470 million, all of which has since been disbursed. As of May 12, Mid Penn Bank had approved an additional 1,400 loans in the PPP's second round, for a two-round total of 3,637 loans in excess of \$600 million. The businesses that received these loans employ an estimated 65,000 people, according to Ritrievi.

He believes the entire company deserves applause for its swift and thorough response, though he can't help but recognize the contributions of some key individuals—all of whom took on additional responsibility while continuing to keep up with the regular demands of their jobs. Falatek, for example, was invaluable in "getting the pipeline going and getting as many loan approvals as we did, as quickly as we did," Ritrievi says.

"Because of my previous SBA experience," Falatek says, "I was familiar with the SBA requirements for data collection, so we could anticipate pretty accurately what the data collection was going to look like on the front end. That gave us



Cash Management Officer Laura Melfi, Commercial Loan Officer Betty Silfa, and Business Development Officer Bernadette Duffy executed Mid Penn Bank's PPP loan efforts for the bank's southeastern Pennsylvania region offices.

almost a full week lead and allowed us to have applications ready to hit the SBA system right when it went live.

"My heart bleeds for small businesses," she continues. "This program was a lifeline for them, and so many people were confused or scared. Those conversations we had [with loan applicants] were some of the shining moments that pushed you through when you saw a stack of applications for people who really needed help."

Chief of Staff Joan Dickinson ran Mid Penn Bank's first PPP war room. The hours she spent there "flew by," she says, as she led a small group of people devoted to gathering vital loan details in preparation for the SBA entry team.

"You would get there at 7 a.m., and before you knew it, it was 7 at night," she says. "One out of every five applications was incomplete, and everyone had questions. We had to do a lot of follow-up, because we knew every application had to be cor-

rect. We just wanted to help as many people as we could."

Ritrievi admits that there are almost too many notable contributions to mention. Christy Hockenberry, who works in the bank's IT group, created an efficient way to automate the loan-transfer process to the SBA's E-Tran portal. First Vice President and Retail Market Manager Amanda Brigaman, Market President Heather Hall, and First Vice President and Senior Real Estate Lender Amanda Sattazahn took lead roles in the call center to bring in new PPP applicants and make sure their loan applications went smoothly. Heather Bentley, Ritrievi's executive assistant as well as the mother of three young girls, came into the command center as early as 2 a.m. to help process loan applications.

One team member, Maggie Steinour, worked a 35-hour shift at the height of the demand. As

Chief Administrative Officer, Steinour was heavily involved in multiple aspects of the response, everything from working with the bank's HR recruiters to facilitate loan applications and disbursements, to creating processes and procedures for sending out e-sign documents to finalize PPP loans. Also, like many other members of the Mid Penn Bank team, she spent many hours processing loan applications.

"I love that when I was here on a long shift, putting in applications, our President and CEO was asking people in the room if we needed cups of coffee or energy drinks to keep us going," Steinour says. "That showed us that if everyone is willing to do the small tasks, the big tasks aren't that big. It showed everyone that we could get through this together."

Mid Penn Bank continues to accept new applications for PPP loans, from customers and non-customers alike, though the flow has slowed to a relative trickle. Ritrievi says the bank is now turning its focus toward the next phase of the recovery—namely, re-opening branch lobbies and looking for more ways to help business owners and other members of the community press forward. It also intends to continue expanding its retail footprint, including in the Philadelphia area.

"I absolutely wish this never happened," Ritrievi says. "It's been a terrible healthcare crisis and economic crisis for the country, the region, and the state, and I can't wait for it to be over. But the fact of the matter is, that over the last 47 days, we've been able to show the community the value of a strong community bank, and I'm really proud of that." ■

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President and CEO Rory G. Ritrievi