

Open Letter to the Community



To Our Friends and Community –

This is a painful and difficult time as we come face-to-face with a racist and sexist comment that was posted on social media on Monday. While we have apologized and provided the traditional response that *this is an individual's personal view and does not reflect our values* – more must be said, and more will be done.

This is a defining moment for us as a family and a bank. Farmers & Merchant Saving Bank was founded in 1916. Later our name was changed to Farmers & Merchants Bank & Trust in 1965. We have been proud to call Burlington/West Burlington home. It is a great place to own a bank where we have created jobs and helped community members reach their financial goals. Over the past one-hundred-plus years, we have invested in this community through volunteerism, financial contributions, and community outreach.

Here are a few reasons why F&M Bank & Trust is a Pillar of the Community:

- Financial sponsorships to help organizations grow and thrive
- Financial donations to help support make Burlington/West Burlington grow and prosper
- *Giving Back to the Community* with over 4200 staff volunteer hours annually
- Serving on countless committees, boards and councils
- Creating F&M Kids Bank (a financial literacy program in the area schools for over 23 years)
- Project: Crayon (a school supply drive helping more than 400 teachers for 12 years)
- Started the F&M Community Foundation for educational purposes for the communities in Des Moines County
- Youth Sport Teams (financial support as well as serving as coaches)
- Collecting food and donations to give when in time of need
- Preparing meals to help families during a time of loss
- Giving time to area churches and organizations
- And the list could go on...



But none of this matters unless our community trusts us and believes we are people of integrity who treat all with respect and dignity. And that brings me back to the hateful and hurtful social media post.

I cannot take it back. I will not defend it. And I will not support it. But I can act.

I will use this moment to create an even more inclusive culture within our bank family. Therefore, we will provide more formal diversity and inclusion training for all members of our team. My hope is that this will build a greater understanding and respect for all people.

I know some have encouraged people to not support us. While I understand this sentiment, my hope is that you will give us an opportunity to use this moment to learn.

With gratitude,
Charles E. Walsh