

# IOWA BANKER MIKE BOBST WORKS TO HELP VETERANS THROUGH FARMER VETERAN COALITION

**Editor's Note:** As part of our continuing series to share more best practice tips from member Iowa banks, this month's leader spotlight features Mike Bobst, vice president of First State Bank in Redfield and his involvement as part of a group called the Farmer Veteran Coalition (FVC) of Iowa which aims to assist returning veterans who have a desire to work in agriculture.

After meeting with U.S. Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack in late June 2012, Lyle Stewart set up an initial meeting on June 21, 2012 with representatives from the Iowa Farm Bureau to discuss the FVC of Iowa, which would be a local extension of an existing national group. After meeting with several different groups and individuals for input and feedback throughout the summer and fall, the FVC of Iowa was formed in December 2012. The mission of the group is to empower veterans to thrive in Iowa agriculture. They plan to accomplish this by:

- Assisting military veterans to develop, grow and succeed as Iowa's next generation of farmers and agribusiness leaders.
- Connecting military veterans with resources and networks of information, programs, and organizations to help transition to agricultural careers.
- Identifying collaborations and resources between agribusiness,

farming, education and military communities.

- Promoting opportunities for all military veterans in all sectors of Iowa's agricultural economy.

Iowa banker Mike Bobst, vice president of First State Bank, Redfield, is the treasurer of the group. For this month's Leader Spotlight, we had the opportunity to visit with Bobst about his banking career, his community involvement and what he'd like to accomplish this year as part of the coalition.

**Q: WHERE DID YOU GO TO SCHOOL?**

A: I went to school at Northwest Missouri State College. I also obtained additional education by serving four years in the United States Air Force.

**Q: WHAT FIRST INTERESTED YOU IN BANKING?**

A: I had a desire to help people. I felt as a good banker I could provide the financial help for people to attain their financial goals.

**Q: TELL US MORE ABOUT HOW YOUR BANKING CAREER HAS PROGRESSED?**

A: I spent 15 years in the farm equipment business before getting into banking in 1984. I worked for Raccoon Valley State Bank for 26 years (first in Adel and then Perry). I started as an agricultural loan officer and worked my way up to vice president and branch

manager for the Minburn office. In 2011, I took a position with First State Bank in as vice president at the Redfield office.

**Q: TELL US ABOUT ANY COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS WITH WHICH YOU ARE INVOLVED?**

A: I currently serve as trust officer for the Earlham Public Library and treasurer for the FVC of Iowa.

**Q: WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT WORKING IN THE BANKING INDUSTRY?**

A: It may sound very basic, but I really enjoy helping people with their financial needs.

**Q: HOW DID THE FARMER VETERAN COALITION OF IOWA IDEA COME ABOUT?**

A: The FVC of Iowa got its start two years ago when one of our board members, Lyle Stewart, was working with a returning veteran who told him of problems he and other returning veterans were having in getting back into society, especially agriculture. From that initial meeting, Lyle visited with others who had heard of the same problems veterans were having. Various groups starting getting together to brainstorm solutions and from that evolved the forming of the FVC of Iowa this summer. Our members include people from the universities, ISU extension, government offices, business organizations, private businesses, and most importantly, the military organizations. The Iowa coalition has

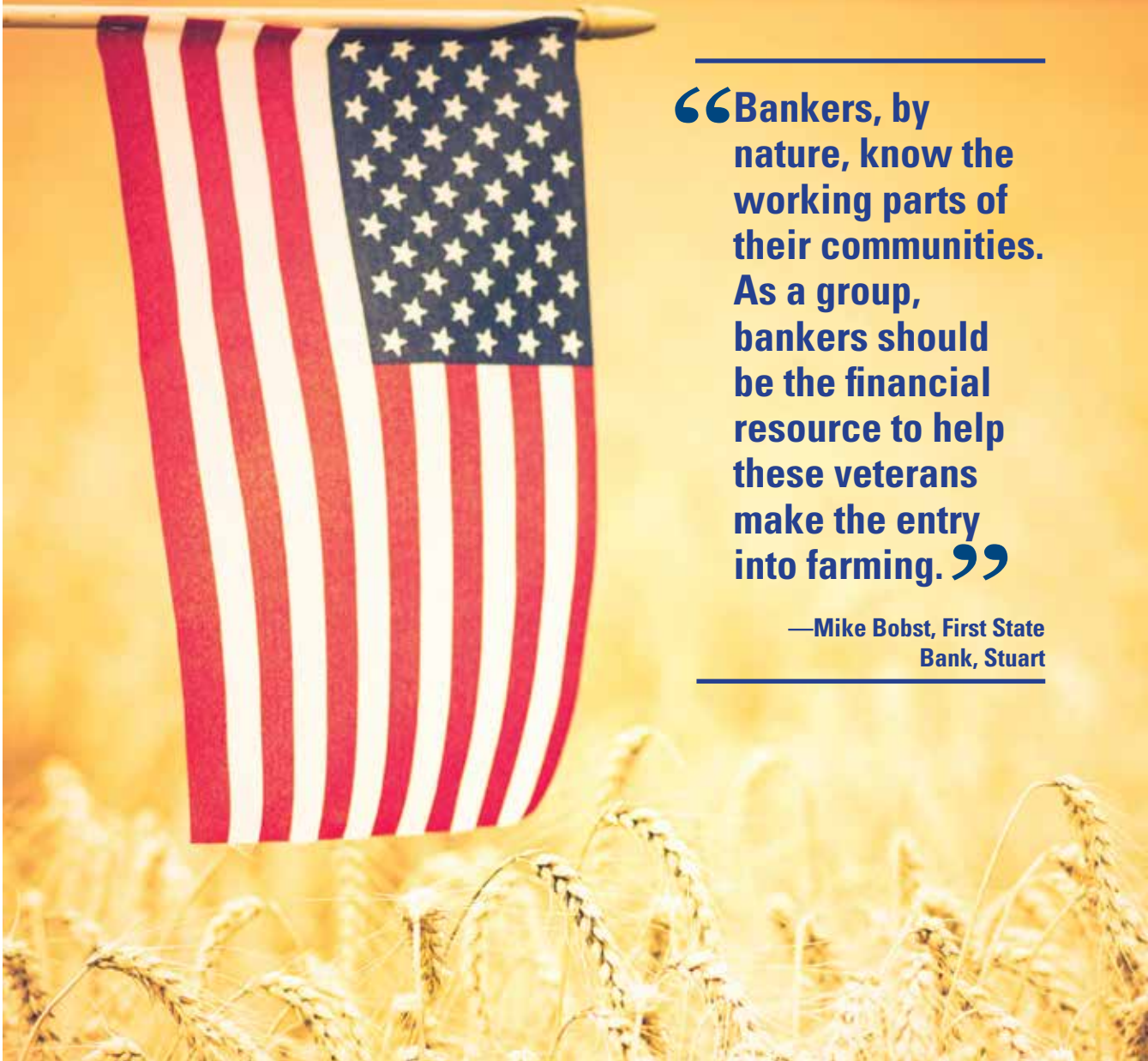
ties to the national group, which has the same goals.

**Q: WHAT IS THE OBJECTIVE OF THIS GROUP?**

A: The objective of the FVC of Iowa is to assist the veterans who have given much to protect what we take for granted. It is the FVC of Iowa's goal to make the veteran's transition back to civilian life as easy as possible. This group has access to programs and resources for veterans seeking a career in agriculture. FVC of Iowa provides guidance and acts as a network for sharing experience, disseminating information, providing resources, and identifying collaborators.

**Q: WHY DO YOU THINK THIS IDEA IS IMPORTANT FOR OUR VETERANS?**

These veterans, both men and women, have many traits that make them valuable to employers and to farmers who wish to transition to retirement. They just need assistance and guidance to accomplish this transition, especially those veterans with special needs resulting from injuries, both physical



and mental. There are businesses and government programs out there that will help. It is the group's purpose to find ways to help them.

**Q: WHAT ARE SOME OF THE WAYS YOU'D ENCOURAGE IOWA BANKS TO GET INVOLVED?**

A: I would encourage all bankers, especially bankers in rural areas, to view the group's website [www.iowafarmerveteran.org](http://www.iowafarmerveteran.org). Bankers, by their very nature, know the working parts of their communities. As a group, bankers should be the financial resource to help these veterans make the entry into farming and related businesses

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**—Mike Bobst, First State Bank, Stuart**

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and help make them sustainable. If any bankers know of a farmer or agribusiness that needs reliable help or a new partner, they should contact the FVC of Iowa to see who and what programs are available for those who made such an important sacrifice for us.

**Q: TELL US ABOUT YOUR FAMILY?**

A: My wife Linda and I live on a farm south of Dexter, Iowa. We have two sons, Matt, 34, who lives in Cedar Rapids and Brandon, 28, who lives in West Des Moines. We enjoy spending time with our first grandchild, a ten-month old named Liam, who is a pure joy to be around. 🍷