

## Best Places to Work--McNeill

1

### MAGNOLIA STATE BANK SELECTED BY MISSISSIPPI BUSINESS JOURNAL AS ONE OF 50 BEST PLACES TO WORK IN MISSISSIPPI

In the course of his 34 years at Magnolia State Bank, CEO and Chairman Thomas Brown says that he can recall only two employees who left Magnolia to work at other banks.

“And we hired one of those back,” he added.

Brown believes that the bank’s hiring process is a key factor in Magnolia State Bank being named by the Mississippi Business Journal (MBJ) as one of the 50 Best Places to Work in Mississippi.

“I’ve always understood that it’s our employees that fuel this engine and it all begins in the hiring process. In any business, you end up with what you start out with and we have made an extra effort to hire people with a strong work ethic. You must be selective and that’s what we’ve done.”

Brown said that it’s easy to recognize character and integrity and to simply recruit and hire the best.

Charlotte Aycock can vouch for the high quality level of people hired by Magnolia State Bank because, as director of human resources, she’s an integral part of the process.

But Aycock also sees another reason for Magnolia’s reputation as a great place to work. “Being among the best certainly starts at the top, because Mr.

## Best Places to Work--McNeill

### 2

Brown is so understanding. He puts families first and he does so much to make Magnolia State Bank family friendly.”

Aycock believes that “service is now the main difference between banks, because banks all offer the same products.”

“There’s no way these larger, regional banks can have a personal relationship with their hundreds of employees,” Brown said. “I’ve been told by many of our customers that when they enter the bank they can tell that our employees seem so pleasant and happy to be working here...that they can ‘see it in our faces. The big banks can’t put that in a brochure or an annual report”.

“I know that when I go to a bank, I want to deal with someone who knows me and who cares about my business,” Aycock said. “And that’s the kind of employee that customers at Magnolia State Bank will always encounter.”

Brown said that of Magnolia’s 60 employees, 30 were working in other banks when they were hired. “We recognized their talent and character and asked them if they wanted to work for us. We have 24 employees with over 20 years of banking experience and six with more than 30 years of experience.”

Brown echoes what Aycock says about the bank and families.

“If someone in our bank family has special problems and needs time off beyond what they may have accumulated through our sick leave program, we tend to be fairly generous because I know we don’t have employees who take advantage of the situation.”

Brown believes that it may be just as important as perks and salaries to know that your employer “has your back” in times of need.

When asked about the MBJ selection process, Aycock said that “my understanding about the selection process is that several employees were called at random and asked about working conditions and benefits at Magnolia.”

## Best Places to Work--McNeill

### 3

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Thomas Brown emphasizes the link between being one of the best places to work and customer satisfaction.

”For many years there seemed to be the general attitude, especially in banking, that ‘bigger is better,’ Brown said. “Now, the ‘big boys’ want to be like us.”

Because of Magnolia’s uncommonly low rate of turnover, “Our customers know that they’ll see the same smiling faces, enjoy the same friendly service of that favorite employee whenever they come into the bank.”

The bank was chartered in 1975 as Jasper County Bank with its one office located in Bay Springs. In 1977, a branch was opened in Heidelberg, in 1989, a Taylorsville office was added and one was opened in Laurel in 2005. Two years ago Magnolia opened a branch in Petal.

Thomas Brown was elected president and CEO in 1979 and in 1999, he was elected chairman of the board. Also in 1999, to position itself for growth and expansion into other market areas in Mississippi, the bank’s name was changed to Magnolia State Bank.

Because of its excellent growth, consistent outstanding performance and contributions to the communities it serves, Magnolia State Bank has received much recognition and excellent ratings from nationwide performance review organizations.

# Best Places to Work--McNeill

4