

DAILY PRESS

mBank returning to Delta County

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ESCANABA - mBank announced it will re-enter the Delta County market in grand fashion.

According to Kelly George, mBank's Chief Executive Officer, the bank has entered into a lease agreement to operate a full-service branch in the new Menards store in Escanaba when it opens for business in March. "We are very excited about the opportunity to get back and have a physical presence in Delta County" George said. "It makes sense for us and bodes well for Upper Peninsula commerce. In addition to our capital out lay we plan to hire three or four people to staff the operation."

George indicated they approached Menards several months ago and received a favorable response to its request to occupy 700 square feet of the new store they were building. "They have been good to work with and we think it is going to be a beneficial partnership for both of us" George said. "We have always wanted to get back to Escanaba as it is a natural fit for us. We have a customer base there and it fits our footprint for future plans to service the commerce hubs of the U.P."

George said in addition to the existing customer base, the decision to expand in these hard economic times was made because of the stability of the economy in the U.P. "In light of all the issues down state we'd rather expend some capital here. The economy in the U.P. does not fluctuate like it does elsewhere, it once again has proven to be more stable than other parts of the state."

The arrangement is a first for the retailer. For the bank it provides an opportunity to offer expanded hours in an environment with substantial foot traffic at a minimal amount of capital expense.

Initial plans are to operate the mBank branch from 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Monday through Friday and 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Saturday. George is confident that with the bank's unique products and expanded hours of operation will be well received by area consumers. "The store will draw customers from across our service area. Having a branch there along with our extended hours will make banking convenient."

The bank is in the process of working through the regulatory process for approval, once received the final arrangements will be made.

mBank is owned by Mackinac Financial Corporation. Headquartered in Manistique, operating eight branch offices in the Upper Peninsula and four in the Lower Peninsula of Michigan.

Menards, known as the place to "Save Big Money," is a family-owned home improvement retailer based in Eau Claire, Wis., with over 243 stores in 12 states.

Menards plans to open the 240,000-square-foot store at 3300 Ludington Street on Tuesday, March 24, with plans for a nine-day grand opening celebration in early April.

In addition to the new mBank branch, the new Escanaba Menards store will also carry name brand appliances, pet products, lawn and garden supplies, and even groceries for a true one-stop shopping experience.

"We are grateful for all the loyal guests who shopped at the old Menards in Escanaba and are excited to open this beautiful, new store that has something for everyone. The addition of mBank will further provide one-stop shopping convenience for all of our guests throughout the area," said Menards spokesperson, Jeff Abbott.