

Oculina Bank sees rating go up in latest quarter

By Paul Ivce

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FORT PIERCE — While the ratings of some area banks by the leading independent ratings agency dropped in the latest quarterly report, **Oculina Bank** was the only bank that operates in the Treasure Coast whose rating went up.

Oculina's rating by Coral Gables-based BauerFinancial went up to three stars for the quarter ending Sept. 30 from two stars for the quarter that ended June 30.

Bauer, which has been reporting on the financial condition of the U.S. banking industry for 26 years, analyzes the reports financial institutions submit to regulators and rates them, said Karen Dorway, president and director of research. Five stars is the highest.

Senior Vice President Rick Clayton, **Oculina's** northern markets director, said two factors helped Oculina improve its rating.

First, he said, **Oculina** executives worked diligently to dispose of "quite a bit" of toxic assets, mostly foreclosed commercial properties.

Dorway said **Oculina** "got rid of almost \$1 million worth of repossessed real estate."

Second, Clayton said, the bank received an infusion of capital during the second and third quarters from the holding company that owns it.

He also noted that **Oculina** has not taken any Troubled Asset Relief Program funds from the federal government.

Dorway said the capital infusion was at least \$5 million. The additional capital has more than offset nearly \$3 million in losses this year, she said.

Dorway said the rating was raised because of the increasing capital ratios and the bank's return to profitability in the latest quarter.

Oculina Bank was started in January 2004 with its original branch in Fort Pierce.

Over time, board members of Colonial Banc Corp. moved to the Treasure Coast because of the potential the area offers, Clayton said. So now a majority of the shares of the holding company are owned by Treasure Coast residents.

Oculina Bank now has eight branches, with locations in Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River counties.



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