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★ SPOTLIGHT ON ED DOUGLAS, PRESIDING COMMISSIONER

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By Angie Talken



The first thing Ed Douglas will tell you about himself is that he has a blessed life. Douglas, a St. Joseph native, first came to Chillicothe in 1974 after graduating from Northwest Missouri State in Maryville. "I thought I was headed to law school," Douglas said recently. "The school president told me he had negotiated a job for me at a bank in Chillicothe." Douglas then began what turned out to be a 32-year career with Citizens Bancshares Bank and Trust where he served the last 20 years as president, chief operating officer and chairman of the board. During his tenure with the bank, it grew from one to 25 locations and increased its financial assets by 10 fold. He still serves as chairman emeritus of the board.

Douglas, who is a certified financial planner and bank consultant, has served four years as Livingston County Presiding Commissioner. His second term will begin on January 1, 2019. "I went to 4,000 homes and 300 businesses during my campaign," he recalled.

Over the years, Douglas has been involved in many key events in Chillicothe and Livingston County. In the past, he has been a member of the Chillicothe R-II School Board, Rotary, YMCA Board, Chillicothe Area Chamber of Commerce, and Rotary, among others. He has been president of the Chillicothe Educational Foundation, and served on the Tourism Board, Main Street Chillicothe Board and has been at the helm of the Sliced Bread Committee. During his time as chamber president, Douglas and other board members were able to help bring the YMCA to Chillicothe, despite being told by the national YMCA board that the town was not big enough. He also served as a tennis coach for the Chillicothe High school for 19 seasons.

Douglas is quick to point out the importance of having a strong community with a strong vision and dedicated citizens. "We really have an unbelievable group of people in this town," he said. "When there is a need, or even a want, people pull together and work hard to foster the development of ideas, businesses and community outreach."

Douglas has also written three books: "Making a Million with Only \$2000: Every Young Person Can Do It", "The Money Marathon: 7 Simple Steps to Financial Freedom," and "Life Principles of the Happiest and Most Successful Among Us." The last book started as a list of life lessons he wanted to be sure to share with his three children and four grandchildren. Over time, he said, he found himself sharing them with tennis players as well.

Over the years, three Missouri governors have appointed Douglas to statewide positions. He was appointed and served as Commissioner of the Missouri Highway and Transportation Commission. During his time in that position, he worked to secure approval to have Highway 36 transformed from a 2-lane highway into a 4-lane highway. He has also served as president of the Northwest Missouri State University Board of Regents and was a trustee of the William Jewell College Board for more than a decade.

As his first term as presiding county commissioner comes to an end, Douglas says he already has much to be proud of when it comes to the work he and the commission, along with county employees have been able to accomplish. Douglas said the county's financial situation was "dire" until 64 percent of Livingston County voters approved a sales tax rate increase in April 2017. That increase has allowed for road improvements, remodeling of the courthouse, security improvements and more. In 2018, the county approved the hiring of a

full-time prosecutor. "We have also been able to implement full-time security in the courthouse," Douglas said. "And are able to offer local businesses a 5 percent variance when they bid on county jobs. It is important to keep as much local as we can." Other steps have been taken to retain employees and remain competitive with other area employers.

Douglas said he has no plans on slowing down anytime soon. He enjoys spending time with his wife of 40 years, Marla, and calls her his greatest asset in life. Together they have three children and four grandchildren.

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