



## A FRESH START

**R**obert Hancock grew up in Terrell, Texas, and went to Eastfield College in Mesquite to play baseball. After two years at Eastfield, he moved his family to Tyler where he attended The University of Texas at Tyler and graduated with a BBA in 1997.

He began his banking career with Austin Bank in 1995 at the Whitehouse location. After five years, he transferred to First State Bank (also owned by the Austin family) in Noonday as Branch Manager. He returned to Austin Bank in 2006 as Location President of the newest Tyler office in Cumberland Park.

Hancock says he loves his job at Austin Bank because it allows him to meet new people. He also enjoys his job's flexibility because it allows his full involvement in Tyler's Chamber of Commerce, which began in 2003. "After the [citywide membership] drive, I was able to join the chamber's contact club, which is a great group of volunteers charged with the task of recruiting new members and acting as ambassadors in the community," he says. After three years as a member of the contact club, "I had the privilege of serving as chairman of the contact club," which came

with a position to represent membership services on the executive committee.

As chairman of the membership services council, he says he was exposed to "all the different areas in which the chamber is involved." Not only are they dedicated to bringing new businesses to Tyler, "the chamber focuses on helping existing business." And at the Chamber's monthly Business After Hours events, "you can see new friendships and business relationships being formed," he says. "After all, we all like to do business with someone that we know."

Hancock's role as chairman of membership services was challenging because he was the source of motivation for the contact club, which is responsible for recruiting new members for the chamber, whose dues make up about 90 percent of the chamber's budget! Hancock also held the positions of executive committee at large (a position appointed by the chairman) and chairman-elect.

Starting in January 2009, Hancock will preside as Chairman of the Tyler Chamber, the position previously held by Dr. Aubrey Sharpe, our favorite Man About Town. He describes the role of chairman as overseer

of the executive committee and board meetings "that should attend as many [committee] meetings as possible in order to hear first-hand what they'd like."

"This year I am looking forward to our membership drive that is held every three years. I hope that we're able to get our membership number over 2,000. I am also looking forward to our semi-annual trip to Austin in March where we will visit with our elected officials and let them know what we feel is important to Tyler and East Texas."

Hancock describes Tyler as a welcoming, giving community that is always seeking to improve. "I can't imagine living or being involved anywhere else but Tyler." And he is very involved. He has been or currently volunteers with the American Cancer Society Relay for Life, Boys Scouts of America, Leadership Tyler, Junior Achievement and The East Texas Food Bank.

"It comes back to the fact that I love people. I get the double benefit of knowing that I am helping others and hopefully making a difference in the community where I live." **B**