

# Keenan's transition inspired by new goals and lifestyle change

BY JANE MEINHARDT  
STAFF WRITER

**TAMPA** — Brian Keenan knew it was time for a change.

As the president and chief executive officer of Fifth Third Bank's Tampa Bay affiliate for six years, he had guided the bank and about 350 employees through turbulent economic times, grown the business and was working 12 hour days.



Keenan

He realized he wanted to reconnect with his family, needed to see his daughter through hip surgery and had to restore his energy.

After Keenan stepped down in early May from Fifth Third, he did all those things over two months. He also talked to 11 banks about potential opportunities and mulled over other professional prospects.

In the end, he returned to the profession he'd been in for 24 years, enticed by fellow bankers he respects and by the opportunity to create a Tampa Bay banking empire from scratch for a well-capitalized institution.

On July 6, Keenan was named regional president for First National Bank of the Gulf Coast, which is based in Naples and led by Gary Tice. Keenan and Tice previously worked together at First National Bankshares of Florida.

In addition to working with a familiar colleague, Keenan found the change he wanted. He went from working for a very large institution to a smaller one with more opportunities for creativity.

## INFLUENCING STRATEGY, HAVING AN IMPACT

His new job is to grow the bank's presence in West and Central Florida, start-

ing with an office in Tampa.

"I'm excited about it," he said. "It gives me balance. I have a chance to make an impact and create and execute strategy. I'm the only employee right now north of Naples, and I will be hiring my own people."

Keenan is a familiar bank executive in Tampa circles. During a recent conversation at a Starbucks Coffee in South Tampa, half a dozen businessmen stopped to shake his hand.

"Tampa is a small big town," he said. "You can get connected quickly."

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Regional president  
First National Bank of the  
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He intends to use his contacts to put loans on the bank's books — focusing on small and mid-sized businesses — and get First National Bank known in the area.

The \$325 million bank has money to lend for projects "that make sense," Keenan said. Growing the bank's presence in the Tampa Bay area will involve mostly acquisition over time, he said.

First National is in a position to expand after securing a commitment

for \$148 million in private equity.

First National currently has 70 employees.

jmeinhardt@bizjournals.com | 727.224.2299