

UNITED STATES  
SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION  
Washington, DC 20549

FORM 8-K

CURRENT REPORT PURSUANT TO  
SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE  
SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934

Date of Report (Date of earliest event reported) **March 27, 2017**

**Lakeland Financial Corporation**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

**Indiana**  
(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation)

**000-11487**  
(Commission File Number)

**35-1559596**  
(IRS Employer Identification No.)

**202 East Center Street**  
**Warsaw, Indiana 46581-1387**  
(Address of principal executive offices, including zip code)

**(574) 267-6144**  
(Registrant's telephone number, including area code)

**N/A**  
(Former name or former address, if changed since last report)

Check the appropriate box below if the Form 8-K filing is intended to simultaneously satisfy the filing obligation of the registrant under any of the following provisions (see General Instruction A.2 below):

- Written communications pursuant to Rule 425 under the Securities Act (17 CFR 230.425)
  - Soliciting material pursuant to Rule 14a-12 under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14a-12)
  - Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 14d-2(b) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.14d-2(b))
  - Pre-commencement communications pursuant to Rule 13e-4(c) under the Exchange Act (17 CFR 240.13e-4(c))
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**Item 5.02. Departure of Directors or Certain Officers; Election of Directors; Appointment of Certain Officers; Compensatory Arrangements of Certain Officers.**

On March 27, 2017, Lakeland Financial Corporation (the "Company") and Lake City Bank, the Company's wholly owned subsidiary (the "Bank"), announced that Sarah J. Earls has been appointed as the Company's Senior Vice President and Controller, and will serve as the Company's principal accounting officer.

Prior to joining the Company, Ms. Earls, age 34, served as Director of Finance and Compliance at Micropulse Inc., a privately held medical device manufacturer based in Indiana, since April 2015, as the Controller of Three Rivers Federal Credit Union from February 2014 to March 2015, as Vice President and Controller of Tower Financial Corporation, which was a publicly traded bank holding company based in Indiana, from March 2007 to February 2014, and as an auditor with BKD, LLP from August 2003 to March 2007, where she worked on audits of financial institutions. Ms. Earls is a certified public accountant.

In connection with Ms. Earls' appointment, Teresa A. Bartman resigned from her position as the Company's principal accounting officer on March 27, 2017 to assume a new role in the Company's risk management department.

**Item 7.01. Regulation FD Disclosure.**

On March 27, 2017, the Company and the Bank issued a press release announcing Ms. Earls' appointment. A copy of the press release is furnished herewith as Exhibit 99.1.

**Item 9.01. Financial Statements and Exhibits.**

(d) *Exhibits.*

99.1 Press Release issued by Lakeland Financial Corporation and Lake City Bank on March 27, 2017.

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**SIGNATURES**

Pursuant to the requirements of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, the registrant has duly caused this report to be signed on its behalf by the undersigned hereunto duly authorized.

**LAKELAND FINANCIAL CORPORATION**

Dated: March 27, 2017

By: /s/Lisa M. O'Neill  
Lisa M. O'Neill  
Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer

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**EXHIBIT INDEX**

<b>Exhibit No.</b>	<b>Description</b>
99.1	Press Release issued by Lakeland Financial Corporation and Lake City Bank on March 27, 2017.

**NEWS FROM LAKE CITY BANK**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**Contact**

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Director of Marketing and Public Relations  
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## **Sarah J. Earls Joins Lake City Bank as Controller and Senior Vice President**

Warsaw, Indiana (March 27, 2017) – Lake City Bank is pleased to announce that Sarah J. Earls has joined the bank as Senior Vice President, Controller and principal accounting officer. As Controller, she is responsible for managing the accounting department, overseeing financial reporting and performing financial modeling for Lakeland Financial Corporation and Lake City Bank.

Earls is the former Controller of Tower Financial Corporation, where she was responsible for all SEC and reporting aspects of the publicly traded bank. Prior to joining Tower, she spent four years at BKD, LLP, as a Certified Public Accountant working on audits of financial institutions. Most recently she worked as Director of Finance and Compliance at Micropulse, Inc.

"We are excited that Sarah is joining the Lake City Bank team," said David M. Findlay, President and Chief Executive Officer. "Her public company experience as a controller and her background in public accounting will deepen our expertise in this area. As important, Sarah represents a great cultural fit and will be a strong leader for our accounting and finance staff. "

Earls has a bachelor's degree in accounting and graduated summa cum laude from Huntington University. She completed her Certified Public Accounting designation in August 2005. Earls is an active member of the Fort Wayne community. She serves as treasurer of the board for Fort 4 Fitness and Aging and In-Home Services. She is a member of Leadership Fort Wayne's Class of 2014 and was featured in Fort Wayne Business's 2011 Future 40 under 40. She is a member of the Indiana CPA Society, the American Institute of CPAs, Financial Executives International and the Finance Committee of Emmanuel Community Church.

"Sarah brings solid credentials and valuable experience to Lake City Bank," said Lisa M. O'Neill, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer. "In addition, her leadership and communication skills will be valuable as Sarah enhances the strategic role of the accounting department at Lake City Bank."

Lake City Bank, a \$4.3 billion bank headquartered in Warsaw, Indiana, is the fourth largest bank headquartered in the state, and the largest bank 100% invested in Indiana. Lake City Bank operates 49 branch offices in northern and central Indiana, delivering technology-driven solutions in a client-centric way to individuals and businesses. The bank is the single bank subsidiary of Lakeland Financial Corporation (Nasdaq Global Select/LKFN). For more information visit [www.lakecitybank.com](http://www.lakecitybank.com).

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