This past June marked a vibrant and unforgettable Pride Month at Raymond James. For the first time, our firm came together to celebrate our inaugural Business of Pride Symposium, the flagship event of our Pride Financial Advisors Network (PFAN). Our virtual symposium allowed firm leaders, advisors and allies who identify within or serve the LGBT+ community to connect with peers – all while focusing on understanding the history, recognizing the challenges and celebrating the wins of the LGBT+ community.

Here to offer an exciting recap of our symposium, along with details on the different ways Raymond James put our pride into action, is the latest issue of Pride Perspectives. Within the following pages, you’ll meet PFAN founder Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin. and learn how he went from being a new Raymond James advisor to establishing the type of network he’d always wished he could join. You’ll also get to know Independent Contractors Division President Jodi Perry, including her determination to make our firm as unique as the clients we serve.

In addition, we’re honored to feature a Q&A with Katie Sowers, the history-making coach who became an LGBT+ leader by turning her childhood dream into a reality. Our second Q&A, with renowned public speaker and LGBT+ advocate Ash Beckham, offers guidance on how we can all harness the power of difficult conversations to make a positive impact on the world around us.

We hope the following pages serve as a powerful reminder of our firmwide commitment to promoting authenticity and championing the greater good. More importantly, we hope they’ll inspire you to join our mission.
Inaugural Business of Pride Symposium

It was with great joy that we celebrated the inaugural Business of Pride Symposium this year after postponing it in 2020 due to the pandemic. Our flagship event – held virtually for the convenience of our attendees – not only commemorated the launch of the Pride Financial Advisors Network (PFAN), it also allowed members and allies of the LGBT+ community to come together, share our stories and assert our commitment to creating meaningful, long-lasting change in our communities and businesses.

The festivities started with a pre-event day of partner firm sessions along with lively networking and table topic discussions for Raymond James advisors. We officially kicked things off Tuesday, June 29, with a heart-pumping, endorphin-rushing ’80s aerobics class, followed by an exciting welcome address from our network’s leadership team – Pride Financial Advisors Network co-chairs Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin. and Marta Shen, JD, CPA, CFP®, and Head of PCG Advisor Inclusion Networks Renée Baker.

The fun continued with our session “Lead with Your Brand,” hosted by the dynamic personal branding guru and diversity and inclusion activist Jayzen Patria. Up next was our Practice Intelligence advisor panel, moderated by Senior Vice President of PCG Education and Practice Management David Patchen and featuring accomplished Miami advisor Laura Stecker CFP®, CDFA®, CLTC®, CEP® and Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin., both of whom shared their powerful decisions to bring their authentic selves to work and, in doing so, help create a more accepting and uplifting workplace for all.

It wasn’t just sports fans who were delighted to hear from our next presenter – the first openly gay and first female coach in a Super Bowl, Katie Sowers. After her inspiring speech came a town hall with Raymond James Chairman and CEO Paul Reilly; President of the Private Client Group Scott Curtis; President and CEO of Raymond James & Associates Tash Elwyn; President of the Independent Contractors Division Jodi Perry; and COO of the Private Client Group Kim Jenson, whose commitment to allyship emphasized the importance of having kind and courageous leaders paving the way forward.

There to mark an unforgettable conclusion to our first full day of festivities was four-time Olympic gold medal diver, LGBT+ activist and author Greg Louganis, who shared his empowering story about triumph and tragedy and stayed for an interactive Q&A session.

Our celebration resumed on June 30 with a partner showcase and a rousing speech from Ash Beckham, the LGBT+ advocate, author and educator whose TEDx Talk “Coming out of your closet” has amassed over 5 million views. Ash’s address honed in on how we can all enact change through compelling conversations rooted in empathy and vulnerability.

We were also honored to welcome Sherrill Wayland, director of National Education Initiatives at the LGBT+ nonprofit SAGE, and Dan Stewart, associate director of the Aging Equality Project for the Human Rights Campaign Foundation. Together, they led a presentation on longevity planning for LGBT+ elders, emphasizing how advisors can help LGBT+ clients overcome the extraordinary challenges they face in finding inclusive aging services. After a brief networking break, we resumed with a Pride in Action roundtable and a happy hour session.

With our sights firmly set on the purpose of PFAN, our event helped raised over $3,000 for The Trevor Project, a nonprofit
focused on suicide prevention efforts among the LGBT+ community. And to ensure our network’s message of diversity and inclusion continues resonating with the next generation of industry leaders, we helped college students explore professional pathways in the financial world during our first Pride Career Night.

As we officially close the chapter on our first Business of Pride Symposium, we want to send a heartfelt thank you to each of our presenters, attendees and award winners. Together, you helped make our one-of-a-kind event an unforgettable one. We look forward to seeing you at our second annual Business of Pride Symposium in 2022!

Our momentous conclusion to Pride Month and our symposium included a closing celebration with PFAN leaders and our inaugural PFAN Awards, where we recognized the following professionals for their tireless efforts to advance LGBT+ equality in the workplace:

- Benjamin Cohen, CFP® – 2021 Ally Award
- Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin. – 2021 Beacon Award
- Jodi Perry – 2021 Leadership Award
- Joshua Charles CFP®, ChFC®, CLU®, ADPA®, CEP®, CLTC, AIF®, WMS – 2021 Top Producer Award

Pride in action

Nearly 1,000 LGBT+ members and allies came together this Pride Month to champion and uplift the voices of the LGBT+ community. Together, we helped raise more than $14,600 for organizations that support and advocate for the community.

Take a look at other ways Raymond James put our pride into action:

- Firm leadership, advisors and associates kicked off Pride Month with a flag raising ceremony at the Raymond James headquarters. We honored Pride during all of June by flying the pride flag outside of each of our corporate locations – St. Petersburg, Florida; Memphis, Tennessee; and Southfield, Michigan. Where no pole was available, we hung banners or flags according to protocol.

- Our very own Tom Hake was recognized as a 2021 Tampa Bay Business Journal Business of Pride OUTstanding Voice, an honor granted to LGBT+ individuals who demonstrate success in advocating for the LGBT+ community in the Tampa Bay area.

- To commemorate Mental Health Awareness Month in May, PFAN hosted a webinar with Amy Deacon from Cleveland Clinic Canada on actionable ways to prevent burnout and manage stress. Amy led an engaging discussion designed to help advisors reframe their mindset during the pandemic and beyond.

- Renée Baker was recognized as a Top 100 Executive Ally by LGBT Great, a global membership organization dedicated to supporting LGBT+ diversity and inclusion within the investment and savings industry.

“The Pride Financial Advisors Network, the Black Financial Advisors Network, the Women Financial Advisors Network and our inclusion networks for Raymond James associates reflect our focus on developing and fostering a more welcoming and inclusive firm for all.”

SCOTT CURTIS
President of the Private Client Group

Show your pride all year long

Make your voice heard and your values known on social media all year long by using #RJPFAN in your comments and posts.
Real talk with a trailblazer

Katie Sowers defied the odds to turn her childhood dream into a history-making feat, gaining recognition as an LGBT+ role model along the way.

When Katie Sowers stepped on the field as an assistant coach at Super Bowl LIV, she didn’t just fulfill her childhood dream. She made history as the National Football League’s first open member of the LGBT+ community and first female coach. But Katie had been a trailblazer long before she joined the San Francisco 49ers. Born in Hesston, Kansas, Katie fell in love with football at a young age. “I hope someday I will be a good football player,” she once wrote in her childhood journal. “I am good at football. When we play football at home, I can make a touchdown in one catch. I am the leader of our football club. I still want to be better.”

It’s that sense of tenacious ambition that inspired Katie to serve as quarterback, wide receiver and defensive back in a number of high-level football teams, and to eventually lead the U.S. Women’s Football Alliance to a gold medal in 2013. Soon after, she set her sights on coaching, pushing herself to reach the highest honor of American football – a spot in the Super Bowl.

Katie, who has since returned to the Midwest for a new role with the Kansas City Chiefs and the Ottawa University women’s flag football program, recently set aside time to speak at our inaugural Business of Pride Symposium and with Pride Perspectives. Read on for Katie Sower’s take on overcoming rejection, enacting meaningful change and the legacy she hopes to leave behind.

Q. As a pioneer in a male-dominated field, what’s been key in helping you overcome the challenges you’ve faced?

Katie Sowers: One of the keys to overcoming these challenges has been to focus on what I need to improve to be the best version of myself every single day rather than focusing my energy on what makes me different. I think our differences make us valuable, but that value will not create change on its own. It has to be reinforced by the work we do on a daily basis.

Q. You’ve mentioned being turned down for a volunteer coaching job at your alma mater in 2009 because of your sexuality, a rejection that ultimately led to your career in football. You also shared that an NFL executive once told you that his team wasn’t ready for a female coach. How did you move past those instances of discrimination instead of letting them hold you back?

KS: Moments like those can be incredibly difficult to move past, but they serve as reminders of the work that has yet to be done. All we can control is how we deal with the circumstances that come our way. If change is going to be made, difficult moments need to fuel us to keep pushing harder.
Q. What are some steps LGBT+ professionals can take to feel empowered and supported?

KS: I think it is important that we never assume the narrative surrounding our lives. Never assume we are not loved and accepted. There have been many times in my life when I shut out friends and coworkers because I assumed I knew how they felt about my life. And oftentimes, those assumptions were wrong. Ultimately, we need to be authentic and allow ourselves and others to learn and grow.

Q. You were quoted as saying, “Oftentimes, we get caught up in what’s politically correct and hearing all these words that make us feel better … when often it could be lies. I'd rather hear the truth and ignorance. That’s where we create change.” How do you encourage allies or members of the LGBT+ community to create the change you referenced and have the challenging, but necessary, conversations that advance progress?

KS: It is vital that we all take time to reflect on our own unconscious biases and have conversations with the clear intent of simply learning more. When those around you feel your authentic intent, it allows for more open dialogue to take place.

Q. In the past decade, we have made great strides for LGBT+ inclusion. Which policies or milestones have you found particularly exciting?

KS: I have loved watching the progress we’ve made as a country when it comes to inclusion, but one of the most exciting milestones for me was when Carl Nassib, an active NFL player, came out to the world. His strength and willingness to be authentic will help others live out their truth.

Q. Moving forward, which LGBT+ policies or issues do you believe offer the greatest opportunities for advancement?

KS: Policies can only do so much. They can also cover up issues without getting to the foundation of those problems. We must continue to work on the little things if we want to see change. This includes the language we use when we speak to our children and our coworkers. It includes being aware of our own biases and recognizing the work we need to put in to change societal norms.

Q. Were there any highlights from the Business of Pride Symposium that stood out to you?

KS: It’s been amazing to see people’s willingness to be vulnerable and have difficult conversations. I’ve been impressed by the way companies have been striving to educate their employees and help them reflect on the issues they can help combat.

Q. What are the main points you hope listeners took away from your speech at the Business of Pride Symposium, or from your experiences in general?

KS: I hope listeners take time to reflect on their own lives and the impact they can have on the world by simply doing the little things.

Q. What is the value of having organizations like the Pride Financial Advisors Network or events like the Business of Pride Symposium?

KS: Having organizations like PFAN, along with events like the Business of Pride Symposium, offers a space to educate where there could instead be ignorance. The more awareness we create, the more we will improve the lives of those around us.

Q. What are you proudest of?

KS: After leaving San Francisco, I had the opportunity to be a part of the Ottawa University women’s flag football program, and together we won our first Women’s Flag Football National Championship. That’s the moment I’m most proud of.

Q. What type of legacy do you hope to leave behind?

KS: I hope that those who come after me feel as though their opportunities were not limited because of their gender, the color of their skin or their sexual orientation. I hope I can leave a legacy that embraces the idea that anything is possible.
The power of difficult conversations

A prolific public speaker and tireless LGBT+ advocate, Ash Beckham is no stranger to hard conversations. That’s because she recognizes their power.

“I’m going to talk to you tonight about coming out of the closet.” Those are the words with which Ash Beckham opened her first and most popular TEDx Talk.

“I think we all have closets,” she goes on to say. “Your closet may be telling someone you love her for the first time, or telling someone that you’re pregnant, or telling someone you have cancer, or any of the other hard conversations we have throughout our lives. All a closet is, is a hard conversation.”

A self-proclaimed accidental advocate, Ash became a leader of the LGBT+ community after videos of her TEDx Talks “Coming Out of Your Closet” and “Owning Your Duality,” along with her Boulder Ignite speech “I am SO GAY,” went viral. She’s since devoted herself to championing LGBT+ causes around the world, using her voice to drown out hate and uplift those who need it most.

Pride Perspectives recently caught up with Ash, who delivered a rousing speech at our Business of Pride Symposium, to learn more about her efforts. Here’s what she had to say on everything from being an effective advocate to combating our divisive political landscape.

Q. What sparked your desire to actively advocate for your community, and what has kept you motivated since then?

Ash Beckham: For me, I found my voice. I was finally comfortable in my skin. Life was so much easier being out that I wanted everyone else to feel the sense of freedom I had found. Plus, I love telling stories, and that became my means of advocacy. It really doesn’t feel like work to me.

What I find motivating now is that people underestimate the power they have – that their voice has. Think of the change we could enact if everyone, regardless of title or background, harnessed the power of their voice. Can you imagine that collective power moving in the same direction? It would be unstoppable.

Q. What helps keep you motivated and engaged, even on days when you feel frustrated by a lack of progress or mounting challenges?

AB: I channel my inner Cardi B. If you get knocked down nine times, get up 10. Keep coming back, day after day, because you never know the moment that you showing up makes a difference. Ultimately, it’s not about the big moments to me. It’s about the little ones. That’s where change happens, but it can be easy to miss. So just keep showing up, even on the hard days. Especially on the hard days. Because that’s where strength is forged.

Q. With changing policies and circumstances, how do you stay up to date with the most pressing issues affecting the LGBT+ community?

AB: There are so many issues, it can be challenging to keep up. I think making sure I have diverse voices in my social media feeds helps. Diverse in every way imaginable – age, race, gender, identity, location, ethnicity. I believe you need a broad spectrum of voices to get the full picture of issues affecting the community. It can get exhausting, so my feed is certainly peppered with joyful tidbits. But we need to be aware of where the struggles are so we can create change.
Q. How do you define success within your role?

AB: Connection. Building relationships. If you are going to dive into these thorny issues and ask people to lead by being vulnerable, they have to trust you. So if we share similar experiences, I want them to know they are not alone. And if someone disagrees with me, my job is not to change their mind. It is to have them doubt the certainty of their position. You can’t get there without connection.

Q. When it comes to the LGBT+ community, which policies or issues offer the greatest opportunities for advancement?

AB: I think intersectional allyship is key. We often get siloed with people who are similar with us. When that happens, we develop a myopic vision of progress. Just because we define ourselves as part of a marginalized group does not automatically make us an ally. We have to do the work. It is our responsibility to not only advocate for ourselves, but for groups we are not a part of.

Q. What has been one of your proudest professional moments?

AB: I was invited to speak at a high school in New Jersey. After concluding my keynote, I was interacting with the students, answering questions and posing for selfies, when I noticed a 15-year-old student lingering around the edge of the group. He was quiet and shy, with bangs over his eyes, and didn’t look up. Once all of the other students had gone on to the next session, he approached me and said, “I just wanted to tell you that I have been having a really hard time lately. I was on my computer the other night and feeling so alone. I had a bottle of pills next to my bed and planned on taking them all before I went to sleep. But right before I signed off, a friend sent me the link to your video. I am standing here today because I watched that video. For the first time, I felt like I wasn’t alone. I don’t think I would be here today without it.” At that moment, I realized that what we do saves lives. And even when it’s hard for us, it is worth it.

My other proudest professional experience was when I spoke to a group at a federal agency. They were a pretty monolithic crowd – straight, white, cisgender, able-bodied. They understood diversity was important, but they didn’t know where to start. Since I had made friends with one of the assistant under-secretaries, I trusted him when he said the audience would be receptive. Still, I was hesitant. But after I finished my keynote, which was much like the one I gave at the Business of Pride Symposium, I expected polite applause at best. Much to my shock, the four highest ranking people in the department – stone-faced straight white guys in the front row – were the first to jump up and give me a standing ovation. Knowing my speech resonated with them was incredibly empowering.

Q. You discuss the importance of duality in one of your TEDx Talks. Considering the increasingly divisive political landscape, what are some ways people can prioritize duality and understanding to drive change?

AB: I think appreciating our own duality is critical. None of us belong to a monolith group. We all have our individuality. If we can see that in ourselves, we must be able to see it in the people with whom we disagree. If we don’t want people to assume things about us based on surface traits, we need to return the favor.

Q. In your opinion, what were the highlights of the Business of Pride Symposium?

AB: The excitement and resilience of the team that put it together. Making a virtual event feel so relevant and relatable when everyone is experiencing Zoom exhaustion is no small undertaking. Hosting the inaugural event virtually underscored the symposium’s importance and timeliness. I also loved the video that showed Raymond James employees speaking candidly about what inclusion means to them.

Q. What are the main points you hope listeners took away from your speech at the Business of Pride Symposium?

AB: I hope they realize they each have the power to lead from exactly where they are – and that the time to start is now. We may not be able to change entire policies or the culture overnight, but we have the power to decide what type of leader we want to be in every interaction we have. We can decide to shy away from difficult conversations. Or we can dive in and do the hard work of developing ourselves into the inclusive leaders we strive to be.

Q. What is the value of having organizations like the Pride Financial Advisors Network or events like the Business of Pride Symposium?

AB: It is critical to create a culture where people feel seen and heard. Where they see representation and support from all levels of the organization. Events like this make people feel like they belong. The ripple effect of that is immeasurable.

Q. Looking ahead, what do you hope to achieve?

AB: I hope that more and more people will share their stories with one another. That’s how progress happens. I also hope people embrace their leadership potential and begin acting on it right now.
Purpose, empowerment and the Pride Financial Advisors Network

It was in founding the Pride Financial Advisors Network that Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin., discovered something else within himself – a renewed sense of purpose and empowerment.

Five years ago, Thomas J. Hake, M.Fin. – or “Tom” to those who know him – could have never predicted where he is today. “For so many years, when I was struggling with the weight of my sexuality and not feeling comfortable in my environment, I wasn’t happy. And people could see it.” But Tom’s come a long way from where he was. He moved to Florida, took up a more active lifestyle and, oh yeah, founded a thriving advisor inclusion network at Raymond James. The result? A life more fulfilling than he could have imagined, far-reaching industry recognition, including being named InvestmentNews’ “See It, Be It Role Model” in 2019 and, most recently, an honoree of the Tampa Bay Business Journal’s 2021 Business of Pride.

Looking back on all that’s changed, one thing is clear: It was by founding the Raymond James Pride Financial Advisors Network (PFAN) that Tom unearthed a transformative sense of purpose.

PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR A NEW NETWORK

PFAN grew from a seed planted during a chance encounter at Tom’s first Raymond James national conference in 2017. At that point, Tom had been with Raymond James for a couple of years, and he was determined to find ways to align with other gay advisors. So he summoned the courage to raise the idea with David Patchen, senior vice president of the firm’s PCG Education & Practice Management. “I hitched a ride from Orlando to St. Pete with David. I was kind of terrified, thinking, ‘I have to come out to him before I could pitch the idea of the network.’” And I was nervous that if it didn’t go well, we were still stuck in his car for another hour or so. “But it did go well and I’ll never forget when he dropped me off and said, ‘You’re loved and respected for who you are here. You are safe with us.’”

Despite David’s heartening response, the lack of a self-identification platform at Raymond James limited Tom’s quest to find other LGBT+ members and allies. But he refused to let that stand in his way. Instead, Tom did what any ambitious entrepreneur would do – he set out to build the community he envisioned from the ground up. “I learned as much as I could about what it means to start and lead a business resource group for a Fortune 500 company.” What followed were countless months devoted to working on a plan for his network, attending a wide range of LGBT+ conferences by organizations like Out & Equal, the Human Rights Campaign and Equality Florida, all while serving as president and financial advisor of his own practice, Hake Investment Group.

“I had to learn a lot. I didn’t know anything about starting a new network. But I also realized that when I went back to Raymond James, I’d be the right person to teach, help and align people to the cause.”

Tom’s hard work paid off when in 2018 he flew to Florida, from his hometown, St. Louis, to meet with Jodi Perry, who had recently become president of the firm’s Independent Contractor Division (ICD), Tom’s business channel.
“I talked to her about my idea and she said, ‘I love it. I’m going to get you in front of senior leadership.’”

CEMENTING THE PILLARS OF PFAN
In a matter of months, Tom found himself leading a one-hour presentation on the benefits of creating the advisor network in front of Raymond James executives, including Private Client Group President Scott Curtis and President and CEO of Raymond James & Associates Tash Elwyn.

Tom explained what he considered the three pillars of the new network: to create a collaborative and safe place for the firm’s LGBT+ advisors to come together and align; to support all Raymond James advisors as they strive to meet the distinct needs of LGBT+ clients and their allies; and to serve as a voice of inclusivity for the firm.

“By the end, Tash shook my hand and said, ‘Looks like you hit a grand slam,’” Tom said. “And I kind of knew he was right. Then Scott Curtis said he’d be our executive sponsor and Marta Shen agreed to be my co-chair. We were off and running!”

Soon after that, the firm realigned the Pride Financial Advisors Network, the Black Financial Advisors Network and the Women Financial Advisors Network under its Advisor Inclusion Networks (AIN).

Spearheaded by Renée Baker, AIN cemented the firm’s commitment to pave the way for meaningful societal change, further promoting PFAN in the process.

A SURGE OF SUCCESS AND SUPPORT
Since its official debut in June 2020, PFAN has experienced a surge of success and support from within and outside the firm. In fact, Tom recalls an instance when Jodi Perry was turned away at the network’s kickoff cocktail party because so many people crashed the party that the venue had no capacity to spare.

“We felt terrible, but it was a sign of success that I just never envisioned. When we saw Jodi after that, she said, ‘If it meant that an advisor got in there and heard your message, that’s more important than me attending.’”

In June 2021, the network reached yet another milestone by hosting its inaugural Business of Pride Symposium. And despite having to postpone plans for the original event – which coincided with the 2020 St. Pete Pride festivities – due to COVID-19, PFAN was able to celebrate its symposium in 2021.

Keeping sight of his overarching mission, Tom hopes the success of PFAN inspires a stronger sense of empowerment and advocacy in others, just as it has in him.

“I am so empowered to go out there and be me. Raymond James embraces that,” he said.

“I’m making up for lost time. There’s so much going on and so much opportunity. And PFAN is taking up a lot of my time now, but that’s OK. Because after all those years when my parents didn’t want to know about my boyfriend, or when I felt like I couldn’t come out, I’ve finally started to see a different world emerge. Now I just need to offer the same to other people.”

It’s that concept that drove Tom to lead conversations on – and eventually help approve – transgender-inclusive medical benefits at Raymond James, enabling the firm to achieve a perfect score of 100 on the Human Rights Campaign Foundation’s 2020 Corporate Equality Index.

His dedication to creating the type of world he wants to see has also influenced Tom’s approach to business.

“One of the things we do at my practice is always put a woman’s name before her husband’s. It’s a very small gesture, but the world doesn’t do that. I don’t tell them I’m doing it, and when people catch it, they notice, and remember.

“We’re putting them first because there have been plenty of times in the past when they weren’t first. And it’s time for them to be there. I want to empower my clients to realize that we think about things like that, and that we want our industry to be more inclusive and considerate.”
Tom’s efforts have paid off in more ways than one – he estimates that 80% of assets at his practice are owned or controlled by a woman.

**COURAGE OVER COMFORT**

The path to becoming a prominent advocate hasn’t been an easy one for Tom. He’s had to overcome twists, turns and detours along the way.

Growing up in St. Louis, Tom spent 18 years in Catholic school (“My family is so Catholic my parents are named Mary and Joseph.”). He attended Saint Louis University and earned a Bachelor of Science in business administration with a concentration in finance, a decision partly inspired by his father, who opened his own mutual fund sales office the same year Tom was born.

After college, Tom worked full time in the IT accounting department of a regional bank for seven years, two of which he spent completing his Master of Finance. He then joined his dad’s business before accepting a role at a Midwestern boutique firm. This would mark one of the first times his sexuality affected his career.

“They didn’t treat me very well there. When I finally brought somebody who was important in my life to a conference, that’s when I felt things started to go downhill. So I left.” After a short time at a large wirehouse, Tom finally found his home at Raymond James in 2015.

Now a firm leader in diversity and inclusion initiatives with branches in Florida and St. Louis, Tom is committed to being the advocate he would have wanted to have.

“I want to make an impact. I want to share our stories, so that we can hopefully inspire others to be empowered. They may not know it, but everybody has someone who needs to hear their story. And they’re challenging stories. But then we say, ‘We have a place for you where you can find other allies, or other members of the community, who know what you’ve been through. And in fact, not only are we going to offer you resources for financial planning, but we’ll connect you to organizations like The Trevor Project and PFLAG.’”

In addition to extending his support and mentorship, Tom is proud to provide education on vital issues affecting the LGBT+ community, such as the fact that 27 U.S. states can legally discriminate against lesbian, gay and transgender people, denying them employment, housing and public accommodations based on their sexual orientation alone.

“It’s not always easy,” he said of his advocacy work. “It’s easier to stay in the status quo. But we need to move the needle. We need to choose courage over comfort.”

As for supporting the movement, Tom emphasizes the power of visibility.

“It never hurts to put a little pride flag somewhere in your office because you’re letting people around you know you’re somebody with whom they can connect. In my early days here, I would walk through the halls and if I saw a pride flag on somebody’s desk, I’d just go talk to them.

“It’s so simple, but we have to be more visible to protect and nurture each other. And displaying your Raymond James pride flag is a great way to offer that invitation to anyone in our community.”
As a woman in finance, Jodi Perry knows what it’s like to be “the only one in the room.”
She joined Raymond James in 1994 – the same year the firm’s Women Financial Advisors Network got its start. At the time, Jodi was working an entry-level position in operations. She would eventually rise through the ranks to become president of the Independent Contractors Division within Raymond James Financial Services in 2018.

“Throughout my career, there have been so many people who didn’t look like me but who supported me in various roles.” Now, Jodi’s returning the favor by advocating for those who need it.

“A couple of years ago, Tom Hake asked me for a meeting. He and I had never met, but I could tell how passionate he was about starting the Pride Financial Advisors Network, and I was immediately on board.”

By that point, the Women Financial Advisors Network had been a thriving movement for over two decades, and the firm’s Black Financial Advisors Network was celebrating its sixth year. “To me, PFAN made perfect sense,” said Jodi. “It was the third leg of our stool.”

Driven by the conviction that PFAN had a place and a purpose at Raymond James, Jodi helped Tom coordinate a meeting with senior leaders, including Paul Reilly and Scott Curtis, both of whom were supportive and enjoyed Tom’s enthusiasm.

Since then, firm leadership has proudly stood behind PFAN, and Jodi and Tom have developed a close, collaborative relationship demarcated by regular meetings to discuss the network’s needs and initiatives.

“It’s been an honor to be part of PFAN from the very beginning, back when it was just Tom’s idea,” said Jodi, noting that although the COVID-19 pandemic delayed the network’s inaugural Business of Pride Symposium by a year, PFAN’s trailblazing trajectory has just begun.

CONTROVERSY WITH A PURPOSE
Despite being a key ally of PFAN since its inception, Jodi insists that her support for the network isn’t particularly noteworthy. It’s who Raymond James is – “it’s woven into the fabric and the culture of the firm” – even when the role of advocate hasn’t been an easy or convenient one.

“All of our Advisor Inclusion Networks are controversial. Social justice is controversial,” said Jodi, adding how some people struggle to understand that if they haven’t needed laws to obtain equal rights, they are in an inherent position of privilege.

“I think the most important thing you can do for a group is show up and be an advocate, even if you don’t fit their demographic. And because leadership has a bigger voice at the firm, the more involved we are, the easier it is for a movement to take root.”

It’s been proven that the push for advocacy, inclusion and diversity isn’t just the right thing to do – it’s also good for business.

According to the McKinsey study “Why diversity matters,” companies with more racially and ethnically diverse employees perform 35% better than companies with a largely white and monocultural staff. Jodi considers these findings particularly relevant to financial services.
“Diversity and inclusion should be an important element of every business. But I think for us, it’s really important that clients be able to look across the table and see people who are more like them.

“Our client demographics are changing, and everybody feels different about money. So the more diverse advisor base we have, the more we can address those diverse, evolving needs.”

**AS UNIQUE AS THE CLIENTS WE SERVE**

Driven by the mission to foster a firm as unique as the clients we serve, the Advisor Inclusion Networks have helped crystallize Raymond James’ support for underrepresented advisor communities under the leadership of Renée Baker.

“Renée has really helped unify our networks,” Jodi affirmed. “And I’m really proud of how all of them are trying to help each other. So if the Women Financial Advisors Network is recruiting women at a college, they make it a point to also recruit Black students and LGBT+ students.

“We’re understanding that diverse groups want more diversity as a whole – and that comes in all shapes, orientations and colors.”

And the issue of being the only one in the room? Jodi started seeing that as a powerful advantage long ago.

“It’s really important to be authentic and embrace what makes you different. Instead of trying to fit in, be proud of the fact that you stand out and can bring a different perspective to a situation.”

Looking ahead, Jodi plans to continue her invaluable work as an advocate, upholding diversity and inclusion as pillars of Raymond James’ people-first values.

“My whole goal is just to leave something a little bit better than it was before I got there.”
SAVE THE DATE

THE 2ND ANNUAL BUSINESS OF PRIDE SYMPOSIUM

VINOS RENAISSANCE
ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA

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If you have have questions, feedback, ideas or want to get involved, please email us at pridefinancialadvisorsnetwork@raymondjames.com.

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