

BFAN CONNECTION

A biannual newsletter from the Black Financial Advisors Network



BFAN SYMPOSIUM

The eighth annual symposium brought advisors and firm leaders together for engaging conversations, educational sessions and inspiring speakers.

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CHRIS GARDNER

The CEO of Happyness, a guest speaker at the BFAN Symposium, discusses the chapter of life he's writing now.

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SOLITAIRE DASHER-SMILEY

Advisor Solitaire Dasher-Smiley shares her experiences navigating life and growing her career at Raymond James.

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Black Financial
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BFAN CONNECTION

EIGHTH ANNUAL BFAN SYMPOSIUM

Reconnecting, rediscovering and redefining

The eighth annual BFAN Symposium was worth the wait. After a four-month postponement, the symposium was held from June 7 to 9 at Opal Sands on Clearwater Beach, Florida. It was wonderful to see everyone’s smiling faces again – in-person and not via Zoom – and the energy was palpable. From company updates and keynote speakers to panels and networking breaks, the symposium gave network advisors a chance to reconnect with their community, reignite their passion and re-energize their practices.



▲ **BFAN ADVISORY COUNCIL:** The symposium marked the first time members of the BFAN Advisory Council were together in one place since February 2020. We thank them for their leadership and their commitment to bringing us all together again. Pictured: (seated, L to R) Tony Barrett, Renée Baker, Derrick Lewis and Andrea Nichols; (standing, L to R) Stephen Pryor, Chris Fils, Lanta Evans-Motte, Thomas Dedrick and Lynne Henning.



▲ **BEST PRACTICES:** A panel of advisors shared best practices during a discussion hosted by Alexis Rodriguez of the Advisor Inclusion Networks team. More collaborative than competitive, network advisors are eager to share their secrets to success in hopes they might help others with their businesses. Panel members, left to right, included Alexis Rodriguez, Morgan Summers, Forest Busby, Natalie Norman and Russell Ballew.



▲ **SAY CHEESE:** Attendees of the eighth annual BFAN Symposium pose for a group photo at the Opal Sands in Clearwater Beach, Florida.



▲ **INSPIRING SPEAKERS:** Advisor Anthony Paul (left) kicked off the symposium, sharing his belief that getting uncomfortable is the key to unblocking out greatness and challenging us all to get uncomfortable. Keynote speaker Chris Gardner (right) captivated us with his inspirational story – we know it well from the movie “The Pursuit of Happyness” – but it was incredible to hear about his current commitment to human capital and how he plans to give back as part of his life’s work. His belief that we can conquer any of the challenges life throws at us – big or small – was especially moving. Learn more about his vision in a Q&A on Page 4.



◀ **TOWN HALL:** Raymond James CEO Paul Reilly participated in a town hall session hosted by Renée Baker, head of Advisor Inclusion Networks.

AWARD WINNERS

Though we presented our annual awards virtually in February, it was great to call the honorees up to the stage so they could receive the recognition they deserve and hear the appreciation of their peers.

Top Producer: Derrick Lewis, AIF®, WMS

Community Impact: Crystal Alford-Cooper, CFP®, CDFA™, CRC®

Sage: Káon Nelson, CFP®, CPWA®, AAMS® and Tony Barrett

Pioneer: Steven Dawson, CFP®, MS

Leadership: Renée Baker, DBA, RCC™

Ascend: Terrance Dedrick, CRPC®, AAMS®, AIF®

The recipients are pictured on the cover of BFAN Connection, along with Scott Curtis, president of the Private Client Group at Raymond James. Steven was unable to attend, but was proudly represented by his wife, Jalauna Dawson.

Pictured on the cover (L to R): Tony Barrett, Jalauna Dawson, Káon Nelson, Derrick Lewis, Renée Baker, Scott Curtis, Crystal Alford-Cooper and Terrance Dedrick.

CAREER NIGHT

Career Night was a major success! Attendees included students, recent graduates and people looking for new careers, as well as representatives from the home office. We discussed internships, the Accelerated Development Program, the Wealth Management Associate Program, the Advisory Master Program and other opportunities. In addition to all of the information available, attendees were able to schedule one-on-one coffee chats with respective recruiters to continue their exploration of Raymond James as the next step of their career journey.

Q+A

KEYNOTE SPOTLIGHT

An interview with Chris Gardner



CHRIS GARDNER
Author, Entrepreneur

We sat down with the CEO of Happyness to discuss the chapter of his life he’s writing right now. In preparation for his keynote presentation and book signing of “Permission to Dream” at the BFAN Symposium, we had the chance to talk with Chris about his past, his future and what’s on his mind right now.

Q: What’s one lesson you learned in this business that you’ll never forget?

Relationships are everything. That might not seem earth-shattering, like you’ve never heard that before. But the relationships in our industry are the most important thing – that’s what I learned. For a second, let’s assume everyone in our business is good, so there’s not much difference separating you from your biggest competitor. The person who’s going to get the business every time is going to be the person with the relationship. Relationships can do things that money cannot. Develop, treasure and nurture your relationships.

Q: Business aside, what was the most pivotal moment in your life?

There’s been too many of them. In fact, I’ve described what we all had to do in 2020 as a hard pivot. Something you would’ve never chosen but had to do. We can take what we learn from all those previous hard pivots and apply it to right now. One of the hardest pivots I had to make in my life was when I lost my wife to brain cancer. And if I go back to when she got her diagnosis, that was another hard pivot. I went from being her husband, best friend and lover to becoming a primary caregiver. I got the honor of being her primary caregiver for the last four years of her life. So many of the last conversations we were having, she was asking me, “Now that we can see how truly short life can be, what are you going to do with the rest of your life?”

Q: How are you answering that question?

I am making a huge investment right now in human capital. I'm making a direct investment in the future of this country. I am in the process of doing a tour of high schools, middle schools and upper-level elementary schools all across the country. I'm talking to young people about what can be done. There are loads of people telling you what you can't do. Let's talk about what can be done. A lot of folks in our industry want to check a box: we talked about that, we had a conference, we made a contribution. Well, that's not changing anybody's life. The most important thing in the world for me right now is helping to change the trajectory of young people's lives. And that's making a direct investment in the future of this country.

“Relationships can do things that money cannot. Develop, treasure and nurture your relationships.”

– CHRIS GARDNER

Q: And how about the future of this industry? What can firms like Raymond James be focusing on to making lasting change – particularly on the equitability and inclusivity front?

Talent is talent, and it needs to be invested in wherever and whoever it is – the only color that's important in this business is green. If you can help me make money, if you can help my clients make money, I don't care what color you are. I'm not in the Black business. I'm in the green business. I had to learn that lesson early in my career doing cold-calling. Back then, there were more millionaires in Texas than anywhere else due to the price of oil. The problem was that my colleagues in San Francisco could not understand what Texans were saying. My folks are from Louisiana, which means I'm an honorary Texan. There was a gentleman I built a relationship with; he would tell me to buy 1,000 shares of whatever I was selling every time I called him. This was all done over the phone. Then, one day, we planned to meet. I got ready for the meeting and

told myself to focus on the performance, added value and the wealth I created. I knew he didn't know I was Black. But every position in the portfolio was up. At the end of the meeting, I closed the folder and looked him in the eye, and I said, “It's not a Black thing. It's not a white thing. It's a green thing.”

Q: Tell us, what's something that most people don't know about Chris Gardner?

I have a green thumb! I live up to my last name. I have this thing about my plants and my yard. I talk to my plants. I've turned into one of those men who goes out and looks at his lawn with pride. Jade is my favorite plant. A leaf falls off for whatever reason, you just put it in water, then dirt, then it takes off. [Chris shares a picture of his granddaughter next to a jade plant from 12 years ago.] They've grown up together. This plant has taken over the house. And this little lady is the finest piece of work ever created in the history of my family.

Q: As we wrap up, what's one piece of advice do you have for advisors at Raymond James?

First of all, you have got to love this business. Period. No matter what jersey it is that you're wearing, whatever firm you're working for, you have got to love this business. Because if you don't, you'll never be any good at it. This is not just about making money.



Chris Gardner's keynote presentation at the 2022 eighth annual BFAN symposium

NETWORK ADVISOR SPOTLIGHT

Solitaire Dasher-Smiley



Advisor Solitaire Dasher-Smiley has always been committed to excellence and it's served her well as she's navigated life and grown her career at Raymond James.

After many years in banking, including managing a main office, Solitaire Dasher-Smiley can recount many occasions when she was the only woman of color or person of color in the room. Like in elementary school when she was often the only Black girl in her class. Or in eighth grade at a private school where the principal said there wasn't a spot for her in the advanced algebra class – because she was on partial scholarship. And now, when at a recent conference that brought together 300 local advisors, she was the only Black woman in attendance. That's why her involvement in BFAN is important to her. It's one of the ways she fights for a seat at the table – and makes space for others to sit next to her.

JUST GETTING STARTED

"I've always had a pretty strong affinity for math as well as human connection. I like to talk to people. I wouldn't categorize myself as a shy person," she laughed. "When I went to college, I majored in finance and international business. My father always said, 'If you can help people manage their money and their finances, and do it well, you'll always be in demand.'"

And she got that job, right out of college, at a big-four accounting firm. It fulfilled her desire to work with numbers, but there was a lack of deeper human connection. So, six years later, she found Raymond James and transitioned into the firm as an accountant. But her goal was to learn as much as she could and eventually become a financial advisor.

"I knew I wanted to go that route, to be an advisor. But I also knew I wanted to find an area of the business that would allow me to distinguish myself. When most people think about investments, the first two things they think of are stocks and bonds – traditional investments. I wanted to do something different," Solitaire said. "I had a chance in my other roles to work with various groups and figure out what I liked and what I disliked. And I stumbled across alternative investments."

And when an opportunity in the firm's alternative investments group opened up, Solitaire went for it. It was her chance to get one step closer to her dream.

“I don't always win. But, I never lose ... instead, I learn.”

– SOLITAIRE DASHER-SMILEY

"Even though I was an internal candidate, it was still a rigorous and lengthy process. Ultimately, I got the position," she said. "But, during the first three to six months, I really felt like I was drinking from a fire hose. I had joined a high-performing

team. And, in this role, there was so much to learn that I really struggled initially to see how I was adding value.”

Then, after months of studying the fundamentals of alternative investments and the idiosyncrasies of the products she covered, there was a lightbulb moment and it all clicked. One day Solitaire was fielding a call from an advisor and, without hesitation or consultation, she knew the answer. She said, “It just really felt good. Though I knew there was still much to learn, in that moment, I was able to add value to my team, our client (the receiving advisor), the advisor’s client, and, ultimately, Raymond James. And it felt amazing.”

Over the course of seven years, she continued to garner the knowledge, credentials and experience to become an expert in her space and her confidence followed. During that same period, she was able to leverage her expertise to build meaningful relationships with a network of financial advisors around the country. She became the first person many advisors would think of if they had a question regarding hedge funds, private equity or structured investments.

Given the depth and breadth of her unique and complementary skills to many other advisors, it’s no surprise that she was recruited by one of the financial advisor teams with whom she had built a valuable relationship to become a partner with Weiss Wealth Strategies of Raymond James.

A BIG MOVE

The only hitch in Weiss Wealth Strategies’ offer was that Solitaire lived in Tampa, Florida, (near the Raymond James headquarters) and the team, the office and the bulk of their business was in Scottsdale, Arizona. Solitaire said her husband was surprised when she pitched the idea of a cross-country career move. But nonetheless, they headed west to attend the team’s annual holiday party, meet a many of the local clients, experience the city (since their only prior visit was in 2005 when Jeff, now her husband, proposed), and explore if this was an opportunity they wanted to embrace and pursue.

“Every single thing about the visit exceeded our expectations,” Solitaire said. Everyone in the office was welcoming, and she remembers visiting Gary’s house and

noting a big wall of family photos just like the one in her own home and her parents’ home. They went to a hole-in-the-wall Mexican restaurant, and the bartender recognized Gary as his son’s former little league baseball coach. “He knew Gary not because of what he did professionally, but because of how he gave back to the community. That made it feel very genuine and authentic. It just felt right.”

She even convinced her in-laws to move across the country as well. They are retired and couldn’t stay away from Solitaire’s two beautiful babies for too long. “I thought it would be a tough sell and it really wasn’t,” Solitaire said. “They said, ‘We believe in you. We want to support you. And we want to do whatever we can to help you and our grandchildren be successful.’”

Now that Solitaire has realized her dream of becoming a financial advisor, she has that fulfilment found in human connection she was missing at her prior firm and in her other roles.

“Get comfortable being uncomfortable.
There is no shortage of things to learn.
And there are going to be lots of
opportunities worth pursuing.”

– SOLITAIRE DASHER-SMILEY

“Being a new advisor, one of the memories that sticks out to me the most is when one of our clients said she really wanted to pay for a full year of college for one of her grandchildren. And she was not sure she was going to be able to do it because it wasn’t originally part of the plan. When we showed her that she was not only able to send her granddaughter to school for one year, but she could actually pay for two years, if she wanted, and it would have no negative impact on her achieving all of her other goals. She began to cry. Then I started to cry. It was one of the most moving experiences I’ve ever had in my career. And, I hope to be blessed with many more opportunities to exceed client expectations.”

FOCUSING ON EXCELLENCE

To anyone who knows Solitaire, it's somewhat predictable that she's achieved what she set out to. Those around her describe her as loyal, determined and committed to excellence. It was ingrained in her at a young age. She always gives everything her best.

"One of my favorite quotes is by Colin Powell. And it goes, 'If you are going to achieve excellence in big things, you develop the habit in little matters. Excellence is not an exception, it is a prevailing attitude,'" Solitaire said. "And long before I heard that quote, I've been living that philosophy. My parents, my childhood friends, my former teachers, they would all attest to that. They never really had to push me to give my best effort. It just came naturally."

To be clear, Solitaire said that doesn't mean she's never failed. It does mean that when she does make a mistake, despite giving it her all, she learns and grows from it. In her words, "I don't always win. But, I never lose ... instead, I learn."

And that's exactly the advice she'd give to new advisors starting in the business: "Get comfortable being uncomfortable. There is no shortage of things to learn. And there are going to be lots of opportunities worth pursuing. But, it's not always easy. It's going to be uncomfortable and frustrating, but you have to live there for a little while. So, get comfortable with that."

Another piece of advice she has is to distinguish yourself. After all, it's how she got the opportunity to transition from associate to advisor. She made a name for herself by growing

“ Though I knew there was still much to learn, in that moment, I was able to add value to my team, our client, the advisor’s client, and, ultimately, Raymond James. And it felt amazing.”

– SOLITAIRE DASHER-SMILEY

her expertise and becoming a reliable, qualified and go-to resource for alternative investments and consultant on high-net-worth client cases.

One of the other ways she's made a name for herself is through her involvement in BFAN. "I participate in the Black Financial Advisors Network because I believe it is a network that was created with the intent of bringing people of shared experiences and potential hurdles together so they can learn from each other, encourage each other and promote diversity in the industry," Solitaire says. "The most meaningful part of my participation is in the relationships that I've built and the guidance and encouragement that I've received. And I intend to pay that forward."

Solitaire has already started sharing her story and making an impact on college students, having presented at a recent career night for a finance discovery program geared toward engaging more minority students to pursue careers in finance. She feels like participating in these events is important – to be more visible on college campuses and show that being a financial advisor is an attainable career. It's something she's committed to being increasingly involved in going forward as well.

Beyond that, she realizes that sometimes you can't plan for everything. "Despite being a financial planner, there are just simply some things that you can't or don't plan for. A great personal example is moving my family across the country," Solitaire said. "Nonetheless, it provided me with an opportunity. It got me one step closer to pursuing my longer-term goals. So, when I think about what's next for me, I would to say my plans are to continue to serve our clients, grow our business – and simply have a seat at the table where I belong."



Solitaire (left) alongside BFAN attendees at the eighth annual BFAN symposium

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Raymond James' technology is built from the minds of advisors. It's designed to save time while being intuitive and easy to learn – so every practice can discover its potential.

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EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS TO PUSH EFFICIENCY

An efficient operation behind the scenes means more time upfront with your clients and prospects. At its core, our technology makes that possible. By exploring the customization options, you can take it a step further. Here are some examples:

TIP NO. 1: HARNESS WIDGETS FOR QUICK VIEWS INTO YOUR PRACTICE

Advisor Access homepage

Customize your Advisor Access homepage so your morning starts with the at-a-glance insights into practice and client information you need most. Widgets include important alerts, recent trades, CRM activity, cash availability, firm updates, headline news and more.

TIP NO. 2: USE THE FA SELECTOR TO CUSTOMIZE YOUR VIEW

Advisor Access homepage

The FA Selector is your key to customizing and saving your unique view in the Advisor Access homepage. Set preferences and save advisor numbers to your default view to have the homepage load each morning with the client and practice information that is most relevant to you. Flip between views with a few quick clicks.

TIP NO. 3: CUSTOMIZE THE ALERTS PORTAL TO STAY ON TRACK

Alerts Portal

Set your alert priorities, notification methods and default views in this centralized portal to easily keep up to date with your alerts or alerts for the advisors you support. Teams can also set priorities and email notifications based on members' roles for easier collaboration.

TIP NO. 4: CREATE FULLY CUSTOMIZED CLIENT REPORTS IN LESS TIME

Client Reporting

If the more than 100 settings and 25 highly customizable reports don't quite fit your client reporting needs, you can increase the level of customization with fully tailored reports through the Custom Report Builder tool. Once built, you can include them in report packages to run on a schedule or on demand.

Juneteenth celebrations

We appreciate everyone who joined in the celebration of Juneteenth. June 19 is an opportunity for us all to reflect on the progress we've made and acknowledge the work that still needs to be done in the name of equality. Advisors across the firm commemorated Juneteenth by volunteering in their communities to support the growth and development of financial literacy and general wellness in the Black community.

BFAN advisors **Forest Busby** and **Carl Scott** of Houston managed a booth and engaged with attendees of the Pre-Juneteenth Celebration Health & Wellness Fair of the Houston Area Urban League.

BFAN advisor **Lynne Henning** of Jackson, Tennessee, participated in the Society of African American Cultural Awareness' 33rd annual Jackson Juneteenth Freedom Day Celebration as well as the second annual Miss Jackson Scholarship Pageant sponsored by 100 Black Men of West Tennessee.



◀ **FREEDOM DAY CELEBRATION:**
Lynne Henning with attendees of the Jackson Juneteenth Freedom Day Celebration

▶ **PRE-JUNETEENTH CELEBRATION HEALTH & WELLNESS FAIR:**
Forest Busby at the Raymond James tent of the of the Pre-Juneteenth Celebration Health & Wellness Fair



Mark your calendar

16th annual Conference of African American Financial Professionals, The American College of Financial Services®

August 8 – 10, 2022

Omni Hotel, Washington, D.C.

National V.I.S.I.O.N. Conference, Association of African American Financial Advisors

September 19 – 22, 2022

Hyatt Regency, Atlanta

Second annual Black Wealth Summit

October 27 – 29, 2022

The Hotel at the University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland

Ninth annual BFAN Symposium, Raymond James

February 7 – 9, 2023

Innisbrook Golf Resort, Palm Harbor, Florida

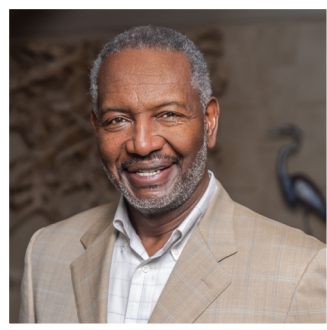
In the news

Several BFAN advisors recently shared their perspectives with news organizations that cover our industry, including Financial Advisor IQ and Financial Planning. They discussed BFAN's efforts to address representation within financial services, the need for the Black community to be reflected in marketing materials and how Raymond James is incorporating diversity goals into its advisor training programs.



Awards and recognition

2022 SEE IT BE IT ROLE MODEL



Thomas Dedrick, CFP®, WMS

Thomas Dedrick, CFP®, WMS has been recognized as a 2022 See It Be It Role Model. He is a senior vice president of investments at Dedrick Wealth Management Group of Raymond James in Alabama and a council member for the Black Financial Advisors Network. The award demonstrates his great leadership in advancing the diversity and inclusion cause in the financial advice industry.

INVESTMENTNEWS' 40 UNDER 40



Chris Fils, CFP®, MBA

Chris Fils, CFP®, MBA, has been honored as one of InvestmentNews' 40 Under 40. He is a complex manager in Sarasota, Florida, and council member for the Black Financial Advisors Network.

Nominees for the InvestmentNews Diversity & Inclusion See it Be it Role Models Award must currently be working as financial planners, registered representatives or registered investment advisers, or as industry professionals in a role that supports financial advisers. Judges will consider demonstrations of leadership, business achievements and examples of being a role model or inspiring others from diverse backgrounds to succeed in the financial advice profession. InvestmentNews received more than 120 nominations for the Diversity & Inclusions awards and selected 10 individuals for the See it Be It Role Models award. Each role model has at least 10 years of experience in the industry. The ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience, is not an endorsement, and is not indicative of future performance. Neither Raymond James nor any of its financial advisors pay a fee in exchange for this award/rating nor is Raymond James affiliated with InvestmentNews.

Each year InvestmentNews recognizes 40 industry professions under the age of 40 based on factors including accomplishments as exhibited by their credentials and achievements in their industry-related projects, contributions to the industry, quality of leadership within the financial advice field, and promise/commitment to the field. The nominees were all under the age of 40 when the honorees were announced. Over 1,000 nominees were considered and 40 were chosen to receive the award in 2022. The nominations are read and vetted by an internal group of editors and reporters at InvestmentNews. The ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience, is not an endorsement, and is not indicative of an advisor's future performance. Neither Raymond James nor any of its financial advisors pay a fee in exchange for this award/rating. InvestmentNews is not affiliated with Raymond James.

BUILDING A BETTER TOMORROW

The Black Financial Advisors Network has helped establish Raymond James as the destination of choice for Black financial advisors seeking a place where they are welcomed, supported and celebrated in their success.



For questions, ideas or to get involved, please email us at
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