

BUSINESS OF PRIDE

A FOCUS ON 'EQUITY AND INCLUSION':

Nonprofit veteran has a clear vision for the state's new LGBT chamber of commerce

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Grace Moreno knows a thing or two about what it takes to run a successful nonprofit.

As the executive director of the recently launched Massachusetts LGBT Chamber of Commerce, a local affiliate of the National LGBT Chamber of Commerce, she brings 21 years of experience in the nonprofit sector. That includes such roles as national operations director for Neighborhood Assistance Corp. of America, deputy director of Health Care For All, vice president/executive director of national programs at The Community Builders Inc., and vice president of operations and finance at the Edward M. Kennedy Institute for the United States Senate.

The new chamber is the first-of-its-kind in this region in some time — a predecessor of sorts, Greater Boston Business Council, ceased operations a couple of years ago — and will have a statewide focus. So far, the chamber — which is in a “soft-launch” phase right now, with plans for an official launch later this year — is off to a good start: It has 10 corporate sponsors to date, including Seyfarth Shaw, Boston Scientific, Burns & Levinson, JetBlue, Takeda, State Street and Tufts Health Plan, and more than 30 small businesses have joined as founding members.

Moreno recently gave Business Journal Associate Editor of Research, Sean McFadden an overview of what to expect from the new chamber.

What's the chamber's mandate, and how might that be different from other LGBT organizations in the area? Our mandate is centered around two main missions: One is putting more revenue in the pockets of LGBT-owned businesses. So, raise the revenue for LGBT businesses. If it looks like there's some companies that are very startup, getting them certified through the national LGBT Chamber, getting them to participate in the supplier diversity programs through the state, and being able to compete on some of these levels. The



Grace Moreno,
executive director
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Chamber of Commerce

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second is that we're learning there are a lot of corporations that want to build a connection to the LGBT business community — from a human resources perspective, from a perspective of hiring talent, from a supplier diversity perspective and who want to gain best practices of how to include LGBT in the equity and inclusion process. We really are metric-centered. We want to be able to count how much money we are putting into small businesses and measure how much progress we're making to help large companies make their way in the LGBT equity and inclusion sector.

What's the process of lining up corporate sponsors been like, and what's the reaction of the local business community been? It's been easy — the corporate business community has been ready and eager and well-positioned to recognize their leadership role in this space. Companies like Harvard Pilgrim Health Care and Eastern Bank were the first to join as Corporate Founding Sponsors, and they did so because they know the role they can play in creating economic vitality and honoring their mission and recognizing their community. PTC joined third, and they did so because they saw our chamber as the next step in their own commitment to the LGBT community. So we have corporations at the table who have been waiting to get this chamber going and others who jumped at the opportunity right away.

What's your vision for the first year of the chamber? The vision in year one after launch is to have a substantial number of small businesses that know that we're here and can help them get to their next level of success. Right now, we have 30; I want to have 200 by this time next year. At the same time I want us to roll out a robust programming agenda, solidify how we want to work with our corporate partners, and commit to how we want to work with small businesses in helping them to do business development. Year one is forming, and year two is going to be about growing. It is going to be staying very much in touch with what the business community needs and making that important to the corporations.

Jennifer Pinck:
2018 LGBT Business
Trailblazer

On her LinkedIn profile, Jennifer Pinck, president of Boston-based Pinck & Co. — an owner's project management firm that provides planning, design and construction management consulting services — describes herself as a “fierce problem solver with a laser focus on client service and cost-effective solutions.”

With approximately 36 years of experience in the Massachusetts design and construction industry, Pinck is also a true pioneer.

She launched her career in the late 1970s in the male-dominated field of the building trades, working as a commercial painter, and eventually rose to a role as construction superintendent for the George B.H. Macomber Co. in the 1980's.

“It was really tough,” Pinck recalled in a 2011 interview with the BBJ. “But I developed a thick skin and was very determined.”

A trailblazer throughout her career, Pinck in 1986 became the first woman to obtain a Boston ABC (builder's) license.

Her vast professional experience includes working on two of the region's most storied mega-projects in the late 1980s to mid-1990s: She served as a construction manager for the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority on the Boston Harbor Project; and as mitigation manager for the Central Artery/Tunnel Project, aka the “Big Dig.”

Since its founding in 1998, her firm has served on a wide range of projects for public sector, institutional and nonprofit owners. Recent projects undertaken by Pinck & Co. include Castle Square, a 500-unit affordable housing development in Boston; and a 150,000-square-foot renovation and 20,000-square-foot addition for Norton High School.

Pinck also has a clear perspective on what it means to be an LGBT business owner in Massachusetts.

“Being an LGBT business owner in this state reflects the trailblazing policies that the commonwealth, its citizens, its institutions and businesses have embraced,” she said. “We have led the nation in so many ways: adoptions, domestic partnerships, employment protections, marriage equality. This progressive outlook means that we've created a culture that encourages and promotes human capital and we, LGBT and other ‘non-traditional’ business owners, can focus on success vs. survival.”

Harvard Pilgrim wins BBJ's Corporate Ally Award

Harvard Pilgrim Health Care, this year's Corporate Ally Award winner, has been a leader in supporting LGBT initiatives for more than two decades.

The nonprofit insurance company was one of the first companies nationwide to support same-sex partner medical benefit programs in 1993, and a year later, an employee resource group formed the Health Triangle to foster an inclusive work environment that supports gay, lesbian, and bisexual employees in and out of the workplace.

Over the next three years, the company

initiated surveys on staff satisfaction and diversity, created a list of 120 “gay-sensitive” clinicians and launched the company's first gay and lesbian ad campaign. The company created a workshop to teach medical workers about the clinical needs of gay and lesbian patients and distributed the first versions of an AIDS kit.

Harvard Pilgrim invests about \$80,000 per year in programs and initiatives that benefit the local LGBT community. For the past 25 years, the company has had an internal LGBT affinity group, which currently has about 70 members.

Since 2006, Harvard Pilgrim has earned a

100 percent rating for corporate equality from the Human Rights Campaign, America's largest civil rights organization that's working to achieve LGBT equality.

In 2014, Harvard Pilgrim began covering the cost of gender confirmation surgery and transgender benefits for its own employees. The next year, it became the first plan in the region to offer gender-confirmation surgery and transgender benefits to commercial accounts. The company appointed nurse care managers to work with transgender patients, removed gender identifiers from its medical records, and

announced a voluntary pronoun inclusion policy on Harvard Pilgrim email signatures.

In 2015, Harvard Pilgrim Health Care also launched the Out. Proud. Engaged. Network, or OPEN, an LGBT employee resource group that promotes education, professional development and engagement in its community.

As OPEN continues to evolve, both the frequency and variety of its initiatives have grown with company-wide engagement. For example, it has launched an annual “Pride Day at Harvard Pilgrim” to celebrate and build community at work.