

the ALLIANCE

Celebrating LGBTQ+ People in Real Estate
VOLUME IV, Issue 1 | 2026



LIVE
PROUD

Everyday

**TOMMIE
WEHRLE**

2026 National
President

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WELCOME to the alliance

our vision...

To create a world free of housing discrimination.

our mission...

ADVOCATE. ELEVATE. CELEBRATE.

Advocate for fair housing for all and promote LGBTQ+ homeownership. Elevate professionalism in the industry through education and networking. Celebrate diversity and inclusion in our members and allied partners.

our values...

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION EQUALITY + EQUITY INCLUSION TRANSPARENCY PRIDE

our core belief...

We believe in accountable leadership to the members of the organization, as well as the practice of transparency from all members, in all things. We will be an organization that hears every voice and will reflect the values and ethics of its members.

Live Proud Every Day...

Friends—**HAPPY PRIDE.**

THERE ARE MOMENTS IN HISTORY WHEN CELEBRATION QUIETS.

When visibility feels risky. When progress feels fragile. When the world seems to look away. This is one of those moments for our community. The bandwagon has left town. Much of mainstream America is no longer celebrating us. And yet, this is precisely when living proud matters most.

Living proud today is not always loud. It is not always a parade or a spotlight. Sometimes, it is quieter and, in many ways, more powerful. It is choosing integrity when it would be easier to shrink. It is showing up for your clients, your colleagues, your community with authenticity, even when the climate suggests you should dim your light. It is the daily decision to be seen, not for approval, but for **TRUTH.**

What does that look like? It looks like kindness in the face of indifference. It looks like excellence in your work that cannot be ignored. It looks like lifting others up when they feel unseen. It's sharing our stories.

When the world stops celebrating you, you must become the source of your own affirmation. That requires digging deeper beyond the noise, beyond the headlines, into the core of who you are. Our community has always drawn strength from resilience, from creativity, from an unshakeable belief that we belong. Those are not small things. Those are the very qualities that change industries, shape culture, and move society forward.

Remember: visibility is not just about being recognized. It is about making it possible for someone else to see a future for themselves. Every time you live openly, lead with integrity, or extend compassion, you are creating space for others to exist more fully.

So, if the world feels quieter right now, let that not silence us. Let it sharpen our purpose. Let it remind us that pride is not given; it is lived.

We are still here. We still matter. And through how we live, lead, and show up for one another, we will continue to prove it: **Every. Single. Day.**

Our stories matter and in this issue of the Alliance Magazine we are proud to celebrate our members and how they contribute to this beautiful tapestry we call our community.

Live proud in whatever way moves you,



**TOMMIE
WEHRLE**

2026 National
President
LGBTQ+ Real Estate
Alliance

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Live PROUD

This feature is a tribute to the enduring spirit of LGBTQ+ people.

ACROSS THE COUNTRY, members of the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance are showing what it means to live authentically, not just in the milestones, but in the everyday. In how they build businesses, nurture relationships, serve clients, support one another, and claim space in an industry that hasn't always made room for them. Pride, for them, isn't reserved for a single month or a parade. It's found in quiet acts of courage, in resilience forged through experience, and in the decision to be SEEN even when it would be easier not to be.

At a time when external validation can feel uncertain, these stories remind us that pride is not something given, it is something lived. It's deeply personal, yet profoundly communal. It shows up in chosen families, in long-standing partnerships, in cultural traditions, in advocacy, and in the simple, radical act of being oneself.

"Live Proud" is about honoring those moments, big and small, that define who we are. It's about recognizing that even when the world stops celebrating us, we never stop celebrating each other.

Because pride isn't just a response to acceptance. It's a declaration of existence, resilience, and joy. ■



NATURAL BORN

Advocate

**Purpose-driven
work runs in the
family.**

TOMMIE WEHRLE learned something early from her father, who spent years in politics: a headline is rarely the whole story. He encouraged her to look past the surface, to dig into the details that reveal what makes people care and take action.

SHE SAYS ONE OF HIS MOST IMPORTANT LESSONS

started at the St. Louis Zoo, where they visited often. Each time he would point out how much he disliked seeing animals in cages. Then one afternoon, while watching the giraffes together, he asked, “why do you think we display animals in captivity like this?”

When she heard a recording of whale sounds for the first time, that’s when she got it: “It’s awareness and connection,” Tommie explains. “Seeing a tiger makes its disappearance real. Hearing a whale makes the threat harder to ignore. When you experience something in person, it’s real, and once it’s real, it starts to matter.” That was the moment that launched a lifetime focused on purpose-driven work.

Her early advocacy began in high school with a campaign to protect humpback whales. Then in college, Tommie leveraged Title IX, the federal law prohibiting sex discrimination in schools, to push for equity in women’s college athletics. Over the years, her work evolved into lobbying Congress, organizing within her industry, and helping others find their voice. Today, as president of the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance, she’s dedicated to removing barriers between LGBTQ+ people and homeownership. Like many Alliance members, it’s work she came to through her own experience.

“When you
experience
something in
person, it’s real,
and once it’s real,
it starts to matter.”

-Tommie Wehrle



She recalls her first week at a national real estate company, when she casually mentioned her former partner in a meeting introduction. Two agents complained to her manager that Tommie inappropriately disclosed her sexuality. “I was ready to quit,” she says, describing her initial shock. Instead, she researched the company’s policies on discrimination, then discovered and joined an LGBTQ+ employee resource group. Eventually that experience led to networking with other LGBTQ+ colleagues and becoming a founding member of the Alliance. “If it hadn’t been for that incident,” she says, “I wouldn’t have discovered any of it.”

“There are no checks and balances... **it is more critical then ever** for us to be that check and balance.”

-Tommie Wehrle

Over the past 35 years in real estate, Tommie has seen the industry change in significant ways when it comes to the LGBTQ+ related policies. She’s also seen how much depends on who’s in the room. She describes her first transgender client, whose credit history had effectively disappeared after transitioning. A gay mortgage broker in Tommie’s local network took on financing the loan himself. “If we were someplace else in the country,” she admits, “I might not have been able to get that loan through.”

Those kinds of stories, Tommie says, more agents need to hear and be ready for. With federal fair housing enforcement effectively hollowed out, she says complaints sent to Washington now land with no one to read them. “There are no checks and balances,” she says. “It’s more critical than ever for us to be that check and balance.”

TOMMIE WEHRLE is a Learning Consultant for Better Homes and Gardens Real Estate. Wehrle has been in the real estate industry for nearly 35 years as an agent, broker/owner and instructor/coach. She has been active in local and state Realtor® associations along with the National Association of Realtors®.

For agents wondering what that looks like in practice, here’s her advice: find out what’s happening in your state, and in others, then pick up the phone. Tommie regularly sets aside time to call state senators across the country, write to the Kansas City Chiefs about the implications of Kansas’s transgender bathroom law, and urge agents in blue states to build relationships with counterparts in red ones. “This is not for you to get business,” Tommie says. “It’s so you create a safe passage for somebody.”

When she needs a dose of inspiration, Tommie looks up to a framed newspaper article on her wall across from her desk. In the clip, a newspaper columnist reported on her speech at a Human Rights Campaign dinner years ago. Standing at the podium, she said, “We are not asking for special rights, we are asking for equal rights.” But the quote in print read differently.

Where Tommie said “we,” the reporter wrote “they.” A small, but deliberate change. “He did that to protect me,” she says, referring to the risk of being publicly identified as a lesbian at the time.

Framing the article was her father’s idea. He wanted her to remember what it meant to be visible then, how far things had come, and to believe that one day, that kind of protection wouldn’t be necessary. She’s now one of thousands of Alliance members across the country working to make sure that progress continues.

“It is scary. We can’t deny that, and it can be frightening for some people, depending on the environments that they exist in,” Tommie comments about recent anti-LGBTQ+ policies and headlines. “But to go back to that world is more frightening than it is to stand up.” ■

“We are not asking for **special rights**, we are asking for **equal** rights.”

-Tommie Wehrle



KEN OSBORN

he/him
EXP REAL ESTATE
LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA

"You have to
show people
we're here... And
we're not just
here for the deal.
We're here for the
community,"

—Kenneth Osborn

**PROUD TO BE SEEN**

Ken Osborn was among the LGBTQ service members who stood up to Don't Ask Don't Tell

Ken Osborn recalls sitting in a packed briefing room in 1993, shoulder to shoulder with nearly a hundred other service members, as the military rolled out a new policy: "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," allowing LGBTQ+ service members to serve only if they kept their identities hidden. "Ninety-nine out of a hundred people didn't care who people were outside of work," he says. "As long as they showed up and did their job, it wasn't an issue."

"Ninety-nine out of a hundred people didn't care
who people were outside of work... As long as they
showed up and did their job, it wasn't an issue."

But the policy said otherwise. It created an extra layer of tension and an awkward filter in everyday conversations. At the time, he hadn't yet connected it to his own life. That changed during Desert Storm, when he was stationed at Fort Lewis. Away from home for the first time, he started to come to terms with his own identity. "You have to look in the mirror at some point and go, well, guess what? This is who you are," he says.

Soon after, when Ken saw a call for plaintiffs to challenge the policy, he decided to step forward, making his public coming out part of a federal case. "I thought if this is it, I wanted to go out with a bang, not a whimper," Ken says.

While his name appeared in national headlines, inside his unit, the reaction was less reactive than he expected. In fact, Ken was promoted to captain and given a new command. He remembers the moment his sergeant major pulled him aside and said, "I don't care. You work hard and you take care of your people."

But Ken points out that wasn't the experience for every officer. "Each base is a small town," he says. "Some were okay. Some weren't. And if you got assigned to the wrong one, you were stuck." Off duty life for every LGBTQ+ service member was shadowed by that

awareness, who was around, and what it could cost. "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" didn't change that, Ken says. "It still felt like living underground."

In New York, as part of *Able v. United States*, Ken stood alongside service members from every branch, each taking the same risk. They knew their odds were low, but the goal was bigger than a single outcome. "We got to make a difference whether we won or lost," he says. "We were a steppingstone." The case was ultimately overturned on appeal, but the trial judge's opinion laid groundwork that later challenges would build on, helping pave the way for future progress.

Ken says his military experience still influences how he works today. In real estate, he is the person clients rely on when deals get complicated, when emotions rise or something unexpected threatens to derail the process. His focus is constant, keeping people and the entire process above board.

He brings that same awareness to his leadership roles, mentorship, and his involvement with the Alliance. Visibility, he says, is vital. "You have to show people we're here," Ken says. "And we're not just here for the deal. We're here for the community." ■

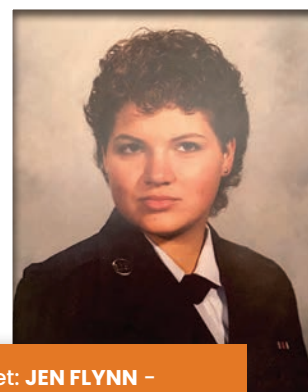


JEN FLYNN

she/her
VELUR REAL ESTATE SERVICES

"If people know
me and like me....
they should know
me and like me as
a **gay woman**,"

—Jen Flynn



Inset: JEN FLYNN -
Air Force Photo

CALLED TO SERVE

Jen Flynn learned about leadership in the military

Before she ever put on a uniform, Jen Flynn was already drawn to the life it promised, one bigger than her life so far in a small Connecticut town. "I was just enamored with those Army and Air Force flyers that came to the high school," she says. "And I'd always go to the programs."

She enlisted as soon as she could "I was still 17 years old, and my parents had to sign the waiver form for me." Within a year, she remembers working overnight in the Air Force computer operations, then riding a motorcycle across the Tampa-St. Pete causeway at sunrise, fully on her own for the first time.

"I remember just feeling this sense of freedom," she says. More than 800 miles away from her hometown, Jen was fully on her own and ready for whatever came next. "When you get through boot camp as a 17-year-old, you pretty much feel unstoppable," she says. "Like you can take on the world."

That sense of momentum grew overseas. Stationed in Germany, Jen rented an apartment from a local family, worked in a NATO bunker, and spent weekends skiing in Austria or traveling across Europe. Her new life also came with real responsibility.

"As a 17, 18-year-old, I was in charge of some people that were 30 and 35 years old," she says. At the same time, her personal life carried a different kind of weight. It was in Germany that Jen came out, quietly, to a small circle of trusted friends. At the time, the military was actively investigating suspected gay service members. "There were witch hunts, literally, people called them witch hunts, where the service would follow people that they thought were gay," she recalls.

Jen loved the Air Force. She had planned to make it her career. But the cost of staying meant living a double life she couldn't accept. So she wrote a letter to her commanding officer. "It was terrifying and liberating," Jen says. "It was the most integrity-driven thing I'd ever done," she says. She left with an honorable discharge, and a decision that would imprint everything that followed. "If people know me and like me," Jen insists, "they should know me and like me as a gay woman."

After leaving her military life, Jen says her inner drive for service found its deepest expression through Landmark, a personal development organization where Jen trained as a seminar leader for five years. "I just saw myself," she says remembering a moment where everything changed. "I felt empowered and transformed," she says. A Landmark leadership project led her and her wife Lauren to co-found a foster home in Da Nang, Vietnam, work they continue to support today.

"There were **witch hunts**, literally, people called them witch hunts, where the service would **follow people** that they thought were gay."

Her advocacy at home called her to a similar path, after learning that, in parts of the country, discrimination in housing still exists for people in the LGBTQ+ community. "As soon as I found out that was a problem, I joined," she says. "I feel good about being part of an organization that can level the playing field for all of us."

For Jen, the Alliance is about connection to a network where people show up for each other and share experience. "If you come in and get to know people, you'll realize you're not alone," she says. "We've all been there in one way, shape, or form." ■



JEN FLYNN (r) and
wife, Lauren

TODD ARMSTRONG

he/him
FOUNDING NATIONAL DIRECTOR,
COMPASS MILITARY DIVISION

“The military teaches you organization, responsibility, self-motivation... But more than anything, it teaches you to care about people,”

—Todd Armstrong



COMBAT READY FOR LIFE

A Navy career taught **Todd Armstrong** everything he needed to know about caring for others in life and business.

Ask Todd Armstrong what makes a great leader and he won’t give you a textbook answer. He’ll take you back to what he describes as a defining moment early in his Navy career, when he and his colleagues were involved in an offshore accident. He remembers waking up in the hospital, bracing for the fallout, certain things were about to get worse. But instead, his leaders took a different approach. Todd describes how his commanding officer handled the situation calmly, without blame. “He put his neck on the line” he says. “That’s taking care of your sailors, taking care of your people. That’s number one.”

He carried that motto through a career that began when he enlisted at 17 and eventually led him to retire as a Senior Chief, after years working in aviation and leading teams across deployments. More than anything, Todd says his experience set a benchmark for how he works with people today. “The military teaches you organization, responsibility, self-motivation,” he says. “But more than anything, it teaches you to care about people.”

One of the most remarkable parts of Todd’s story is how early he was already balancing military service and real estate. “I was selling real estate from Afghanistan,” Todd says. He was taking real estate calls from a combat zone, the sound of incoming rockets and mortar fire cutting through mid-conversation. His home warranty officer at the time still tells the story, he says. “She heard all the mortars and rocket attacks, then ‘Hey, I got to go.’” He’d step away and come right back to it. “That’s why I say no excuses.”

As the founding National Director of the Compass Military Division, Todd built a network designed to serve active-duty service members, veterans, and their families to fill gaps he experienced early on. “Our own military folks don’t know anything about the VA loan and how it works,” he says. “You’re never taught about your benefits in the military.”

Todd says the mission is clear: make sure people understand their benefits, avoid costly missteps, and use tools like VA loans to build long-term stability beyond a single transaction. “The whole point of me creating this division was to teach listing agents and the sellers why the VA loan is the best loan out there,” he says.

But for Todd, serving this community goes beyond understanding loans or navigating transactions. It comes back to what he calls the “GAS” principle. “Give a shit. Care about people,” he says. “You can’t fake that.”

In the Navy, that meant knowing his people beyond the job, what mattered to them, what they had going on. Today, it means earning trust and, if something goes wrong, standing with your clients and your team. “If you work with people well,” Todd attests, “they’ll go to the ends of the earth for you.”

While roles may shift, he says, the responsibilities don’t. “The commissions don’t matter. The money will come. But it’s the relationships you build. That’s what’s most important to me,” he says. “Take care of your people.” ■

“If you work with people well, they’ll go to the ends of the earth for you.”



TODD ARMSTRONG and his husband JOHN HERNANDEZ, who is also a REALTOR

CHRISTOPHER
AYERS & JAMES
CRISTBROOK

he/him | he/him
TITLE DETAILS HERE

“Our kids have learned that a family is a **group of people who love each other and care about each other...** They don’t really look at the biological aspect of it,”

—James Cristbrook



BLENDING FAMILY

Through surrogacy and adoption, **Christopher Ayers** and **James Cristbrook** are trailblazing LGBTQ parents.

Several years ago, returning from a camping trip in Canada, Christopher Ayers and James Cristbrook pulled up to the U.S. border with their seven-year-old daughter in the front seat of their RV. At first, it felt routine. A familiar rhythm they have learned over years of traveling as a two-dad family: birth certificates and adoption paperwork ready to present with their passports.

Then the moment shifted. The officer leaned in, looked from one parent to the other, then to the child, and asked, “How do I know you’re not human trafficking?” Christopher recalls, still taken aback. “She looked at me and said, ‘Daddy, what does he mean?’ How do you explain that to a seven-year-old kid?”

James notes that moments like this stand out particularly because they aren’t the norm. “We’ve been very blessed,” James says when considering their access to supportive services and legal resources. “Our biggest concerns have been in situations where we were in front of people of authority,” Christopher adds, “because you didn’t know how they were going to react.”

These days, when people ask their kids who’s who in the family, James smiles at how they’ve turned it into a running joke. “They’ll say, ‘It’s complicated.’ And it is. They’re right. But it just kind of evolved that way,” he says. The Ayers-Cristbrook family came together over time through different paths: their daughter adopted after a long and difficult process; a son born through surrogacy in a state that, at the time, offered no legal framework; and older children from previous relationships who remain part of their family. “Our kids have learned that a family is a group of people who love each other and care about each other,” James says. “They don’t really look at the biological aspect of it.”

Their parenting journeys carry into how Christopher and James show up in their community. James has spent years working with the National Association of Realtors on fair housing and anti-discrimination and is now focused on creating a legal framework for surrogacy in Michigan, so other families don’t face the same uncertainty.

Their experiences also influence how they approach everyday life. Parents often comment on how much they

“Our biggest concerns have been in situations where we were **in front of people of authority...** because you didn’t know how they were going to react.”

—Christopher Ayers

participate at school, church and community events, in ways that may seem to others like going the extra mile. But Christopher says that level of engagement isn’t something they take for granted. “For us, it wasn’t just an option to have kids. We had to fight to show that we were worthy of having kids,” he says.

While Christopher and James speak frankly about the challenges, their message for others in the LGBTQ+ community considering starting a family is reassuring. “Don’t be afraid. Your community is here for you,” James says. They describe an outpouring of support, especially in the real estate community. At conferences, colleagues often volunteered to watch their daughter between sessions so Christopher and James could fully participate.

“Our realtor family couldn’t have embraced us more than they did,” James says. “Most of our chosen family has come from real estate,” Christopher adds. “They’ve lifted us up through all of this. They love our kids, they follow their stories, and they want to be part of their lives. It’s really beautiful.” ■

ELISA WIRKALA

she/her
BROKER
LAKE & COMPANY REAL ESTATE

"We talk about **our family**. You have a mama, you have an Abu (abuela) and grandpa, you have cousins... For her, that is just totally **normal**. She understands families aren't all the same,"

—Elisa Wirkala



PROUD SOLO MOM

Motherhood has expanded **Elisa Wirkala's** world in wondrous ways.

Before she became a mother, Elisa Wirkala spent several years riding motorcycles across continents, often alone and far from anything familiar. Out in the truly remote places, surrounded by open land and towering peaks, she says, "Those were the moments that I felt the most powerfully connected to our earth, and to something greater. The deep sense of awe in nature was the most inspiring and grounding feeling of my life."

With each new continent, she bought and sold bikes, each one with its own quirks. "I learned to change a tire in the blazing desert sun with a little soap, water, and elbow grease, and strip my bike down to locate that one little frayed wire," she says. "I gained the confidence needed as I went."

That mindset stayed with her as her life took a different turn. In her late 30s, while recovering from surgery on her own after a breakup, she found herself wondering, if she didn't take the next steps to become a parent, would she regret it? "I felt really strongly that I would," Elisa admits. Within weeks, she had her first appointment with a midwife. "I didn't try to figure out the end result," she says. "I just took the first little step on the path." Her daughter, River, was born in the summer of 2023.

Now, nearly three years in, Elisa describes the wonders of watching River grow. "Seeing her language skills explode in both English and Spanish," she describes, "her love of painting rainbows with her 'painty-fingers,' how she's developing her own humor and jokes, and how kind and gentle she is with people and animals."

Elisa says motherhood has shifted how she sees her work. She understands more clearly how a home supports a family's daily life. From layout to walkability, home features now carry real-world value. "I don't think I understood the weight of some of those, not in the way I do now," she says.

Their definition of family has expanded, too. River is growing up surrounded by different kinds of families: solo parents, LGBTQ+ households, and close-knit networks of friends who hold meaningful places in their circle. "We talk about our family. You have a mama, you have an Abu (abuela) and grandpa, you have cousins. For her, that is just totally normal. She understands families aren't all the same," Elisa says.

While the scale of Elisa's life today looks different, the spirit remains. Instead of traveling solo across continents, most of her days revolve around shared experiences closer to home – though River has already road-tripped across six countries alongside her. One weekend at their off-grid cabin on an island outside Seattle, River recently decided that bringing in the firewood was her job now. "I watched as she tenaciously struggled with each piece offirewood until she had a nice big stack next to the wood burning stove," Elisa says, "all the

"I spent so many years **exploring** and **adventuring**, but she's still the **best thing** I've ever done."

while sporting her rainbow unicorn slippers, little horns poking up from their fuzzy heads."

Elisa sees that same drive that once carried her across continents now showing up in smaller moments with her daughter, one determined step at a time. "It's been so beautiful and fulfilling," she says. "I spent so many years exploring and adventuring, but she's still the best thing I've ever done."■



changing HEARTS & MINDS

RODRIGO HENG-LEHTINEN HAS BECOME ONE OF THE MOST UNFLINCHING AND STRATEGIC VOICES IN TRANS ADVOCACY, shaped by personal experience and policy battles. His leadership roles as executive director of Advocates for Trans Equality (formerly the National Center for Transgender Equality) and now as senior vice president of public engagement at The Trevor Project, has placed him at the forefront of efforts pushing past symbolic inclusion to demand structural change. As a nonprofit partner to the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance, he has lent his thought leadership and voice at Alliance events to help advance an understanding of trans issues within the housing experience. Recently, he sat down for a conversation with Alliance Interim CEO **Mary Mancera**.



MARY
Welcome. We first connected on LinkedIn in 2021 as the Alliance was first starting out. You were at the National Center for Transgender Equality, and I saw your post on LinkedIn about a trans survey you had underway. I reached out, we had a conversation and the rest, as they say, is history. Since then, you have spoken at our Symposiums.

It has been very exciting to see the evolution of your career as a trans leader. Today, we're in a second Trump administration, our heads are spinning because of all the devastating impacts to the LGBTQ community through policy reversals, funding cuts and a rollback of protections. Before we go into that, let's talk about you and your journey.



RODRIGO
Thank you. I've always cared about social justice and making the world a better place. So I knew that I wanted to do something in the nonprofit sector. More than anything, I am

always motivated to do right by trans people. I'm a transgender man myself. I was raised as a girl, and then I transitioned to live every day as the man I've known myself to be.

I realized where I can make the biggest difference is on trans issues, simply because I happen to be trans and we are such a tiny, misunderstood minority. So often when I tell somebody that I'm a transgender man, they react with surprise and they will say things like, you're the first trans person I've ever met. So, I realized that when you're part of a tiny minority like this, you are often a person's first impression of that community. It's a lot of pressure, but it's also an opportunity to do some good activism.

I was executive director of two different trans groups: the National Center for Transgender Equality and Advocates for Trans Equality. Fast forward to 2026, I'm now senior vice president of public engagement with The Trevor Project, where I focus entirely on reducing stigma against LGBTQ+ youth, especially transgender youth. I'm honored to do work where I can focus every single day on changing hearts and minds.



MARY
Very important work in all three roles. Early last year, Advocates for Trans Equality hosted a national call at the outset of the second Trump term. You all held that space so admirably with such poise and grace. There was so much to be angry about. But your team exuded calm, courage and determination. How did you manage that with what was going on?



RODRIGO
Thank you. It means a lot to hear you say that. We must embody courage and determination. We can't simply throw our hands in the air and say this is happening, what a shame. We must take action. We must protect our young people.

The thing that gives me inspiration is the arc of history on LGBTQ+ rights. We are a small community and yet we have managed to change hearts and minds. We've had victories before. No one expected marriage equality to happen 50 years ago. And yet we managed to secure that victory. The way we did it was by sharing our

personal stories and continuing to introduce ourselves to friends, families and neighbors so that all these everyday people across the country could get to know us. It's hard work. It's scary work. We've done it before. We can do it again. That's our call to action right now. The fact that we are under attack means we must stand up and do something about it.



MARY
Rep. Sarah McBride said recently that the political attacks by the conservative right were so effective because trans people needed to do a better job of telling their stories. Do you agree with her that it was a political strategy for Trump's team to demonize trans people because most of middle America didn't know a trans person?



RODRIGO
Absolutely. Most everyday Americans don't think they know somebody who's trans. I phrase it as they don't "think" they know somebody who's trans because yeah, maybe they do

know somebody, and they just haven't disclosed it. I mean, to use myself as an example, I'm a transgender man, right? There are plenty of people I interact with in my daily life, in person, in my neighborhood. We know each other and they don't know that I'm trans. Because the thing is, I have transitioned. I live every day as Rodrigo. They know me as Rodrigo. End of story.

The way we can overcome stigma is by introducing ourselves as trans people to more of our neighbors. It might sound naive, but this has always worked on LGBTQ+ rights. It's called humanization and familiarization. Getting acquainted with a trans person or an LGBTQ+ person allows the public to realize, we're not some boogeyman under the bed. We're everyday people trying to go to work and provide for our families like anybody else.



MARY
Sarah McBride says we need to be having the hard conversations. But what does that mean? What else can the rest of the community – the other parts of the alphabet – contribute to that conversation?



RODRIGO
Allies speaking out on our behalf is enormously important, especially allies of trans people. But if you are not trans, vocally

supporting trans people is crucial for two reasons: One, for that hearts and minds aspect of changing the perspective of people who are not yet supportive of trans people. Secondly, for the safety and support of our younger LGBTQ+ people, who may not be so vocal and are scared to come out. Often, they need to see an adult in their life signal that it's a safe space. So, for non-trans people to talk to other non-trans people in support of trans equality is extremely persuasive and that includes LGBs.

In The Trevor Project's research, we have found that if a young LGBTQ+ person or questioning youth has at least one supportive adult in their life, their odds of attempting suicide can lower significantly, and in many instances, by 40% or more. Forty percent – that's extraordinary.



MARY
Tell us more about The Trevor Project because that organization does such important work.



RODRIGO
The Trevor Project is the leading organization of suicide prevention for LGBTQ+ young people. We run a 24/7 suicide crisis line for any LGBTQ+ young person ages 13 to 24, if they are struggling, or if they need somebody to talk to, if they're in crisis, they can call literally 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We never close.

For anyone interested in learning more about The Trevor Project's Pride campaign this year, or how to join our efforts this month, visit TheTrevorProject.org/Pride.

My work at The Trevor Project is to change the narrative about LGBTQ+ young people. You know, LGBTQ+ young people are really being targeted by some people who want to score points selfishly. So, my job is to show the public that these are real life people, not abstract concepts. These are real life people being hurt. And it's urgent that we turn that tide around.



MARY
Thank you for your service and partnership, Rodrigo. Soldier on my friend.



RODRIGO
Thank you so much, Mary. So good talking with you. ■

RODRIGO'S LIST ON WAYS TO GET INVOLVED LOCALLY



Submit a letter to your local community newspaper



Donate banned books to your local library



Start a reading club in your neighborhood or in your community of LGBT literature



Volunteer at your local LGBTQ Center



Host an LGBTQ Movie Night



Check out Equality Federation

how you SHOW UP MATTERS

By **Richard Woods** – Vice President
2027 National President Elect



Leadership is often framed as something reserved for titles, stages, and moments of crisis. But in truth, the kind of leadership that changes lives and industries happens in the everyday by all of us. It is found in the quiet, consistent actions rooted in strength, integrity, kindness, and visibility. For LGBTQ professionals in real estate and beyond, how you show up today matters. For us as a community and as real estate professionals.

Strength is not always loud. Sometimes it is the decision to show up authentically in spaces where doing so still carries risk. It is the agent who corrects a colleague's biased remark, the broker who ensures inclusive language in marketing, or the leader who refuses to compromise on fairness even when it's inconvenient. These moments may seem small, but they accumulate into a powerful force that reshapes culture. And each day, how we choose to show up says everything about what we stand for and who we are.

Integrity is the backbone of trust, our most valuable currency in real estate. It means advocating for clients equitably, ensuring no one is steered, excluded, or treated as "less than." It means honoring the

belief that homeownership is not just a transaction, but a pathway to stability, dignity, and wealth. When we show up with integrity, we elevate not only our own business, but the expectations of our entire profession. We also set the bar for those around us.

Kindness, too often underestimated, is a leadership strategy. It is how we build bridges in a time when division can feel easier. Kindness shows up in mentorship, in listening, in creating spaces where others feel seen and supported. For many LGBTQ individuals, especially younger generations navigating identity and financial uncertainty, how we show up can shape whether they feel encouraged or excluded.

And then there is visibility. Visibility matters because it signals possibility. When LGBTQ professionals are visible, openly, proudly, and professionally, they challenge outdated narratives and expand what leadership looks like. Visibility tells clients, colleagues, and communities: "We belong here." And when allies stand alongside us, that message grows stronger and reaches further.

Together, these everyday actions create momentum. They influence office culture, shape client experiences, and ultimately drive systemic change. Leadership is not a single act; it is a pattern of behavior.

How we show up every day defines that pattern.

Because in this moment, how you show up today doesn't just reflect who you are. It shapes who we become together as a community and as an industry. ■



SIMPLE WAYS YOU CAN LEAD

- Call out bias when you see it
- Advocate for your LGBTQ clients
- Be the first line of defense for fair housing protection for your clients since there is no active enforcement of HUD/fair housing protections.
- Come out to allies whenever possible
- Volunteer on your association committees
- Volunteer at Alliance events

2026
LGBTQ+ REAL ESTATE *report*



By
Tommie Wehrle
2026
National
President

TROUBLING FINDINGS FROM THE LATEST LGBTQ+ REAL ESTATE REPORT should serve as a wake-up call for everyone involved in housing, education, workforce development, and public policy. The findings suggest

that LGBTQ+ Gen Z Americans, nearly one-quarter of all adults under 30 according to Gallup, are entering adulthood expecting to fall behind their heterosexual peers in career advancement, wealth creation, financial stability, and ultimately homeownership.

That should alarm all of us.

For generations, homeownership has been one of the primary engines of wealth creation in America. It is how families build equity, create financial security, pass assets to children, and stabilize future generations. But this report suggests many LGBTQ+ young adults increasingly view that pathway as less attainable or perhaps not attainable at all.

The reasons are deeply interconnected.

The survey found that 68.1% of respondents believe heterosexual Gen Z adults are more likely to reach senior leadership positions first, while 58.6% believe they will receive promotions sooner. Over half believe heterosexual individuals are more likely to build significant wealth over the next 20 years.

Why does that matter? Because wealth creation rarely happens in isolation. Career advancement drives earnings. Earnings drive savings. Savings create down payments. Homeownership creates equity. Equity creates generational wealth.

When one group consistently faces barriers at the front end of that equation, the long-term consequences compound over decades.

Perhaps the most revealing finding in the report involved family financial support. Nearly 80% of respondents believe heterosexual Gen Z adults are more likely to receive family assistance such as inheritance, down payment support, or financial safety nets.

Among LGBTQ+ respondents themselves, that figure skyrocketed to nearly 90%.

That single finding may explain much of the anticipated wealth divide ahead.

In today's housing market, family assistance increasingly determines who can buy a first home and who cannot. The median age of a first-time homebuyer has now climbed to 40. For many young buyers, especially in high-cost markets, parental help is no longer a luxury, it is the bridge into ownership.

If LGBTQ+ young adults are less likely to receive that support, they are not simply delayed in buying homes. They are delayed in entering the wealth-building system itself.

Equally concerning is how LGBTQ+ Gen Z adults now define the American Dream. For heterosexual young adults, homeownership ranked first alongside financial independence and marriage. But for LGBTQ+ young people, "living in a safe and supportive community" ranked first. Homeownership fell dramatically lower.

Think about that for a moment.

An entire generation of LGBTQ+ Americans is prioritizing safety before stability, acceptance before asset-building, and personal freedom before property ownership. That is not because ambition is lacking. It is because many still perceive discrimination, rejection, and unequal opportunity as defining realities shaping their future.

The implications extend far beyond the LGBTQ+ community.

America cannot afford for nearly 16 million Gen Z LGBTQ+ individuals to become economically sidelined. A weaker pathway to wealth creation means lower rates of homeownership, reduced economic mobility, diminished retirement security, and fewer opportunities to build stable multigenerational households.

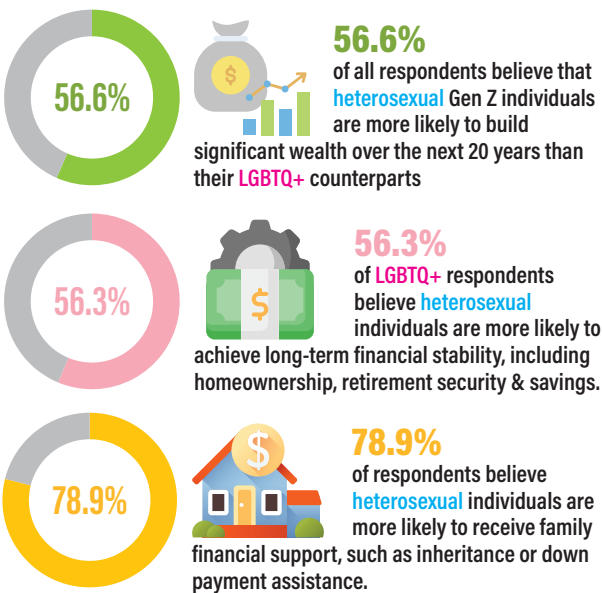
This is no longer simply a social issue. It is an economic issue, a housing issue, and a workforce issue.

If we want a stronger economy and a healthier housing market tomorrow, we must ensure that LGBTQ+ young adults are not locked out of opportunity today. ■

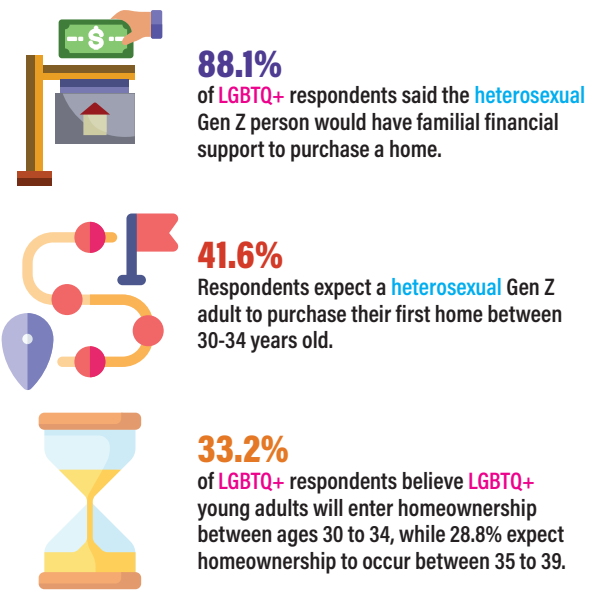
Perceptions of Financial Advantage:
Gen Z **Heterosexuals** vs **LGBTQ+**

Survey insights on perceived financial advantages of heterosexual individuals compared to LGBTQ+ individuals over the next 20 years.

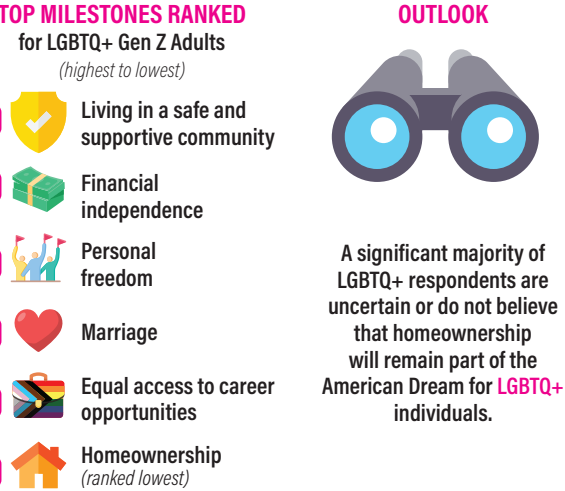
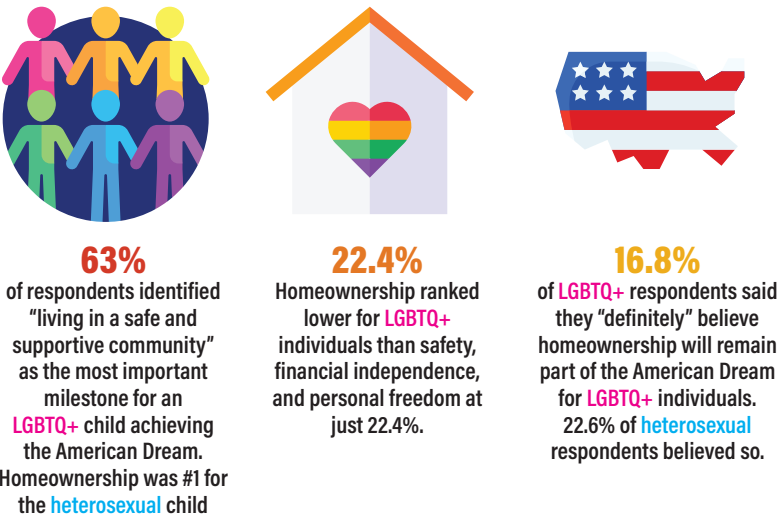
PERCEIVED FINANCIAL ADVANTAGES



HOMEOWNERSHIP & TIMING PERCEPTIONS



LGBTQ+ PRIORITIES & OUTLOOK ON THE AMERICAN DREAM



KEY TAKEAWAY
A majority across groups perceive that heterosexual individuals have greater financial advantages—whether in wealth building, financial stability, or receiving family support. LGBTQ+ respondents also prioritize safety, financial independence, and personal freedom over homeownership in defining the American Dream.

Source: 2026 LGBTQ+ Real Estate Report; published by the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance

MEMBERMOMENT *spotlight*

SPENCER EISEMAN

REALTOR

Tacoma, WA

Windermere Abode



What characteristic do you admire most in others?

I often find myself admiring outright kindness and selfless actions, whether it's from a stranger or someone I know well. It's always a much-needed glimpse of our shared humanity. I find it inspiring when individuals dedicate themselves to their community, not expecting anything in return but simply to improve the world!

What's the best advice you've ever received?

Sometimes doing the right thing results in burning a bridge.

What's one word your coworkers would use to describe you? Authentic.

If you could instantly master one skill, what would it be?

To be able to lucid dream or astral project (if that's even real, lol)

Early bird or night owl?

I'm most productive and in more of a creative flow state in the evenings. We're big gamers at our house, so this wouldn't surprise most.

What's one small thing that makes your day better?

I always feel immediately more positive after spending a few minutes filling out a daily gratitude journal. I take this journal in my backpack and like to fill out the daily entry either on a lunch break walk or to kick off my day of work at the office.

What's one app you can't live without?

Peloton App - I use their app for everything but spin rides lately. Currently loving indoor and outdoor runs + hikes with Jess King and Olivia Amato and yoga classes with Aditi Shah and Anna Greenberg.

Random fun fact about you that not many people know?

I was born with a solitary kidney; I didn't even know until my appendix was taken out in college.

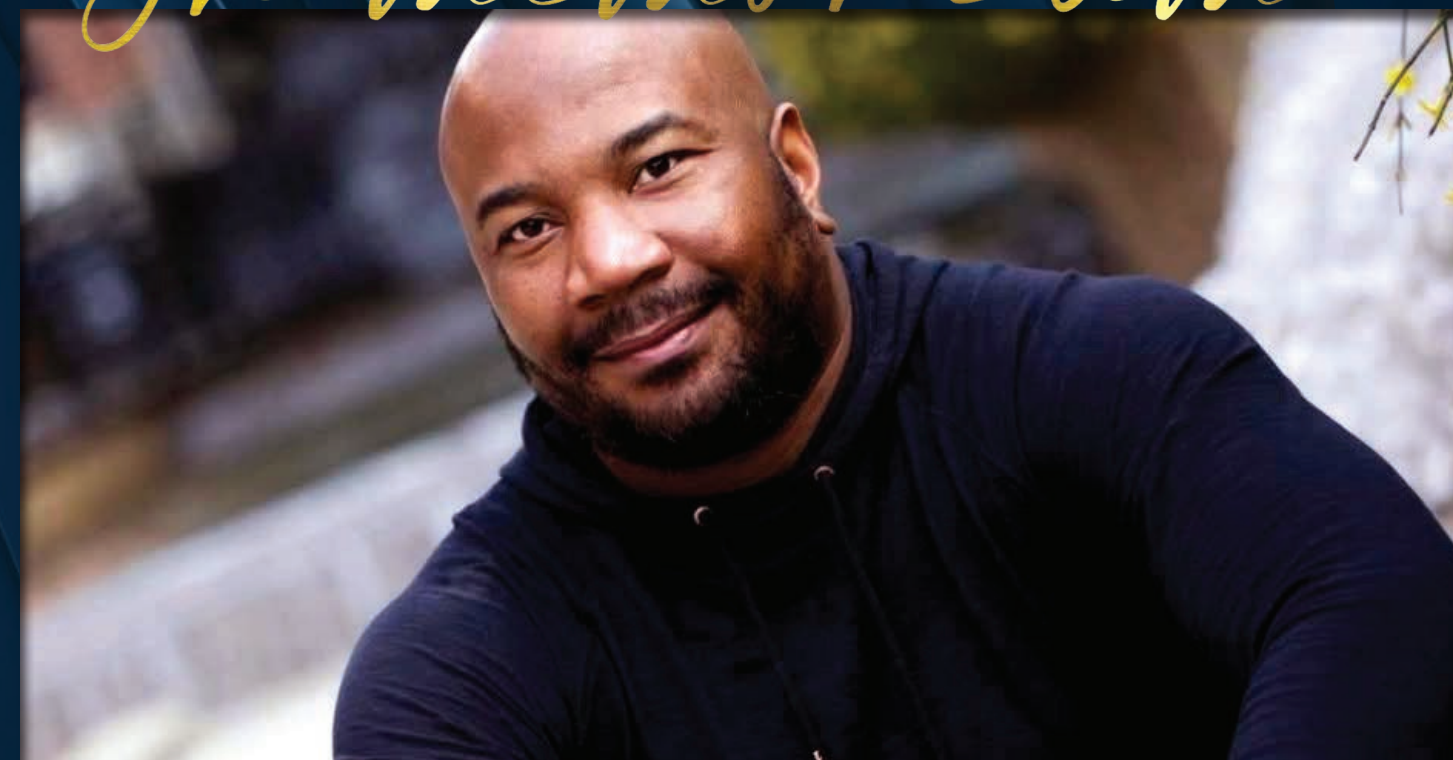
If you had unlimited resources, what passion project would you tackle?

I'd start an endangered animal sanctuary and do everything I could to help tackle the climate crisis.

What's something you're looking forward to this year?

An eventful Europe-to-Mediterranean adventure with my husband for our birthdays in the summer. ■

In memoriam...



OCTAVIUS HUMPHRIES

THE LGBTQ+ REAL ESTATE ALLIANCE CELEBRATES THE LIFE OF FORMER BOARD MEMBER AND FOUNDING MEMBER, OCTAVIUS HUMPHRIES.

As a founding member, Octavius' vision, passion, and unwavering dedication were instrumental in building the Alliance from the ground up. He cared deeply about creating spaces of belonging and advancement, championing both his LGBTQ+ and African American communities with a powerful, intersectional passion.

The legacy he leaves is measured not only in his professional achievements but in the profound personal impact he had on all who knew him. Octavius was a beacon of light, a loving father whose family was his world, and a caring, loyal friend who celebrated our joys and stood by us in challenge. His laugh was infectious, his counsel kind, and his presence a gift. We have lost a pioneer, a leader, and a radiant spirit far too soon. Our deepest sympathies and unwavering support go to his son, his husband, extended family, and his countless friends. We will honor his memory by continuing the vital work he began, carrying forward his passion with the same love and determination he showed every day.

**Rest in power, dear Octavius.
Your light will forever guide our way. ■**

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Caring. With Pride.

True care isn't convenient—it shows up every day. It challenges. It inspires.

We're continually driven by our purpose to inspire and build better lives and communities. And it's an honor to support others who are doing the same. That's why we're so happy to sponsor the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance. Thank you for the care you give to the LGBTQ+ community through joy, love, and the unrelenting pursuit of a better life for all of us.

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HOMEOWNERSHIP FOR ALL

NAR is proud to partner with the LGBTQ+ Real Estate Alliance. Together, we're committed to fostering belonging and helping open more doors to homeownership for every community.



LGBTQ+ REAL ESTATE

alliance



JOIN US for the 2026 LGBTQ+ Real Estate Conference in Chicago

THE LGBTQ+ REAL ESTATE CONFERENCE professionals have been waiting for is finally here. **Future Forward** brings together agents, brokers, and industry leaders for two powerful days of networking, education, and community — in the heart of one of America's great LGBTQ+ cities.

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