

# The Power of Partnership

## Connors Wealth Management and Marine Bank & Trust

By Ryan Randall

**A**s we move throughout our lives, the successes and growth we experience will be in part due to the connections and partnerships we make throughout the journey. In the business world, the same applies to companies, who are able to achieve more through relationships that help them achieve their goals. Such is the case for Connors Wealth Management and Marine Bank & Trust, two businesses working together to provide Brevard County with access to financial planning and investment management services, allowing their clients to handle all their financial needs in one convenient location.

Connors Wealth Management was launched in 2002, located in Founder and Wealth Advisor Justin Connors' hometown of Cocoa Beach. The company prides itself on being able to assist those it can help the most, utilizing value assessments to assure the best customer service. Connors Wealth Management partners with LPL, one of the largest broker dealers in the nation and Independent Financial Partners (IFP), an independent SEC-Registered investment advisory firm located in Tampa. Partnered with LPL Financial, IFP supports a broad network of independent financial advisors by providing operational and strategic resources.

Chartered in 1997 with \$242 million in assets, Marine Bank originated in Indian River County. Versatility is key for the company, providing the personal attention expected from

a community bank through local decisions and custom solutions, while also having large bank features, such as mobile banking, multiple surcharge-free ATMs and various cash management services.

### Finding Synergy

The journey to this partnership started in 2012, when Connors met Marine Bank & Trust CEO Bill Penney. The bank spent a year reviewing Connors Wealth Management to ensure it was a good fit, looking at chemistry and culture, as well as the business model being a good fit for Marine Bank's clients. Being a community bank, Marine Bank focused on how the partnership would benefit the area, something that has also always been a staple among Connors Wealth Management.

Once it became apparent the two businesses would work well together, Marine Bank & Trust presented Connors Wealth Management to its clients as a wealth management option and partner. As a fiduciary business partner, the companies worked at smart growth over the first three years. During that period, the amount of business Connors referred to Marine Bank from Brevard led to discussions about opening a branch on the Space Coast. This led to Marine Bank & Trust opening a Melbourne branch on Suntree Boulevard earlier this year, about two miles away from Connors' second location in Melbourne. ▶

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– Malak Hammad

## Developing Relationships

For Marine Bank & Trust, the collaboration is another example of its local bank mentality, listening to the Space Coast’s needs and providing service unseen in larger banks. The service is delivered by those accustomed to the area, such as Vice President Malak Hammad, an 11-year Brevard resident with extensive banking experience. Her experience allowed her to forge connections that led to three of her previous staff members joining her at the new Melbourne location. For Hammad, having a strong professional

relationship with her clients allows for honest financial conversations. This is facilitated by a strong staff that adheres to client concerns.

“How we treat our clients will distinguish us from other banks,” Hammad said. “I always say, ‘It’s opening night for every client.’ It really is; there are no second chances, so the team and I are very much in tune with the fact that the client in front of us is the most important, as finances are the most personal thing they can share with you.”

## Companies and Communities Thriving

As the partnership galvanized, the commitment to these relationships became a clear differentiator. With a dedication to provide local clients with the best service possible, this cultural norm of Marine Bank & Trust and Connors Wealth Management starts at the top.

“You must have leadership that encapsulates a round-the-clock commitment,”

Connors said. “On top of that, you have a dedication to the community, not just the relationships you serve.”

To serve the community out of the office, both companies are involved in local organizations. Connors Wealth Management has provided support to local art shows and cancer fundraisers, looking to make a difference in Brevard County. Hammad works with The Salvation Army, Children’s Hunger Project, the Brevard School Foundation, and currently is a board member with Be Kind Brevard and the Children’s Hunger Project.

Partnerships are recognized as being instrumental and essential in helping companies thrive. With detailed attention to not only current and potential clients in Brevard County, but also to the local organizations and events that help better the Space Coast, Connors Wealth Management and Marine Bank & Trust see a greater partnership with the community that empowers both to thrive. ♦