

Throughout PRIDE Month, CTI will feature profiles of local LGBTQ+ leaders to celebrate #LowellLGBTQExcellence by learning about their experiences, perspectives, and the wisdom they share in our local communities.

### **CTI Celebrates Local LGBTQ+ Leader of Excellence ~ ED BANKS**

Nominated by **Jenny Pickett**, Intake Manager, Child and Family Services, CTI

#### **Pride Month!**

Our very own Ed Banks, Mill City Mentor Program Coordinator, is a proud member and leader within the LGBTQ+ community. Ed was a Senior in High School when Matthew Shepard was brutally attacked and murdered. Even though Ed knew he was gay, that event made him more afraid to come out to be his true self. Ed played sports, had a girlfriend and worked hard to “pass”. It wasn’t until his 20s that Ed came out to his family, girlfriend and coworkers.

Now Ed and his husband live here in Lowell. Ed is very active in the Boston gay community, playing in the gay Beantown Softball league since 2002 and is even a Hall of Fame winner in 2016. As a team member, he and 600 other teams competed in Dallas, TX! This is his family of choice. This camaraderie, understanding and acceptance of his teammates and fellow Pride members support him daily.

For him, Pride Month is a month of acceptance. A month when people can be who they are. Like Black History Month, however, it shouldn’t be about a specific month in the calendar, which needs to be identified and filed away. Every day we should be looking to be accepting, supportive and open-minded.

Ed is the Leader of the Pride ERG here at CTI. He and his group have led Town Halls and meet on the 3rd Thursday of every month at noon. According to the Human Rights Campaign 2022 Municipal Equality Index, Lowell had the LOWEST rate in LGBTQ+ inclusion laws, policies and services of the ten municipalities evaluated. Through this lens, you can see how much remains to be done.

Ed feels that LGBTQ+ members need speak up! Use their voice individually as well as collectively. Be active! Look at our leaders and see what they are doing or not doing to make effective change. We need more LGBTQ+ community members in city government to make a difference. Homelessness severely impacts this community...40% of the homeless today identify as LGBTQ+.

Ed was able to reconcile with his opinionated Dad before he died. He says if he could reconnect with his Dad, then yes, thoughts can change, prejudice can be removed, and love can prevail. Ed shared, ***“Childhood abuse and trauma should not become your only history...We, as educators and mentors, move forward to help break the cycle and inspire those who need that inspiration, guidance and hope!”***

Thank you, Ed for being a champion in this vital cause.

#LowellLGBTQplusExcellence #PRIDE #CommunityLeader #Leadership #DElatCTI  
#PRIDEMonth2023 #Appreciation #Grateful #CTIPride #PrideMonth