

WHETHER SHE'S GUIDING CLIENTS TOWARD RETIREMENT OR LEADING INITIATIVES TO UPLIFT WOMEN IN FINANCE, **RACHEL R. COHEN** OF MORGAN STANLEY WEALTH MANAGEMENT STRIVES TO MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE.

Clients tell me, 'I feel like you care about me,' or 'I always know you're there for me,' or 'I can tell you love what you do.' That's the kind of feedback that tells me I'm doing something right."

Cohen has spent more than 30 years educating and advising clients as they plan for the future. She spent the first 18 years of her career with Merrill Lynch and then joined Morgan Stanley in 2009. Each of her titles with Morgan Stanley—Executive Director, Wealth Advisor, Alternative Investments Director, Senior Portfolio Management Director, Lending Specialist, and Senior Investment Management Consultant—speaks to a specific area of focus. Cohen describes herself in simpler terms: someone who helps solve problems and gives confidence to her clients.

"When I first started in this industry, the work was very transactional in nature," she says. "Now, it's much more based on relationships, which I love. Clients call on me to help solve problems having to do with anything that has a dollar sign attached to it. One of the things I like best about this business is that each client is different, and the business is always changing. You have to be willing to be flexible, adaptable, and willing to learn."

Cohen has also worked hard to set herself apart as "a connector" and a "uniter of people."

"When someone comes to me with an issue or a question that keeps them up at night, I'm going to do everything in my power to solve the issue in front of me," she says. "Someone might need financial advice involving a special-needs child, or they might need help finding the confidence to start a new business, or they might have a question pertaining to real estate or insurance."

"I believe you get what you give, so I see it as my responsibility to help in any way I can," she continues. "If someone comes to me with an issue that falls outside of my area of experience, I have built a network of people around the country I can turn to, including other advisors. It's very collaborative in that way."

Invested in Positive Change

by **BILL DONAHUE** | photos by **JODY ROBINSON**

Rachel R. Cohen learned early in life how to balance a fulfilling career with an enriching family life. Her mother was a strong, skilled, and self-sufficient professional who encouraged Cohen to follow her passion. When Cohen went to college, she majored in business and developed a keen interest in finance. She realized that no matter which career path she chose, she wanted to help other people, particularly other women.

"I wound up finding the perfect career," says Cohen, a financial professional with Morgan Stanley Wealth Management in West Conshohocken. "My work doesn't feel like work to me. I have a big heart, and I'm in a position to help people every day. You can't predict the markets, but you can always treat people with compassion and respect."

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A self-described lifelong learner, Cohen earned her M.B.A. in finance from Temple University’s Fox School of Business. She has also worked to acquire several prestigious designations and certifications to help her better serve clients: CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™, Chartered Retirement Planning Counselor, and Certified Divorce Financial Analyst®. In addition, she has received many honors and awards. From 2020 through 2023, she was named among *Forbes* America’s Wealth Advisors Best-In-State and *Forbes* Top Women Wealth Advisors Best-In-State. She also earned a Five Star Wealth Manager award in 2020, 2021, and 2022.

While wealth-management has traditionally been dominated by men, the number of female advisors has been steadily on the rise. In fact, Cohen has taken a lead role in bringing about change through her involvement in the Forum of Executive Women; recently helped launch and is Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Complex Women and Wealth Chapter; and served on the planning committee for the Morgan Stanley Women’s Summit. She also has been invited and participated in the Barron’s Advisor Women Summit. Such opportunities not only enable her to give back to others, but also serve to inspire her, broaden her network, and further expand her skill set.

Most recently, Cohen was asked to become a council member for Women in Wealth LIFT (Ladies in Finance Together), an advocacy and business development network of Morgan Stanley women dedicated to supporting peers to achieve business success and realize meaningful connections with their clients. The initiative is intended to elevate all women at the firm through coaching, networking, peer mentoring, and recruiting activities.

“It’s important for me to help the next generation of women advisors succeed,” she says. “Whether I’m helping a young advisor who’s trying to find her way or a client who’s looking to better understand their financial picture, education is a big part of what I do. On the client side, it can be overwhelming for people to learn about finance. We have a full suite of education tools and family-office resources, so we can offer a lot of support across all generations. The education goes both ways, because I learn from my clients, too.”

Ask Cohen to share the secret to her success, and she will likely cite her strong work ethic, attention to detail, resource-

fulness, creativity, and compassion. Ever humble, she’s also the first to admit she has had plenty of help. She credits her family, her mentors, and members of her professional network. Likewise, she has high praise for the team she has assembled: Casey Dearth, Assistant Vice President and Wealth Management Associate; Kathy Pezuoli, Registered Client Associate; and Tiffany Bechtel, Client Service Associate; as well as relationships with other advisors, and a planning team.

“It’s hard work to be the leader, and it’s important to have the right team to make sure clients are well cared for by people who reflect your values,” Cohen adds. “I’ve been very fortunate to have a strong team made up of good people who are excellent at what they do. Their contributions have been invaluable.”

While Cohen loves the career she has built, her family has always comes first. Her schedule often requires her to work long hours, but she prioritizes time with her husband Kipp, an attorney who specializes in mergers and acquisitions, and their two sons, 23-year-old Brandon and 21-year-old Ryan, both of whom work in finance.

“When I work with a client, I become a resource for them,” Cohen adds. “Sometimes they’re not sure of their goals but they know they need help moving forward, especially after a big change in their lives, like a divorce, death or other transitions. I get to know them as people first and then help them succeed. You have to be a resource consistently, and I really enjoy being in that position.”

“I am creative in the way I help people craft their futures,” she continues. “It’s a very entrepreneurial career, so I have unlimited ability to grow and expand my business. It’s a lot of freedom and flexibility, but also a lot of responsibility. My days are never boring, and the work of helping people plan for the future energizes me.”

Going forward, Cohen intends to continue growing her client base while maintaining the delicate balance between her professional and private life. She follows the same advice she often offers to her clients: work hard and plan ahead, but also take the time to enjoy life. She is looking forward to the possibility of learning a new language, taking more time to exercise, and fine-tuning her culinary skills. She might even sneak in the occasional round of golf.

“You have to have a happy balance between saving for the future and spending



time on yourself and your family,” she adds. “When I advise my clients, we talk about investments, retirement, and other financial issues, but that’s only part of the equation. We also talk about doing things that make them happy and having a good understanding of what’s important to a family’s future. To me, the two go hand in hand.” ■

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