

# Leaders in PRIDE



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## Meet BKD's 2021 PRIDE Award recipients, Michelle Brekken and Nickie Redick.

At BKD, our **PRIDE values**—passion, respect, integrity, discipline, and excellence—allow us to provide **Unmatched Client Service**®, support our teams, and create and sustain an uplifting culture that unifies us all. PRIDE is so valuable to our firm that we continue the tradition of rewarding one outstanding partner and employee each year for their commitment and exemplification of our values.

This year's PRIDE Award recipients, Partner Michelle Brekken and Director Nickie Redick, were consistently recognized for their tremendous client service and investment in their peers.

"Honoring Michelle and Nickie at this year's Leadership Conference was a true privilege. It's clear from their glowing nominations that they are well admired by their co-workers and have set a phenomenal example for us to follow," says BKD CEO Tom Watson.



Michelle with family at the 2021 BKD Leadership Conference in St. Louis.



Nickie with family at the 2021 BKD Leadership Conference in St. Louis.

### Disciplined innovation and true expertise

Those who nominated Michelle did so with an outpouring of appreciation. One colleague stated, "When Michelle is announced as the partner PRIDE Award winner this year, the response from everyone will be, 'Of course she is.'"

Michelle joined BKD in 1992 and served several years as the accounting and auditing (A&A) director in Springfield, Missouri, before becoming the regional A&A director for BKD's South Region, where she oversaw the practice across 13 offices in four states. As a key player in the firm's transition to paperless audits, Michelle led one office's pilot of the software and was essential to redesigning materiality methodology, which took a willingness to challenge the status quo.

That same innovation has continued throughout her career, driving her to support and improve new technologies and problem-solve potential audit and client issues. As of June 1, 2021, she began her new role with the National Office A&A team to help enhance the firm's audit quality control infrastructure.

"Competitive pressures require we never rest on our laurels and past success, so we must focus on ways to evolve to meet client needs," says Michelle. "While my new role is centered on our internal infrastructure, the guiding principle is strengthening ourselves appropriately so we can support our internal teams and our services to external clients while maintaining our strong business and professional standards practices."

Michelle has continued to build on her extensive industry knowledge throughout her career, which has positioned her as a key resource to many within the firm.

"I've seen how well she deals with potential auditing deficiencies and remains cognizant of our responsibility to the profession when discussing these issues. She has a vast knowledge of accounting and auditing standards and is a shining example of True Expertise in practice," says one colleague.

### Excellence in client service

Nickie, BKD's employee award recipient, is an accounting and auditing director based in Indianapolis, Indiana, with more than 15 years of experience providing audit, accounting, and consulting services for a variety of clients. She has taught at Camp BKD, a week-long program of technical training and immersion into BKD culture for new personnel, and was an office ambassador for the SKY initiative. She is a founding member of Executive Women in Finance and was a finalist for the 2020 and 2021 Indy's Best and Brightest awards in accounting.

With a strong foundation instilled from her parents of striving to give her best to each task at hand, Nickie is recognized as a lifelong learner who aims to find the best solution for her clients. For any question posed to her by a client, she will have the answer or she'll tap into the right resources to find it promptly—and then internalize the experience for future use. She is regarded as a true leader when it comes to helping clients improve their processes, and an excellent role model on interacting with clients with professionalism, expertise, and authenticity.

"I've seen firsthand how much Nickie's clients love her," says one BKDer. "She has such a unique ability to connect with them and notices every important detail. Her passion for clients and their successes is always evident."

Nickie's passion and determination are also evident to her family, as one of the greatest moments of her career was the day her daughter Addison was asked to dress like her hero at school—and immediately knew she wanted to dress up as her mom.

"She proudly wore business attire and her mom's BKD name tag to work," says Nickie. "My parents taught me to work hard, win and lose graciously, and take value in everything I do. This foundation ties in with our PRIDE values, and it's a foundation I hope to give to my daughters."

### Honesty, reliability, and mentorship

Michelle's record of formal and informal mentorship and coaching spans more than 16 years, and those who regard Michelle as a mentor are quick to commend her time and willingness to explain issues, answer questions, and find solutions. She's also a tremendous asset beyond educational opportunities. When one Springfield employee was scheduled on a Houston client, Michelle took the employee to dinner and showed her around the Houston area so she didn't feel lost. Later, when that same BKDer was considering a move from Springfield, she contacted Michelle for guidance. Michelle then reached out to every managing partner to get an idea of where the employee would have the most success.

"Michelle was instrumental in my move to Dallas. She helped me form new relationships and offered unparalleled support through career challenges. When I came back from maternity leave, she helped me find the balance between career and home life. She's been a cheerleader throughout my entire BKD career," she says.

Even those who don't work with Michelle often can point to many ways she lives the PRIDE. "Michelle isn't in my practice unit or region and I don't work with her daily, yet she's taken the time to mentor me during my career and has always made me feel like my growth and challenges matter," says one colleague.

One of the greatest lessons Michelle has learned as a mentor is that creating opportunities for people is just as important as giving them space to grow on their own and learn from others.

"Letting go is hard, but it's an important part of being a mentor," she says.

Similarly, those who work with Nickie are grateful for her dedication to BKD's people in addition to balancing client work, networking events, and family. She's maintained a team-first approach and consistently finds challenges and opportunities for peers to fine-tune their skills and focus on growth and development.

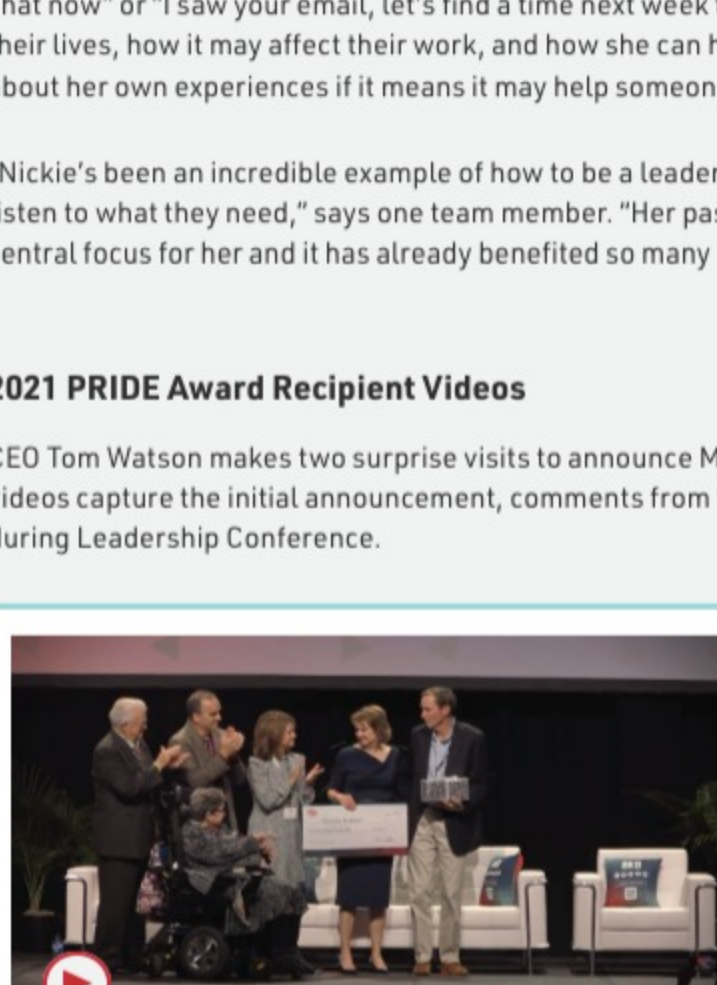
"I always make sure I'm keeping what's best for people long-term in mind," says Nickie. "I look at what's best for each individual regardless of whether that's best or easy for me. It's important to let each person define their own success and do what you can to support that success along the way."

Anyone who has reached out to Nickie, even for work-life balance advice, knows she'll promptly respond with either "Let's chat now" or "I saw your email, let's find a time next week to talk about it." She truly cares about what people have going on in their lives, how it may affect their work, and how she can help them find their way through. She's also always open to talking about her own experiences if it means it may help someone else.

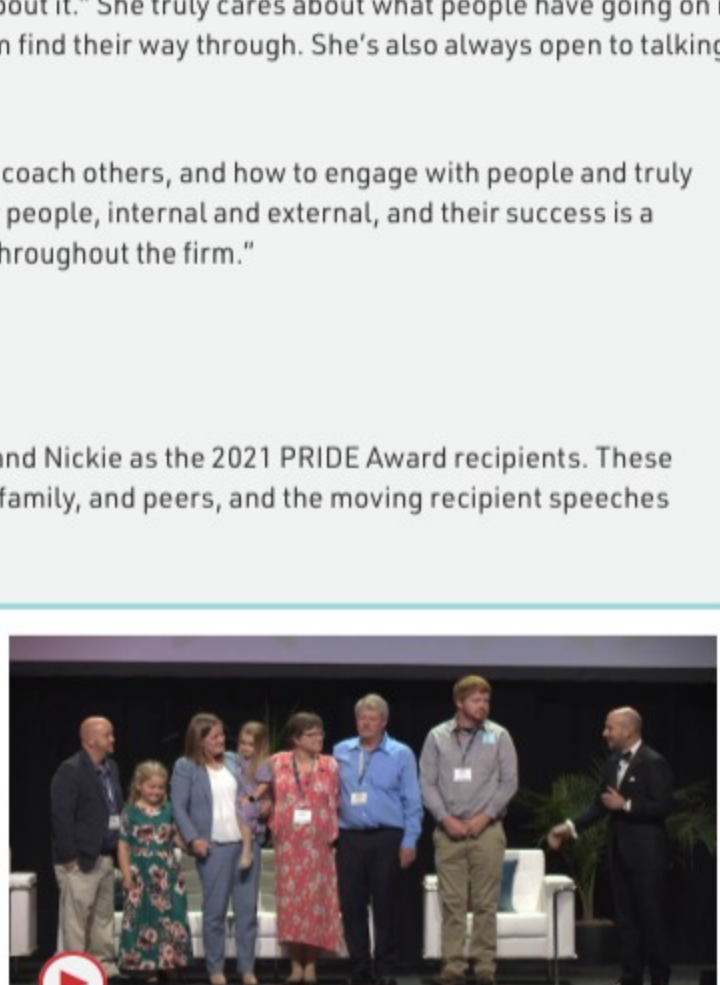
"Nickie's been an incredible example of how to be a leader, how to coach others, and how to engage with people and truly listen to what they need," says one team member. "Her passion for people, internal and external, and their success is a central focus for her and it has already benefited so many people throughout the firm."

### 2021 PRIDE Award Recipient Videos

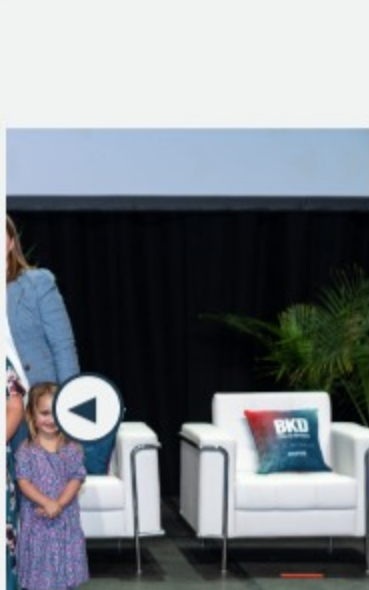
CEO Tom Watson makes two surprise visits to announce Michelle and Nickie as the 2021 PRIDE Award recipients. These videos capture the initial announcement, comments from friends, family, and peers, and the moving recipient speeches during Leadership Conference.



Michelle Brekken - 2021 Partner PRIDE Award Winner



Nickie Redick - 2021 Employee PRIDE Award Winner



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Do you know a BKDer with admirable community involvement, interesting hobbies, exciting accomplishments, or a unique story? We want to hear all about it! For more information or to submit, contact [bkdlife@bkd.com](mailto:bkdlife@bkd.com).