

Jodi Ristau

Certified Financial Planner

Financial Advisor, The Drosner Phillips Ristau Group – Managing Director

Member since August, 2018



Playing the role of the Mother Abbess, Jodi Ristau sang “Climb Ev’ry Mountain” in Brookfield Central High School’s production of “The Sound of Music.” That she had even auditioned for the role was a fluke. Then there is what turned out to be the prescient message of the lyrics—“Climb every mountain, ford every stream, follow every rainbow, till you find your dream.”

Raised in the Bible Belt in Memphis, Tennessee, Jodi sang in church choirs and played piano from a young age, but it wasn’t until she was a high school sophomore that her gorgeous soprano voice was discovered.

“When I auditioned, which I did on a whim, the chorus teacher just looked at me and said, ‘Why are you not in choir?’ She saw something in me I hadn’t seen in myself.”

The teacher connected Jodi with a private voice instructor and singing became her passion. Upon graduation, however, Jodi was offered a full ride to the University of Memphis to study business. But once again, her teacher stepped in and encouraged her to follow every rainbow, as the song goes, and audition for the vocal music program at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire.

A full ride at Memphis or a modest scholarship for UW–Eau Claire?

“I chose Eau Claire, which just goes to show you that there are people who can pop into your life and completely change its trajectory.”

Jodi decided on a double major in music and business but felt that the business program wasn’t a good fit for her at the time.

“From my sophomore year on, it was just music and I loved it. I loved studying it. I learned so much about myself and all the transferable skills of vocal performance—being on stage, having a presence, all the things that help you be successful in any role in life.”

But in her senior year, Jodi had streams yet to ford. Music, always a beloved escape, had become agonizingly clinical, leading her to the realization that while it would remain a lifelong passion, music would not be her career.

After college, Jodi landed an administrative position in finance through a temp agency, then got her foot in the door at Baird. And finally, just like the song says, she had found her dream. She worked her way up from an entry-level job through various roles to senior leadership positions, attending night school part time to earn her MBA from Marquette University and securing a plethora of financial certifications, including certified financial planner, which she completed virtually during the pandemic.



In 26 years with Baird, Jodi's journey to her current role of CFP, Financial Advisor and Managing Director of the Drosner Phillips Ristau Group was arduous but gratifying.

"I've had a number of different roles and my path was filled with a lot of very hard work and having to prove myself, but I always had the support of amazing professional sponsors. Baird is incredible in that way," said Jodi, a recipient of the company's esteemed G. Frederick Kasten Jr. Supporting Cast Award in 2009.

Her current role is client-facing, a perfect fit for her expertise and her personality.

"What I enjoy most about my job is the people—the people that I work with as well as my clients. Helping clients meet their goals along their life's journey requires a close connection that is so special. Professional accomplishments without the people component just don't have meaning to me."



Baird's professional sponsorship afforded Jodi the opportunity to serve on a range of internal and civic boards. She is board president of Renaissance Theaterworks and actively involved in TEMPO, the largest professional women's group in Wisconsin, two organizations where she proudly champions women, diversity and underserved communities. Notably, Jodi co-chaired TEMPO's 17th Annual Leadership Event where her team quickly pivoted in the 11th hour after the presenter bowed out only to score Olympic gymnast Simone Biles.

When she's not working or studying for yet another license, Jodi enjoys exploring diverse cultures through world travel. She also loves being involved in the local community, something instilled by her parents.



"When I have free time, I tend to do things that have a community aspect to them. My parents absolutely taught me the value of giving back in a way that you're passionate about. They volunteered their entire lives and I saw that there is true meaning in what you do for others."

Along with its consistently balanced approach to issues and a respect for varying viewpoints, it was community engagement that drew Jodi to Rotary, where she serves as co-chair of the Member Engagement Committee and as a Johnson Park Committee member.

"Rotary's projects and commitment to the community is incredible and I love that. I'm really proud to be part of this organization."

Editor's Note: *Rotary People of Action is a bi-monthly series written by a group of Rotarians. This feature was written by Mary Bolich.*