

A portrait of Carol Butera, a woman with blonde hair and blue eyes, wearing a red blazer over a black top and a pearl necklace. She is smiling and standing in front of a background of blue and white flowers.

# Carol Butera

Executive  
Director  
**William G. &  
Marie Selby  
Foundation**

**T**here's a new Executive Director of the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation. They've tapped a local and respected non-profit executive who brings leadership experience and a collaborative spirit to the position. Carol Butera, former Vice President of Children First, assumes her position at the Foundation this month.

The two previous Executive Directors, Dr. Sarah Pappas and Debra Jacobs,

now President and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, leave a legacy that is not unnoticed by Carol. "These ladies are always professional. They are smart and good decision-makers. Like them, I respect the legacy of the Selby's and the importance of philanthropy. I am grateful that these women are willing to be mentors to me as I begin this journey."



**H**iring an Executive Director of a non-profit organization is a tedious task for its governance body especially for one that has awarded over \$120 million in grants to other non-profits and provided four-year college scholarships to over 5,000 students.

When the time arrived to appoint a new Executive Director of the William G. and Marie Selby Foundation, the Administrative Committee tapped a local and respected non-profit executive who brings leadership experience and a collaborative spirit to the position. Carol Butera, former Vice President of Children First, assumes her position at the Foundation this month.

“My career has given me the understanding of how human services can enrich lives. I learned the importance of education and how it helps to level the playing field. My job is to enrich the four-county area that we serve through education and non-profit infrastructure. I always wanted to work in human services to make a difference in people’s lives. I lived and worked in Haiti for three years and I saw what education does and how a little money makes the difference in lives. This experience also gave me the opportunity to see life in a much larger way and how the United States plays a major role in the lives of people all over the world,” Carol says.

The Foundation is named for Marie and William Selby. Marie grew up in Ohio camping and hiking along the Ohio River. William (Bill) had seen the beautiful west coast of Florida and fished its waters. After Marie and William married in 1908 in Ohio, they purchased seven acres of land bordered by Hudson Bayou and Sarasota Bay and built their house.

Even with their wealth, the Selby’s lived quietly and modestly. The year before his death, William established the William and Marie Selby Foundation in 1955. (Marie lived in the house until her death in 1971. Her will stated that the house and property become a botanical garden.)

The Selby Foundation funds two categories: grants to non-profits for capital projects and four-year undergraduate college scholarships to students. Residents and visitors alike see the legacy of the Selby’s in capital projects such as the Marie Selby Botanical Gardens, the YMCA Selby Aquatic Center, and the downtown Selby Public Library. But behind the scenes the Foundation funds infrastructure projects—roofs, equipment, building renovations, and software—to non-profit organizations whose mission relates to education, human services, arts, community projects, history, science, and the environment.

The Foundation also awards four-year undergraduate college scholarships to area students on a need basis. Carol notes that many “Selby Scholars” either remained or returned to the area after college. While almost all non-profits have ambitious fundraising campaigns throughout the year, the Foundation does no fundraising but rather relies on the financial resources that the Selby’s willed to the Foundation.

Philip Tavill, Chief Executive Officer of Children First, says, “In the 10 years I worked with Carol at Children First, I had the privilege to watch her passion for mission drive everything she did. In her work, Carol has toiled tirelessly to improve the lives of our community’s most vulnerable young children and families and, through her efforts, many have had tremendous success. Of course, Carol will always say,

‘It’s the team that did it all!’ Listener, storyteller, motivator, consoler, mentor, loyal friend...these are just a few of the ways her friends and colleagues would describe her. It is rare to meet someone like Carol, and for this opportunity, I am grateful.”


Carol identifies qualities that she possesses that have been instrumental in her career success such as being a good listener, thinking outside the box, working methodically, connecting people, and thinking strategically. Her contagious personality and knowledge of the community have long been recognized in the community.

The two previous Executive Directors, Dr. Sarah Pappas and Debra Jacobs, now President and CEO of The Patterson Foundation, leave a legacy that is not unnoticed by Carol. She says, “These ladies are always professional. They are smart and good decision-makers. Like them, I respect the legacy of the Selby’s and the importance of philanthropy. I am grateful that these women are willing to be mentors to me as I begin this journey.” She also recalls advice from Karin Gustafson, former CEO of the YMCA Foundation, who told her that being number one is important, but take time to be the best number two.


Carol says the Foundation is operating well and changes will be made as the community changes. As she works with other granting organizations, she’ll identify gaps in needs. Her responsibilities include assuring that the Board is informed of the Foundation’s financial condition, accounting to non-profit organizations by helping them become stronger through grants, and assisting students in locating mentors and retaining the Selby scholars. The staff consists of Carol, one full-time person, and a contract person who coordinates the scholarship program.

Carol was raised in Tucson, Arizona. Her mother worked and Carol describes her as a wonderful role model. Her father owned a real estate and insurance business where he worked until he was 93. Carol received her Bachelor’s degree in sociology from Northern Arizona University. After Carol earned a Master’s degree in Social Work from The Ohio State University, she became a crisis counselor and then Executive Director of a domestic violence shelter in Columbus where she and the Attorney General passed the first legislation in the nation that required some fees from driver licenses to fund domestic violence centers.

She worked at the Chamber of Commerce and was Executive Director of a central Ohio education foundation. After spending three years in Haiti—sometimes without electricity and water, she moved to Sarasota where she worked at the YMCA and Children First. She is married to psychiatrist Dr. Parlane Reid and they have a robust family of 10 children and 16 grandchildren. Carol’s mother and a Golden Retriever puppy named Tucker also live with the couple.

Away from work Carol boats, bikes, reads, plays jazz and ragtime piano (she was the pianist for a community church in Haiti), dines with her husband, and spends time with family. When asked about the reasons for her career success, Carol says, “It’s important to always be in the moment and never forget the big reason you are here—to impact lives and make a difference. And remember that change happens one person at a time—be a part of it.” 

 STORY: Carol Darling

 IMAGES: Evelyn England