



Renee Snyder

President and CEO
at Habitat for
Humanity Sarasota

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Habitat also operates ReStore, a retail store that sells slightly used furniture and building materials, that funds operating expenses so all donations are devoted toward new home construction. Overseeing this is President and CEO

Renee Snyder, a former banker who specialized in housing and community development who came on board in 2010.

She and her team are now in the midst of The Campaign for Hammock Place—a first for Sarasota and a first for Habitat—construct an entire neighborhood of 40 houses to offer affordable and permanent housing for 40 families and 100 children.

With a vision of a world where everyone has a decent place to live and a mission to partner with God and community to provide decent, affordable housing for people in need so they may build better lives for their families, Habitat for Humanity Sarasota fulfilled that vision and mission by completing 22 homes for 19 families in the year ending June 30, 2018. Building homes and selling them to qualified buyers with no interest results in monthly payments that their buyers can afford.

The 800 Habitat Sarasota volunteers—with 17,000 donated hours—along with potential homebuyers have built over 250 homes in the area since 1985. Habitat also operates ReStore, a retail store that sells slightly used furniture and building materials, that funds operating expenses so all donations are devoted toward new home construction. Overseeing this operation is President and CEO Renee Snyder, a former banker who specialized in housing and community development.

“My experience in the banking industry paved the way for my work at Habitat since I worked with the Community Re-development Agency (CRA). In Sarasota, there was a need for revitalization in the Laurel community. I was a consultant with the Venice Foundation (now the Gulf Coast Community Foundation). Funding made it possible to demolish neglected houses, build new homes and county waterlines with the County and the non-profit Laurel Civic Association. In 2010 I joined Habitat and we’re now in the midst of The Campaign for Hammock Place—a first for Sarasota and a first for Habitat—to construct an entire neighborhood of 40 houses to offer affordable and permanent housing for 40 families and 100 children,” Renee says. “We’ve been blessed with \$3 million through a partnership with The Kolter Group and the Community Foundation of Sarasota County. We have \$4 million of the \$7 million needed to transform families.”

Renee says her motivation stems from a desire to aid families to make Sarasota a better place to thrive and raise children. Her reward is the relief in the faces of families in their new home and the increased educational opportunities for children in Habitat homes. But her motivation is more personal, too. She says, “My father, who is one-half Cherokee, lived in extreme poverty with 12 siblings. He lived in what some people today may call a shack with dirt floors and no plumbing or electricity. He worked on a farm, went to high school, and served in the Korean War. My mother wondered why he didn’t take her to his house. He never complained. I said no one should have to live like that and have dedicated my career to elevating people out of sub-standard conditions.”

Lisa Krouse, Executive Vice President and Board member of FCCI Insurance Group, says, “Renee is one of those special people who seems to know how to get things done. In essence, she is a change-maker. FCCI has had a special relationship with Habitat, primarily due to the trust and confidence we have in the organization under Renee’s leadership. With the building of FCCI’s five homes, we have seen many facets of Renee’s strengths. We have come to appreciate that she is tough and decisive, caring and compassionate and, most important, never wavering from Habitat’s mission to provide decent, affordable housing for people in need so they may build better


lives for their families. There have been a few situations that have arisen during the ten years I have known Renee where she has taken on some pretty difficult issues. She handled them with grace and dignity and in a way that you want them to have been handled. I have an enormous amount of respect for Renee and what she has accomplished.”



Habitat has 14 administrative staff who oversee the application intake, service 170 mortgages, and operate the large retail enterprise. Another 22 employees work in the three ReStore facilities on one site. Funds raised through donations, foundations, and corporations are \$1.3 million and ReStore revenue is \$1.8 million. All donations are directed to new home construction since the ReStore—boutique & loft, furniture showroom, and home improvement outlet—revenue funds operating expenses. Renee’s goals are to complete Hammock Place in two and one-half years and acquire land to add to the five properties that Habitat already owns.

Homes at the gated, deed-restricted Hammock Place will have three or four bedrooms, two bathrooms, and a two-car garage in 1,200 to 1,400 square feet. Persons desiring a Habitat house should have a gross income that allows 30 percent to be applied to mortgage, taxes, and insurance. According to Habitat information, the applicant must need improved housing due to overburdened rent; overcrowded, unsafe, or substandard housing; two years of steady, verifiable income; have reasonably good credit; live or work in Sarasota County for at least 12 months; attend homeownership classes; complete 300 to 500 sweat equity hours; and save for closing costs. The cost of a house at Hammock Place will be about \$228,000. With \$57,000 down payment assistance, the monthly mortgage, taxes, and insurance will amount to about \$825 for 30 years. While she would like to serve more families, Renee admits that Habitat cannot serve minimum wage earners.

Local qualified loan officers certified through a testing program by Habitat for Humanity® in Americus, Georgia, review applications made to the Sarasota affiliate. Once the applicant is approved, has earned 100 hours of sweat equity on another Habitat house, and paid full deposit up to \$3,000 (one year of insurance, tax escrow, and closing costs), an offer is made to the applicant. Contrary to what is general belief, the applicant does not work solely on their own house. When two or three houses are 60-70 percent built, the house is offered to the applicant. Throughout the 12- to 18-month process, the mortgage holder and builder helps the homeowner.

Renee is southern, fair, steady, gritty, compassionate, and perseverant—her own words. She says, “I get it. I understand housing issues, but I do not understand ‘no or can’t do’. I rely on my faith and look at the positive. I live by the phrase love your neighbor.” From Kentucky, Renee was raised in a loving family with a sister and brother who still live in Kentucky as do her parents. She is a huge University of Kentucky and barbecue fan. She is married to William J. Snyder, her greatest supporter and personal assistant. They live on three acres and she enjoys spending time at home, interior decorating and design, and gardening.

Renee is committed to transforming lives through housing and achieves this with every shovel of dirt that begins a journey for a worthy family. 

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