

MARC BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE DEVISSE

His tanned skin and broad shoulders hint at the fact that he's a builder, but Marc Devisse has built so much more than houses in Southwest Florida.

His demeanor reveals a caring heart, and his can-do attitude inspires everyone around him. He dedicates funds, functionality and physical labor to projects that make our region a better place to live.

As the owner of Tri-Town Construction, Devisse utilizes his business as a conduit for community giving, funding children's charities, offering manpower for select projects and donating roofs and materials to causes such as Habitat for Humanity of Lee County.

"He wants his money and his energy to count for something," said Carolyn Rogers, vice president of development and communications for the Southwest Florida Community Foundation. "He doesn't do it for glory, he does it, I think, because he thinks it's the right thing to do."

Devisse met Rogers when he and his siblings established a fund at the community foundation. Since then, Rogers has become one of his greatest mentors.

"It's always been important to me to help people where I can," Devisse said.

Following his parents' separation, when he was 8 years old, Devisse moved with his mother to Naples from Chicago. At age 11, he moved to Punta Gorda with his father. After high school, he studied marketing and management at Florida Gulf Coast University, graduating in 2005. He jumped into the then-booming world of Southwest Florida development and earned his real estate license while working in construction.

As the real estate market declined in 2006, he took a risk and launched Tri-Town Construction. Operating out of a guest room in his house, he had a startup, a staff of three and a 6-month-old son named Dylan. A humble business strategy kept Tri-Town afloat throughout the turbulent recession years.

"We were starting with \$1,000 jobs and then we closed one at \$10,000," Devisse said. "It was exciting at the time, and we just grew from there."

He attributes much of his company's success to his decision to swap advertising investments for charitable ones. As a father, Devisse has a passion for children's charities, and expressed his philanthropic vision by initiating a fishing tournament. That inaugural fundraiser has since become an annual event,

Marc Devisse and his son Dylan, 10, at a construction site for Habitat for Humanity of Lee County



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raising up to \$15,000 a year for children's charities, including Liberty Youth Ranch and Valerie's House.

"My favorite story to tell about Marc happened during my initial interview with him," said Tri-Town executive vice president Brandie Dickerson. "He was ending the interview and the last thing he said was, 'I want to help kids, can you help me help kids?'"

"Right then and there, I knew I had found my work home," she said.

With Dickerson's help, Tri-Town expanded into its current 4,000-square-foot headquarters in Fort Myers.

I saw the future in him. He's inspiring, and motivating his peers to join him.

~ Carolyn Rogers, Southwest Florida Community Foundation

Devisse coaches basketball at the Bonita Springs YMCA and spends quality time with his son and other kids in the community. He brings his son to charity events and fundraisers, and urges other families to volunteer together.

"I am proud to say that we have helped kids at every turn, and that is a wonderful feeling," Dickerson said. "(Marc) is a good dad to his son and shows a commitment to his staff by allowing them the flexibility to put their families first."

While he and his employees do pro-bono work — such as re-roofing the Bonita Springs Historical Society's 1915 McSwain Home — he offers his staff time off to spend with their families.

Today, the Devisse Fund, with its focus on protecting at-risk children, animals and the environment, is firmly established at the Southwest Florida Community Foundation.

"I saw the future in him," Rogers said. "He and his generation are the ones we have been waiting for. He's getting in the game early, putting his skin into it and inspiring and motivating his peers to join him."

Dickerson agrees. "I think he inspires other young entrepreneurs around him to do more for others. He is very generous in the community and to those around him."

Devisse also helped launch the Bonita Kiwanis Young Professionals group, which has provided food for families in need, books for local schools and fitness initiatives for the health of the community.

"It was important to me that not only my siblings and I participate, but also our kids," he said. "The whole point for me was to not only volunteer and help, but to be able to spend time together as families — away from video games, phones and electronics."

Through Bonita Kiwanis, Devisse helped orchestrate multiple community beach cleanups. He finds it most rewarding to see children enjoying the time they spend helping the community and preserving the environment.



Marc Devisse takes his son Dylan on trips around the globe. Here they visit Central Park.

"Kids and the environment are really what drive me," he said. "I want to help with (causes) that really can't help themselves."

"We need strong leaders, and he is one," Rogers said of Devisse. "He and others like him in his generation of leadership are going to be the ones to create change, to help others, to remove barriers, to create an equitable society and to make Southwest Florida a great place to live for everyone." ❁

Habitat for Humanity

In addition to donating an average of four roofs each year to the cause, Marc Devisse and his employees at Tri-Town Construction work closely with Habitat for Humanity of Lee County.

When business was slow at Tri-Town, Devisse paid his remodeling experts and builders to volunteer with Habitat.

"Rather than having them sit at home unpaid, we paid them to work on

Habitat projects ... I really like that they require a buy-in from homeowners and offer a hand-up mentality," he said.