



Rebuilding New Orleans Started with Demolition, Cleanup – ‘Demo Diva’ Goes Beyond the Worksite

Quality of Life Summary

- Hurricane cleanup brings a fresh start for residents
- Demo Diva helps residents handle emotional stress of losing home
- Demo projects provide jobs for New Orleans homeless persons

Contractor to be honored at international CONEXPO-CON/AGG equipment exposition for making a significant difference for the community’s quality of life

By Mike Porcaro

Simone Bruni, the “diva” of The Demo Diva Demolition Company, knows firsthand that that one person committed to helping their hometown can improve everyone’s quality of life. Before rebuilding New Orleans could start following Hurricane Katrina in August 2005, there had to be demolition and cleanup: that’s where Bruni took the stage.

Bruni built the Demo Diva Company from scratch to respond to the need. In the process, she became not only a contractor, but a support system for some of her customers faced with the devastating loss of their homes. Along with the public service of demolition to make way for rebuilding, Bruni was also able to employ some of New Orleans’ homeless.

“It was an idea literally that hit the ground running after the storm,” Bruni said, reflecting on the time when the company began. Far from being a real-life diva (“prima donna” is how she refers to the term), part of Bruni’s incentive was to offer residents a trusted local company to stave off outsiders who were “price gouging” people in desperate need.



“Being a local, I got protective,” she remembers. It was the goal of Bruni, who lives in New Orleans’ Lakeview neighborhood, to help residents get back on their feet after Katrina and, in the process, improve quality of life.

Demolition: First Step to a New Beginning

Motivated by great personal faith, wonderfully supportive parents and, through the inspiration and example of entrepreneur Warren Buffett, Bruni steadily built a customer base by initially peppering distressed neighborhoods with business cards and yard signs to promote her upstart business. Using a combination of honesty and fairness to customers and with a great sense of restoring pride to the community, Demo Diva Demolition made its mark.

Bruni’s is a true believer in the role demolition plays in construction’s life-cycle. “Demolition can be a first step to a new beginning,” she says, explaining her theory. “We work with people who are changing their lives. We’re sort of the first responders in construction with demolition the initial step in the process.”

Bruni was overwhelmed with grief when her home was flooded by Katrina, but she saw that others’ needs were greater than her own. Her services fluidly extended beyond demolition to a mentor role for those dealing with the loss of, in some cases, the only place they’ve ever called home.



“There’s the emotional side of demolition. I am displaying the feminine side,” Bruni said. “I got the idea of painting the equipment pink about two years after the company began,” the owner said with pride. “We started with a grassroots marketing effort. The pink equipment was a way of setting ourselves apart, and it caught fire.”

Non-traditional Community Support from a Non-traditional Company

An integral part of the services of Demo Diva is architectural salvage. A city founded nearly 300 years ago, with its rich past, there is much in New Orleans that should be preserved because it is one of America’s most historical and unique cities. Salvage work is done with utmost thought and care. The company’s website says of its salvage work, “Our passion is New Orleans – past, present and future!”

Another type of salvaging fuels Bruni’s passion for the community. That’s through Demo Diva’s efforts to restore quality of life to residents of the greater New Orleans and Southern Mississippi areas. It’s why the company supports several community events and causes, including some that might be considered non-traditional.



There are countless initiatives the company has taken, like the Diva Brigade program through the New Orleans Mission, a homeless shelter for men, where Bruni gives Mission residents trying to piece their lives together the opportunity to work on various demolition projects.

Bruni also works with the youth in the community to help them build life skills. The company sponsors flag football with more than 400 girls from local public schools participating.

Bruni serves as a mentor during Lemonade Day, a learning program that teaches youth how to start, own and operate their own business using a lemonade stand. In 2012 she was selected as a mentor for an initiative of the New Orleans Saints quarterback Drew Brees’ organization: the Drew and Brittany Brees Foundation’s “Trust Your Crazy Ideas” entrepreneur challenge.

“Young people starting new lives, or entrepreneurs starting a new business – we’re there to help people to rebuild their lives,” Bruni said. “After all, I truly believe the best. There’s no time for negativity.”

For contributions to our quality of life, Demo Diva will be recognized at North America’s largest construction equipment trade show, CONEXPO-CON/AGG. A company representative and one guest will receive a free trip to the show in Las Vegas in March 2014.

At CONEXPO-CON/AGG, they will see all the innovative new equipment that will continue to support their work for better living brought to you by the men and women of the construction industries.

CONEXPO-CON/AGG is the international gathering place in North America for the construction industries. The event features exhibits of the latest technologies and innovations in equipment, products and services plus extensive industry-targeted education. The next CONEXPO-CON/AGG is March 4-8, 2014 at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, USA. More than 100,000 attendees are expected. For more information about CONEXPO-CON/AGG, visit www.conexpoconagg.com.

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The contractors in the stories here are going to Vegas, March 2014, for CONEXPO-CON/AGG at CONEXPO-CON/AGG’S expense. **Tell us about your project, or a project you know about.** If you know of a project that deserves recognition, please [fill out the online form](#) or send an email to Rich Jefferson (rjefferson@conexpoconagg.com) or Project Manager Mike Porcaro (mporcaro@conexpoconagg.com). If you prefer the phone, call Rich on his direct line at 414-298-4122.