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SIMONE BRUNI '89, PROSPEROUS IN PINK



By Mary Block Fonseca '56

Simone Bruni, a graduate of Ursuline's class of 1989, is "pretty in pink," but using this very feminine color in her business has helped Bruni become prosperous in pink. The color wasn't part of her life during the two years she tutored in the Desire Project immediately after graduation from Loyola. Nor did it become part of her daily environment during the 10 years she was involved in convention planning with a local company. It was shortly after Hurricane Katrina that pink became important in her life.

"When I saw that removal of their ruined properties was what my neighbors needed most," recalled Bruni, "I took the first steps into the demolition business."

She decided to call her company Demo Diva and used \$250 worth of hot pink car magnets, yard signs, and business cards to get started.

As a communications graduate of Loyola University, Bruni knew a good bit about marketing.

"I knew I had to do something to brand my business, and get it recognition in a male-dominated field," said Bruni. "Since at first I was marketing primarily to women, using the color pink was an easy decision."

In the beginning, Bruni obtained demolition contracts from homeowners and subcontracted the work to crews who also worked for other contractors. During the first two years her crews demolished two houses a day, every day. She was the company's only employee, so in addition to doing the paperwork, she had to check on her crews to make sure they were doing jobs correctly.

"Two years later, I decided I was in this business to stay, so I bought my first excavator and my dumpsters and had everything painted hot pink," she said.

The pink equipment is a wonderful advertisement for Bruni's business as people spot them all around town and know they could only belong to the Demo Diva. From the beginning, whenever the job underway permitted, Bruni hired men from the New Orleans Mission to work as construction laborers.

"We give them a pink Demo Diva tee shirt, hard hat and safety vest and they are so proud to be wearing them and doing something constructive," said Bruni.

"I started my business to help my community," she explained. "I had very little self confidence at first, but the community has given back to me by hiring Demo Diva. Now I am very confident that I'm where I belong."

Bruni says the lasting friendships, plus the refinement

and appreciation for tradition she acquired during her years at Ursuline, helps her as she meets people from every walk of life in her business. She is often asked to address organizations and uses these opportunities to network for her company. Recently she was asked to speak to a group from Japan who had come to New Orleans to learn how the city recovered from Katrina. They asked to meet an entrepreneur and Bruni was chosen to speak to them. Soon she will be going to Japan with a group of people from New Orleans on a reciprocal visit.



Though Demo Diva stills demolishes the occasional flooded-out home, the business has morphed into a multi-faceted company that does commercial demolition, architectural salvage, and site preparation. But now the work is done by Bruni's own crews.

"I have some employees who are very loyal and have been with me for several years," Bruni noted. She spends three days a week visiting job sites and uses the other



two for networking and growing her business. Her assistant handles obtaining permits and doing other paperwork necessary to start a demolition.

The company has already entered the Mississippi Gulf Coast market and hopes to eventually expand to other South Louisiana cities. Soon hot pink excavators and dumpsters may color Baton Rouge, Lafayette and other areas of the state. When they do, the community will know that the Demo Diva has arrived.

Remember the Ladies

Ursuline Academy held the 5th annual "Remember the Ladies" event during Women's History Month. The junior class transformed into modern and historical female figures influential to gaining equal rights. After preparing a research project and presentation, the students were required to impersonate not only in costume, but also by speaking to their parents, teachers and peers as their chosen subject. Students were judged on creativity, costumes and set design, overall knowledge of their figure's life, and on their understanding of the impact she had on her country or community. Through this interactive experience, students bring history to life while gaining appreciation for the amazing women who paved the way for young women today.

The Academy chose the name "Remember the Ladies" to memorialize the words of Abigail Adams, who wrote to her husband John Adams in 1776 to urge him to keep the rights of women in mind while the Founding Fathers were in the midst of establishing our country.



Junior Gabriella Leonovicz — decked out in a pink hard hat, pink shovel and logo t-shirt — chose Demo Diva and alumna Simone Bruni '89 as her inspiration for the project. Simone surprised Gabriella by stopping by "Remember the Ladies."

