



SIMONE BRUNI RECLAIMING OUR PAST



A native New Orleanian, Simone Bruni has a long-held passion for our city and the abundant beauty of our culture, history and nature. In her hospitality career, she was a natural at showcasing these treasures. Following Hurricane Katrina, she looked around at the devastation in her Lakeview neighborhood and sought to be a part of rebuilding our city.

While the flood waters receded, Simone slept on a friend's couch in Gonzales and volunteered at a nearby large temporary animal shelter nurturing abandoned pets. As soon as she could enter the city, she took bird seed and cat food to her old mud-covered neighborhood. She noticed an eerie, deafening silence. She observed packs of abandoned pets running around and feral cats on the roofs of flooded homes. These scared and hungry creatures touched a tender place in her heart. She knew she had to be part of the solution and immediately became involved with animal rescue crews. She witnessed the volunteerism of America blossom, and these small acts of kindness sparked a raging fire in her heart. While picking up the pieces of her own home and life, she found the faith, hope and resilience to help others literally pick up the pieces of their own lives. Her empathy for the needy creatures and their people evolved into creation of a business: **Demo Diva Demolition**.

With no construction experience and no family members in construction, Simone was compelled to help others who were as vulnerable as these abandoned animals. She began selling trust and hope. She approached people in her neighborhood with words they longed to hear: "Trust me to help you. I live here. Don't pay me until the job is done." Seventeen years later, Demo Diva is now a highly successful multi-million-dollar business. The iconic hot pink dumpsters and excavators have become a part of the New Orleans landscape.



Simone quickly realized that the demolition business is a salvage business. The historic beauty of New Orleans architecture needs to be delicately dismantled and repurposed. In 2015, she started her second business, Reclaimed Diva Millworks, milling coveted antique longleaf heart pine out of old New Orleans buildings to be made into custom traditional flooring, mantles, and stairs. Old-growth heart pine is over 300 years old and is no longer commercially available; real heart pine is always reclaimed. Simone's passion is to preserve the past by repurposing this historic wood, reclaiming our glory days one piece of wood at a time so that it may be enjoyed for generations to come.

One demolition led her to a yard where a tiny squirrel, barely a month old, ran onto her shoe as if begging for help. "Bucky" was bottle fed and lived in Simone's shirt and on her shoulder, inspiring her further to rescue animals. Since Simone is a licensed arborist, she often runs across animals in need of rehabilitation. She now serves as a pipeline for animals in need to a local Wildlife and Fisheries-certified rehabilitation specialist. Between all this, she found time to serve on Louisiana's SPCA board for five years and to participate in many other charitable causes.

Simone's parents' beloved kitten "Pumpkin" was found by the demolition crew under the slab of a house. Simone adores her four cats that were rescued from a Julia Street demolition. Nita Hemeter, a local Trap-Neuter-Release expert, is hired to go to sites before demolition to assure the safety of the animals. If you are lucky, you may see Simone out on the demo site with her adorable fluffy Mini Aussiedoodle aptly named "Dôcô," Portuguese for "sweet." Very sweet, indeed ... both of them!



RECLAIMED DIVA

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