



# Her Voice

Portrait of  
a Mother

*A Woman With Drive*  
**Ann Barnhart**

A Bold  
New Look  
*A Spring Makeover*

*featuring*

**Lori Waters**

Builder  
With Her  
Own 'Touch'



# Award-winning Builder **Lori Waters**



*Her eye for detail — the 'Lori touch' — has made Waters one of the most recognized builders in Polk County*

*By Michelle Jarla*

**L**ori Waters' house epitomizes her building philosophy. From the room that contains her beloved piano to the lanai, what she calls the "Lori touch" is seen in every detail. It's not, however, her dream home. She built and sold that a few years ago.

"That's the life of a builder," she says with a smile. She doesn't seem bothered she only lived in her "dream" for a short time. Perhaps it's because another one is in the works. She's designing the plans for it now, when she has time. Between a full-time construction business and raising a family, it's not always simple to make time for a dream.

"Sometimes, I feel there are not enough



Lori Waters plays table soccer with her husband, Glen, and their three sons.

hours in a day to do everything I want to do," she says. Nevertheless, from her long list of accolades to the love she so obviously receives from her family, it's apparent she finds time to balance her life as one of Polk County's most recognized builders with her role as wife and mother of four. It's a role she was destined to play.

Her father has been in the California construction business for decades. As a child, Lori often accompanied her father to his building sites. Those trips with her father are where she humorously admits she acquired a love for the smell of lumber.

"I know it sounds odd, but I love the smell of it. Maybe it's because it's comforting — it reminds



Lori and Glen discuss blueprints at a worksite.

me of those times."

Lori made those trips with her father until she moved away from home to attend Brigham Young

University in Utah, where she started a major in business and finance. Destiny, however, had other plans for the young student, and she admits it changed her life in a very good way.

"I was set up on a blind date with Glen. That led to another date, and two and a half months later, we got married." That was 21 years ago.

Originally from Florida, Glen convinced his new wife to move to Polk County. He worked for the Pepsi Corporation and Lori stayed home to take care of their growing

family. While she remained busy raising a daughter and three sons, she managed to stay close to the building industry.

"I worked out of the home. I got my real estate license and got

my feet wet in the business. But I realized I didn't like just selling houses. I liked all of it, and I wanted to build, not just sell. I decided building was for me."

At the beginning, it was going to be a hobby. Her goal was to build two or three homes. She didn't realize her passion for building would lead to so much more.

She earned her license and began working toward the goal. After she finished the third house and kept on building, she almost didn't realize the thing her children called "mom's hobby" was turning into something else. When the realization finally did hit, she decided to turn her pastime into a business. Classic Homes by Lori Inc. was created.

"In my first year, I had five homes done. And, it was overwhelming. I was a full-time mother with a new business. At one point, I decided it was either time to take it back to a hobby or have the business grow. That meant having a team. And, I couldn't think of anybody better on my team than my husband."

Glen agreed he was the



Lori has received numerous awards and honors in her profession, including Builder of the Year.

person for the job and started working with his wife.

"It has become a true partnership," Lori cheerfully says. With a sense of humor, she adds, "However, he's conveniently never learned how to keep the books. He does his work on the job site."

It's also where she loves to be, but she learned early on that owning a construction business meant more than building houses.

"I love the designing, I love the construction. I love the entire process of building - from putting the idea on paper to the actual building. But, to be a builder means running a business. You can't spend all of your time on-site. You have to keep up with the laws, handle finances and do all the other paperwork. It's all a part of a



Lori believes the biggest challenge for builders in Polk County has yet to come.

growing business.

"I've heard a few people say that they got into building but couldn't run a business. Thank goodness I've been able to run mine. And, we've done well."

Her company has built more than 100 homes since it started in 1995. She won Home of the Year in the first Parade of Homes she entered in 1996. In the years that followed, the accolades kept on

coming, and in 2001, she was named Builder of the Year by the Polk County Builders Association. In the same year, she was also named the association's president - a first for a woman.

She realizes the appointment was a big step for women who work in an industry dominated by men. But, she's never believed being a minority in the construction world was going to stop her from succeeding.

"I didn't think about the problems of being a woman and being a builder," she says. "I just started the business. I figured that I had to

***"I couldn't think of anybody better on my team than my husband."***