

BUSINESS

WEEK OF FEBRUARY 28-MARCH 5, 2008 A GUIDE TO THE GREATER FORT MYERS BUSINESS INDUSTRY

One foot at a time

The Snyderman family's signature is personal service

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The smell of new shoes fills the sales floor of Snyderman's Shoes Plaza in south Fort Myers, where feet of all dimensions come in search for their shoe soul mates. Owner Bob Snyderman may be found any day kneeling by a customer's foot to measure its length and width.

"We're the old fashioned sit and fit family shoe store," he said. "And that's the reason for our success."

Fort Myers resident David Bloodsworth extended his right foot towards Snyderman last Friday morning, to try on a pair of New Balance shoes.

"Comfort," Bloodsworth said, as to what he was looking for in a shoe.

His developmental disability makes it hard to find the right fit, he said. Bloodsworth had come there with his supportive living coach Cassandra Mitchell that day to find it.

"We come here because he needs supportive shoes, and they help get him the shoes he needs to be in," she said.

Snyderman said finding a shoe for any type of foot or lifestyle is a specialty. All under one roof, the Snyderman family owns New Balance of Fort Myers and

Snyderman's Shoes, which carries many other brands like Doc Martins, Crocs and Teva Sandals.

"We cover the whole gambit," he said.



FLORIDA WEEKLY PHOTO
Bob Snyderman fits a customer with a pair of New Balance shoes.

"We go from putting first shoes on a nine-month-old baby to fitting shoes for senior citizens."

He moved to Fort Myers in 1979, a 29-year-old newlywed, to continue the family business started by his father in Lakewood, N.J. in 1952. His brother had already moved here two years prior to start

a small children's shoe store. Snyderman said the family chose Florida because his parents retired here, but the West Coast didn't come highly recommended at that time.

"When we came here, the Florida sales rep said 'You have a great business in New Jersey,'" he said. "I can't see you coming down here. Fort Myers is a sleepy little town."

But they came anyway, and business started to boom in the 1970s. In 2002, Snyderman's came together all in one location, located at 1900 Trailwinds Drive, one block North of Crystal Drive and Highway 41. His nephew Rick Snyderman sold the Snyderman's shoe store in Naples (which he'd run for 20 years), and came to work in Fort Myers. Bob and his wife Laury said things couldn't have worked out better.

"We basically grew up with this town and now every time I turn around and walk into the kids section there's one of these old time moms, now grandmas, bringing their babies in to be fit," he said. "It's something you don't see a whole lot of anymore in this world of big box stores and malls."

"As far as I know, I don't think there

SEE SHOE, B3 ►

WEEK at-a-glance



Komen Race for the Cure
And other networking social events in Greater Fort Myers. **B10&11** ►



Service first
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Women & Money
Financial advisor, and TV personality Suze Orman gives advise on retiring in style. **B9** ►

Architect Bruce Gora joins elite group Nominated to prestigious College of Fellows

Bruce Gora has been nominated to the American Institute of Architects College of Fellows by his peers in the AIA Florida Southwest Chapter. The announcement was made by the Board of Directors and officers of the local AIA Chapter.

According to the AIA, "The College of Fellows of the American Institute of Architects, founded in 1952, is composed of members of the Institute who are elected to fellowship by a jury of their peers. Fellowship is one of the highest honors the AIA can bestow upon a member. Elevation to fellowship not only recognizes the achievements of the architect as an indi-



Bruce Gora

vidual but also elevates before the public and the profession those architects who have made significant contributions to architecture and to society."

Gora, a founding principal in the firm Gora/McGahey Associates in Architecture, is a lifelong resident of Florida who has lived in Southwest Florida since 1977. In 1981, following four years with another local architecture firm, Gora opened his own firm. That firm became Gora/McGahey in 1985.

Throughout his 30-year career, Gora has remained cognizant of the importance of architecture to a community.

"We take the responsibility of our impact on the community's built environment very seriously. Every decision we make during the design process has a direct effect on the success of our clients," he said. "Design and planning decisions also have a lasting impact on the environment and our community's quality of life."

In 2006, Gora was recognized by the AIA Florida Southwest Chapter as the recipient of the W.R. Frizzell Medal of Honor. The award, presented to one outstanding architect each year, recognizes the contribution of that individual, "for distinguished service over a sustained period of time to the AIA Southwest Florida Chapter and the community, resulting in a profound impact on the architectural profession and the community." ■