

## California Family Business Awards 2018 WINNER

### THE MCCAFFREY GROUP: BUILDING ON TRADITION



CONTRIBUTED | The McCaffrey family (adults from left to right): Liz McCaffrey, Brent McCaffrey, Karen McCaffrey, Bob McCaffrey, Lauren Knowlton and Ash Knowlton, along with children.

#### David Castellon - STAFF WRITER

Though the McCaffrey Group, Inc., no longer bears the name of its founder, John Bonadelle, his influence still is felt within the Fresno-based homebuilding business.

"He started building homes for people in the Central Valley in 1950," said his daughter, Karen McCaffrey, now vice president of the company.

"Dad grew up on a farm in the Corcoran area, and he somehow made his way into construction and liked homebuilding," after a back injury prevented him from deploying overseas with his Army unit during World War II, and he was discharged, she recounted.

"He had done some construction work, and somebody asked him if he could build an addition to their home, and he did, and they asked him if he could build a garage, and he did," McCaffrey said of her father, who found the work so gratifying that he started buying lots and built homes on them that he later sold to families.

But it wasn't just business to him, she said.

"He always thought it was an honor and a privilege to provide the dream of home ownership."

#### From the ground up

As time went on, Bonadelle hired trade con-

tractors to help with the work and formalized his business, naming it "Bonadelle Homes."

Soon, he expanded from building individual homes to building subdivisions, some of the first located near what now are the Fresno State campus, Saint Agnes Medical Center and Manchester Center in Fresno, as well as near what later became the site of Valley Children's Hospital in Madera County.

"Those homes are still standing today," said McCaffrey, adding that she learned much of the family business because her father had her work there frequently when she was out of school, first answering phones as a child, and later working in each division of the company by the time she had went to college.

"When we'd go on vacation, a vacation was never complete without a visit to model homes" to see what other builders were doing, or to look at land that might be acquired in the future, Karen McCaffrey said.

#### The family way

Her brother and sister also went along, and they've found their own successes in the homebuilding industry, she added.

After college, Karen married Bob McCaffrey, who went on to a post-college football career playing one season for the Green Bay Packers.

Karen McCaffrey said that after football, her

father offered to teach his son-in-law and her the homebuilding business, and they agreed.

"Dad was a tremendous mentor."

In 1980, after having built at least 10,000 homes, Bonadelle allowed his daughter and son-in-law to acquire the business, on which they put the McCaffrey name.

For his part, Bonadelle seemed content to return to his roots, living on his farm — though his focus was on raising the exotic animals he had acquired — until his passing in 2000.

After acquiring the company, the family aspect of the McCaffrey Group expanded, with Bob McCaffrey, now the CEO, and his and Karen's son, Brent, serving as president.

Ash Knowlton, married to the McCaffreys' daughter Lauren, is vice president over construction, while Liz McCaffrey, Brent's wife, is vice president of compliance for McCaffrey Home Mortgage.

That division, offering mortgages to homebuyers, is a new venture for the business since the McCaffreys acquired it, along with McCaffrey Home Realty and a home design center.

#### Best is yet to come

Karen McCaffrey said the McCaffrey Group has built about 9,000 homes to date, with its most ambitious project now in the works.

"While my dad's legacy of commitment and

consistency lives on, it is the vision and leadership of the third generation that has led to the largest development in our history, Tesoro Viejo, a 1,600-acre, master-planned community in Madera County slated to debut this fall," Karen McCaffrey said in a written statement.

The community not only will include more than 5,100 new homes, but also businesses, shopping, a kindergarten-through-eighth-grade school, a Madera County fire station and a sheriff's substation, a resort-style community clubhouse, parks and trails and open spaces.

Karen credited the "third generation" of the family business, her son, Brent, and son-in-law, Ash, for spearheading this development.

"As a parent, it's just deeply gratifying to work with your son and daughter and son-in-law and daughter-in-law and watch them blossom and develop. It's deeply gratifying," she said.

And working with family has its benefits, including a particularly high level of trust in one another, McCaffrey said, adding "When it comes to construction, I defer to my son. That's his role."

But working with family also requires discipline, she said. "You need to be disciplined to be in a professional relationship when at work and reset your work boundaries.

"I think we try very hard to keep it professional and not go there."