

Chamber Connection

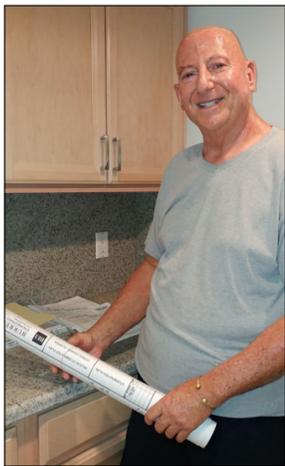
915 N. Suncoast Blvd., Crystal River, FL 34429 · 352-795-3149 · 106 W. Main St., Inverness, FL 34450 · 352-726-2801

Member Spotlight: Dennis Damato General Contractor Inc.

44 years of service
to Citrus County

Dennis Damato may no longer be a Citrus County commissioner, but that doesn't mean that he has ridden into the sunset. In fact, far from it! Dennis, now once again "private citizen" Dennis Damato, is active and BUSY with the contracting business that he has owned and operated in Citrus County for 44 years.

Chamber member Dennis Damato General Contractor Inc. has been specializing in new and renovated custom waterfront homes and commercial construction since Dennis moved to Florida in 1972 where, at 21 years old, he became one of the youngest people to receive a general contractor license in the State of Florida. For Dennis, construction is his passion and his career stretching over four decades has created lasting legacies in the community that help make Citrus County a quality environment in which to live and do business.



ABOVE: Dennis Damato stands in the kitchen of a home renovation project he is currently working on.

When Dennis arrived in Citrus County, it didn't take long for him to become active in the local community. In 1974, he, along with Herb Bell (Herb Bell Plumbing), Charles Lenz (Nature's Campground) and others were founding directors of the Homosassa

Springs Area Chamber of Commerce, and he served as its vice president. He has been a continuous Chamber member since that time. In 1997, Dennis received the Pioneer Award from the Homosassa Chamber for 25 years of outstanding service to the community. The Homosassa Chamber later merged into the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce in 2002.

Dennis has always been one to step up to serve his community to help make it a better place to live and work. He has long held an interest in environmental protection and community preservation and served on the Board of the Old Courthouse Museum in Inverness, including a term as president. His vision for Citrus County also steered him to accept an appointment to the City of Crystal River Community Redevelopment Agency as chair from 1988-2004, where he helped to guide the administration of more than \$3 million in federal grants for projects including piers, building facades and streetscapes.

When he became a county commissioner in 2004, he spearheaded many visionary projects such as the purchase of the county offices in Meadowcrest; the



Interchange Management Areas (IMA) for the new Suncoast Parkway extension; the County Road 491 overlay designed to provide infrastructure between State Road 44 and CR 486 to encourage centrally located planned economic development at the end of the Suncoast extension into Citrus County; and continued expansion and connection of the bike trail system through the county, including the master trail map and the Dunnellon Trail Bridge, to capitalize on recreational tourism and provide multimodal options. Even two very difficult and extended personal battles with cancer — plus another battle by his wife Pat — did not hinder or halt his vision.

It was this same sort of vision, coupled with his attention to the details needed to achieve that vision, that prompted the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce to award Dennis with a Lifetime Achievement Award in 2016. Whether others always agreed with his ideas or not, it was impossible not to recognize that he saw a Citrus County of the future, and understood the steps needed to steer it in that direction.

Today, Dennis continues to run Dennis Damato General Contractor Inc. with his partner and wife Pat to whom he has been married since 1975, and two very loyal local employees. No matter what project they may work on, their No. 1 insistence is quality. "Performance, quality second to none, true craftsmanship, reliability and value have been our tradition since 1972," he says. Notable commercial projects they have undertaken include the recent renovation and

repurposing of the building now housing Chamber member Greenhouse Bistro & Venue and renovations to the historic Crystal River train depot with the Crystal River Lions Club. And after 44 years in the business, Dennis is even getting the opportunity to repurpose projects that he originally constructed during his early years, such as the buildings that are part of his North East Third Street properties.

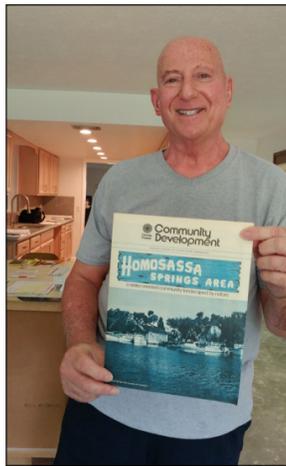
Currently, Dennis and Pat are working to expand North East Third Street Properties LLC, a business that they started in 2016 that specializes in commercial property rentals and that has provided homes for a number of local women-owned businesses.

If you are looking for something "cookie cutter" or simply of average quality, Damato is not your contractor. Each residential or commercial project that Dennis Damato General Contractor takes on is custom crafted to meet the exacting specifications of the client, and Dennis is "hands on" throughout the entire process.

As he says, "Custom building is what I do best. I believe that involves caring for your particular needs and being attentive to even the smallest details that make your project special. My commitment to excellence continually produces projects that we — and a long list of satisfied customers — are very proud of."



RIGHT: Dennis points to names of early members of the Homosassa Springs Chamber Board.



LEFT: Dennis with an original 1970s newsletter of the Homosassa Springs Area Chamber of Commerce.

RIGHT: Dennis Damato General Contractor handled the complete renovation of these historic buildings on NE Third Street in downtown Crystal River. The commercial buildings are now leased to local women-owned businesses.



Chamber Pillar Awards Gala this Friday!

If you've been procrastinating making your reservations for the Chamber Pillar Awards on April 28, your last chance to RSVP is Tuesday. Step out in "Classic Hollywood Glamour" this Friday evening at Black Diamond Ranch to honor the beneficent contributions of individuals, businesses and organizations to Citrus County that have added to the quality of life in our community over the past year. To RSVP, call Janet at 352-795-3149.

The Chamber thanks The Showstopper Presenting Sponsor Insight Credit Union along with Starring Role Sponsor Duke Energy, and Chamber Legacy members Citrus Memorial Hospital, CareerSource CLM, and the Citrus County Sheriff's Office FOCUS program for their support of the Pillar Awards.



Chamber events

- April 28 — Annual Chamber Pillar Awards
 - May 12 — Chamber Luncheon at Black Diamond Ranch; speaker Ken Lawson, Visit Florida; sponsor, CareerSource CLM
 - May 18 — Mixer at Sunflower Springs
 - June 9 — Chamber Luncheon at Citrus Hills, speaker TBA; sponsor, Superior Residences of Lecanto
- For more information on all Chamber events, call 352-795-3149 or go to www.CitrusCountyChamber.com.

Mission of the Citrus County Chamber of Commerce

The Citrus County Chamber of Commerce is an organization of businesses unified in efforts to advance the economic growth of the region, promote the interests of the business community, provide key leadership on key commerce issues and preserve the county's quality of life.

Chamber Legacy Partners

The Chamber recognizes our Legacy Partners that have made a special investment in the Chamber to support the programs and mission of the Chamber. For information on becoming a Legacy Partner, please contact the Chamber at 352-795-3149.



Visit Florida's Lawson is May luncheon speaker

Ken Lawson, president/CEO of Visit Florida, is the keynote speaker for the Chamber's May 12 luncheon at Black Diamond.

Visit Florida has been a target over funding by the State Legislature during this session. While the House has called for significant cuts, Gov. Rick Scott is urging the Legislature to increase



Ken Lawson

funding for the upcoming fiscal year. Lawson's appearance on May 12 comes a week after the close of the 2017 Legislative session and he will share Visit Florida's plans for the upcoming year.

The luncheon is sponsored by CareerSource CLM and is expected to be a sellout. To RSVP, call Janet at 352-795-3149.

'Chamber Report' on WYKE

Watch the weekly "Chamber Report" show on WYKE-TV to stay abreast of Chamber events, issues and member spotlights with host Josh Wooten. "Chamber Report" is broadcast on Tuesdays at 4:30 p.m. on Bright House Channel 16 and Channel 47 (digital antenna). It can also be accessed on Live Stream.com by searching for WYKE.



Alexandria Hampton

This week's program features Alexandria Hampton, public relations and communications coordinator for Seven Rivers Regional Medical Center, who talks with Josh Wooten about the many public outreach programs and classes that the hospital does for the community.

"Chamber Report" is your ticket to the many happenings in Citrus County!