

# HOME AGAIN, HOME AGAIN

The triple bottom-line benefit of builders giving back: helping those in need; unifying the team; and inspiring other colleagues to do more of the same.

By [John McManus](#) May 19, 2017

*"Home is the place where, when you have to go there, they have to take you in."*  
-- Robert Frost



*BUILDER Hearthstone Humanitarian Award honorees (center) Dave and Lori Sanson, with Hanley Wood vice chair emeritus Frank Anton (left) and Hearthstone CEO Mark Porath.*

This week's data is the latest patch in a series of affirming signs. Barring a traumatic blow--political turmoil, global risk, natural catastrophe--housing continues to make its way among the puts and takes of a messy, iffy real world, and is expected to keep doing that. Data shows single-family for-sale builders to be **both confident** and **busy putting starts into WIP**, not coming close to keeping pace with a surge of steady and growing demand.

Good. This is what we want.

We don't want things to be great right now for two reasons. One, is that there's still a lot to learn from business conditions now--when they're only good--before we go on to our next lessons. The other is simply this.

As much investment capacity as there is, and thirst for yield on that investment capacity, we don't have the real estate, operational, or process capacity for great yet.

We'll get there, maybe. But we're not there yet.

Great means profitable supply and prudent demand, two phenomena still clouded by uncertainty on both sides of the equation. Great means predictable labor capacity. Great means the smartest, most talented young people find their way into our associates ranks by attraction. Great means lot prices and fees that pencil reasonably with household, jobs, income, and family formation growth. Great means materials costs that can be modeled across time. Great means striking new, previously unimagined balances between what machines and technologies can do and what people are skilled to do. Great means people who can access the credit markets reliably and fairly to step into the American Dream of homeownership.

We're at good, though. Not great. And, let's just say that's a good thing.

One thing, though, that is great, and it's there whether times are good for builders or malevolent, is this: the giving back.

Recently, a roomful of 400 grown men and women welled with unrepentant tears to see and hear and take in the story of two from among their ranks, and the work they do well beyond the bounds of their organization's balance sheet. DeNova Homes principals [Dave and Lori Sanson's story](#)--a story of blood, and sweat, and time, and persistence, and money, and winning others into the cause vs. chronic or sudden homelessness, chronic domestic violence, chronic social woes that erode communities and families--speaks especially to the home builder and manufacturer and investor and lender communities. They're all in it.

In celebrating winners, each year, of the Hearthstone BUILDER Humanitarian Award, we don't even scratch the surface of the ways each part of that ecosystem of housing's key partners pour themselves into the mission and purpose that runs concurrent with each of his or her organizations' profit and loss statement.

The work the Sansons do for HomeAid Northern [California](#) stands out for who it helps, yes. Those people who find shelter, safety, a shot at life they otherwise would not have had were it not for the work of the Sansons. But giving back, as they say, is a gift that keeps on giving, and it doesn't stop with those in need who are the beneficiaries of the charitable initiatives. Too, those initiatives unify the giving organizations around a purpose, a focus that elevates people's sense of why they're doing what they're doing, and what it's all about.

Thirdly, giving back has a contagious effect. The gift of being in a position to lend time, effort, money, and leadership to programs that help those in need is not isolated to the very few in our business community. When word of these campaigns comes to light, others get the bug rather willingly and with energy that takes on a life of its own.