





RENT-TO-OWN FAMILIES

The Suttons

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**An industry
veteran passes
rent-to-own
passion along to the
next generation.
It's how he rolls.**
By Kristen Card

For years, Larry Sutton has been known among his rental-purchase colleagues as The Reverend of Rent-to-Own; today, he's also known by his three grandkids as Pop-Pop. But whether it's within his industry, his family or his life in-between, one thing no one will ever call Larry Sutton is apathetic. For Sutton, passion is the name of the game.

"If you can't be passionate about it, then don't do it," Sutton asserts. "My uncle [rent-to-own legend Norm "Slats" Slatton] and my mom both really instilled that into me, and that's the driving force behind my belief in my kids and everything they do. If you don't have a passion for it, then it's not worth doing. It's never about how smart you are—it's all about the passion."

Sutton's passion for rent-to-own has been growing since he was 15 when he, along with his mother and siblings, began helping Uncle Slats at what is today called Buddy's Home Furnishings. Having sold his Champion Rent-to-Own stores in 1997 and dabbling in retirement, Sutton's entrepreneurial spirit eventually led him to launch Tampa-based RNR in 2000 and license the concept the following year. Today, the company is about 60 stores strong, eight of them corporate-owned. Sutton is now the rent-to-own mentor for his sons Brent—RNR's director of training—and Adam, who recently merged his video production studio with Thuzi, a top Facebook-engagement firm.

"Both boys have a passion for this industry," Sutton professes. "They have been involved in the business since day one. Brent earned his aeronautical science degree and planned to fly for the U.S. Navy, but decided

to use his flight-instruction experience to help us with our training. Adam has been part of our marketing team since the start and still serves as a valued advisor. Last year, he won two Telly Awards—one of them for a national commercial he created for RNR."

With his sons' assistance, Sutton recently has embarked upon an ambitious company-expansion program, which he expects will just about double the number of RNR stores within the next five years. Additionally, the business is widening its custom-wheels focus to incorporate passenger and truck tires.

"Making things available to people who need it the most is what this industry's about and always has been about," Sutton affirms. "So this is a huge opportunity for us, with customers and franchisees alike."

While his business broadens, Sutton's family ties stay tight. He's close to his cousin Jamie Slatton, who now runs Buddy's. His daughters, Ashley and Alyson, while following other callings, still live nearby. But for Sutton, the tighter, the better—so it doesn't get much better than working, playing and occasionally jamming with his multi-talented, musical sons.

"My mom drove home the importance of family and what it means," Sutton says. "Working with my kids every day and being around them is just sheer pleasure. It's a real neat way of life to work with them side-by-side, to see them grow and pursue their passions—it's deeply fulfilling." ✧

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