

Cynthia White

BOARDROOM MAGAZINE'S DISTINGUISHED CLUB PRESIDENT FOR 2013

By Dave White, editor

Private Club Presidents of the Year major supporters: Kopplin & Kuebler

"We're humbled by the selection but couldn't be more proud. If we think about all that's been accomplished since purchase of this club by the membership in 2010, and road we've taken, it's been wonderful. I can't think of another private club president more deserving. Cynthia White certainly ranks among the top."

And with that, general manager and chief operating officer Dan Miles explained the feelings and emotions of members and staff at the announcement of *Cynthia White* president of Bonita Bay Club, as **BoardRoom magazine's Distinguished Club President for 2013**.

It certainly has been a bit of a roller coaster ride for the Bonita Bay, Florida club going through a rebirth. Members have poured about \$25 million into the club in the intervening years to bring it up to snuff. It is now also a **BoardRoom Distinguished Emerald Club**, emblematic of one of the top private clubs in the world.

"This award could not have been accomplished without the support I have received from a very hard working board, wonderful staff and supportive members," remarked the Distinguished President White.

"It is so rewarding to see all the improvements over the last three years culminating with this major project this year. Most importantly it has been wonderful to see the smiles on our members and employee faces and the increased utilization of our club. Members are proud to now use our facilities."

BoardRoom this year is recognizing 23 clubs as Private Club Presidents of the Year – 2013 for practicing what they preach – leadership for the betterment of their clubs...board presidents or chairs who have served as the volunteer leaders of their club. It's the sixth year for BoardRoom's top club presidents' program.

"Kurt and I are exceedingly happy to see the board presidents receive accolades for the work they do to the benefit of club members," explained Richard Kopplin, partner in Kopplin & Kuebler LLC with Kurt Kuebler. The firm is one of the major supporters of this BoardRoom endeavor.

"These are club presidents who 'get it', club presidents who give their clubs top performances," added Kuebler.

"BoardRoom's Club President of the Year program marked this industry's first effort to recognize club members who take of their time to serve as their club's president, and we're absolutely delighted to see this program continue to develop," Kopplin added.

"This is a very exciting story of a club, president and board that has had to work hard to conquer the challenges of taking over as an equity club," exclaimed BoardRoom publisher, John Fornaro.

"Cynthia White understood what had to be done and realized when it became best to rely on the talents, abilities and even intuition of others. The responsibility of a leader is to define reality...this intuitive president successfully fulfilled her role, but also had the ability to step back and survey the entire landscape of the club."

Nominations of the president candidates have been reviewed by BoardRoom's industry experts who have an understanding of the industry – the structure of the board of directors, and the role and responsibilities of the club's board of directors, which also clearly defines the role and responsibilities of the club's chief executive.

The turnover committee hired GM Dan Miles in 2010, and his leadership also has been the key to Bonita Bay's success as he launched an expansive program to restore the club's legendary amenities and services. He has recruited, hired and developed an outstanding team dedicated professionals and staff.

New standards brought about an immediate and tremendous elevation of quality and superior member services. Miles in working with his board is committed to his staff and standards, which together provide the members of Bonita Bay Club with great service in golf, fitness, tennis and hospitality. He meets regularly with the club president and board committees and communicates regularly with the board.

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*Distinguished
President*



With 1,953 members (in four different membership categories), Bonita Bay is the largest private club in southwest Florida. Bonita Bay Club, located between Naples and Fort Myers, FL, features three Arthur Hills-designed 18-hole golf courses, and another two Tom Fazio-designed courses at Bonita Bay Club Naples.

The club also boasts 18 Har-Tru tennis courses, a resort-style swim facility, a 10,000 square foot start-of-the-art fitness center and spa, and two clubhouses.

“Its all complemented by an outstanding staff, a great tradition of member camaraderie and environmental stewardship,” exclaimed GM Miles.

President White, as a member of the Bonita Bay Club’s turnover committee worked for over a year to develop and execute the purchase plan. Sixty-five percent of members voted positively to buy the club during a difficult time.

The turnover committee became the club’s first board until the club had its first annual meeting and elected a board. White was elected to the board with a three-year term, as the club’s vice president and head of the strategic planning committee.



The SPC developed a comprehensive strategic plan looking at a 10-year vision of opportunities and challenges from the perspective of facilities master planning, membership development and communication.

White stepped into president’s role a little bit early when the elected president person stepped down for health reasons. She was re-elected to a full two-year term by the board.

David Barry, formerly the club’s treasurer and who was instrumental in the turnover activities as well and coordinated the club’s financial package succeeded White in 2014.

“Cynthia White is the first female president I’ve worked with in my 29 years in the private club industry and the major difference I find is that she is a strong consensus builder,” explained GM Miles. “Cynthia has a higher level of concern to gather buy-in among the members and she also has earned the support of board.

“Sometime I’ve found that male leaders are less concerned if people agree with them. Cynthia has been much more concerned about what members think and their reaction to what has been happening and I think that has really paid off. As a result we’ve been much more diligent in communications with members, particularly in soliciting feedback etc.

“Members have never felt that the major project like we’ve had was something a renegade board was pushing through. They were very much tuned into it, the rationale behind it and how the financing for it was going to work. We received 87 percent approval to go ahead.”

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TOP PHOTO L-R: PETER SAPUTO, CYNTHIA WHITE, MAX LUMMIS, PETE WALLACE

**BOTTOM PHOTO BOARD OF DIRECTORS
BACK ROW L-R: DAN MILES, DAVID BARRY,
PETER SAPUTO, WILLIS BLACKWOOD,
RICHARD DELL, DENNIS WILKIE AND MAX
LUMMIS (NOT PICTURED: PETER JONES)**

**BOTTOM PHOTO FRONT ROW L-R: JUDY
HOWALD AND CYNTHIA WHITE**

2013 Top 23 Private Club Presidents of the Year

BoardRoom magazine, for the sixth year, is recognizing 23 club presidents and chairs as Private Club Presidents of the Year – 2013 for practicing what they preach – leadership for the betterment of their clubs.

“This kind of recognition for volunteers who give so much to the club has been long overdue, and since the first awards there’s been a steady growth in the nominations by club general managers and others in the private club industry,” exclaimed BoardRoom publisher John Fornaro.

Private club board presidents play a huge role in the professional operations of their club as a volunteer working diligently with their board of directors and general managers, striving for well informed, but not emotional decisions.

These outstanding presidents exemplify the focus on the leadership responsibilities, the accountability and the management of the board, providing a healthy respect for the club’s macro-management. They understand the importance of working, effectively and efficiently, with their volunteer boards and the dedication that’s required from everyone with whom they work.

These points are exemplified by the selection of this year’s *Distinguished Top President*, Cynthia White, president of Bonita Bay Club in Florida.

Systems alone do not insure a good board. Key elements include commitment, competence, diversity, collective decision making, openness, transparency, effective communication with management and the membership, fiscal responsibility, development and establishment of the club’s mission, vision and policy direction, especially through establishment of a strategic plan.

A successful board president draws upon the expertise of other board members, the club’s institutional memory and stewardship of the club’s resources. As well, the board president provides new board members and future president with information they need to perform effectively as board members.

Congratulations to these outstanding private club board presidents. BR

Ms. Cynthia White	Bonita Bay Club	Bonita Springs, FL
Mr. Richard Bennett	River Bend Golf and Country Club	Great Falls, VA
Mr. William H. Coquillette	The Union Club of Cleveland	Cleveland OH
Dr. Ken Chu	Mission Hills China	Shenzhen, CHINA
Mr. Carl F. Dill, Jr.	The Club at Mediterra	Naples, FL
Mr. Bob Dutlinger	Atlanta Athletic Club	Johns Creek, GA
Mr. William Durkin III	Greenwich Country Club	Greenwich, CT
Mr. Pat Flynn	Sand Point Country Club	Seattle, WA
Mr. Jacob R. Goldenberg	Oak Ridge Country Club	Hopkins, MN
Mr. Michael Goldman	St. Andrews Country Club	Boca Raton, FL
Ms. Dianne Jett	Las Vegas Country Club	Las Vegas, NV
Mr. Larry Kleinberg	Frenchman’s Creek Beach & Country Club	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Mr. E. Paul Legault	Le Club Laval-Sur-le-Lac	Laval, QC CANADA
Rear Admiral Thomas J. Lynch	Union Club of Philadelphia	Philadelphia, PA
Mr. Kevin Mackey	Upper Montclair Country Club	Clifton, NJ
Mr. Rob Norton	Colleton River Plantation Club	Bluffton, SC
Mr. Rick Powell	Hillcrest Country Club	Los Angeles, CA
Mr. Charles W. Schellhorn	The Kansas City Country Club	Mission Hills, KS
Mr. Fred Schulte	BallenIsles Country Club	Palm Beach Gardens, FL
Mr. Jeff Springer	Sanctuary Golf Club	Sanibel Island, FL
Mr. Al Thorell	Philadelphia Cricket Club	Philadelphia, PA
Mr. Jeffrey M. Weber	Lakewood Country Club	Rockville, MD
Mr. Paul Wutz	Desert Mountain Club	Scottsdale, AZ



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Expenditures became necessary because deferred maintenance had been allowed to develop before the turnover. So as part of purchase agreement the new membership approved a \$100 a month, 12-month capital assessment to address some of the high maintenance conditions. The membership has supported the continuation of the monthly capital assessment indefinitely to fund necessary and ongoing capital improvement needs. Another 12 million was approved this past summer as part of the club's "Vision 2013" improvement programming.

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Dan Miles

One of Cynthia's strengths has focused on allowing the general manager to run the club based on policies set by the board, and ensuring that the board also supports the general manager concept. She also has shown a great ability in communicating a vision to the members and pulling together strong member support. In other words, no micromanagement. During her term as vice-president and subsequently president a comprehensive communication strategy was successfully imple-

mented to convey the board's long-range vision for the club.

This program included professionally produced informational brochures, town-hall meetings and member-to-member discussions. Three years of improvements have focused on improving the golf courses and club facilities.

"Vision 2013" includes major modifications to the Bonita Bay Club's west clubhouse, construction of a new golf shop and cart storage building, and the first phase of a three-phase golf course irrigation system improvement that will provide the most efficient use of water and electricity by using the most sophisticated technology available today. Peacock + Lewis Architects of North Palm Beach is providing the planning and design services.

Cynthia White has also had a distinguished career in addition to her activities as a distinguished club president.

Originally from Massachusetts, she attended the University of Massachusetts and the Harvard Advanced Management Program. She also served as chief operating officer of Bell Atlantic/NYNEX Mobile during a prominent 32-year career in telecommunication, and then as president of a wireless start-up company that she later sold successfully.

Cynthia and husband Dick White have two children and three grandchildren. The Whites have been Bonita Bay Club members since 1995. Cynthia is an avid golfer, biker, and bridge player and loves to travel. She and her husband Dick were members of the Tuxedo Club in Tuxedo New York for 28 years. They now spend seven months a year in Bonita Bay and five months at their home in Rhode Island where they are also members of the Carnegie Abbey Club.

Oh yes, so many reasons, why Cynthia White is BoardRoom magazine's Distinguished Club President for 2013. **BR**