

The Sanctuary Golf Club receives rare Distinguished Clubs of America Award

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The readers of BoardRoom Magazine now know what many folks here on Sanibel have known for quite some time: The Sanctuary Golf Club is a very special place.

Last week, the publication - along with the Association of Private Clubs and Directors - announced that The Sanctuary was recognized as one of only two Distinguished Clubs of America - Emerald Club Award recipients out of more than 10,000 private clubs around the world eligible for the honor.

"It is a tremendous honor for the club and for its employees to receive such recognition," said Ken Kouril, General Manager and Chief Operating Officer of The Sanctuary. "The award signifies to us that, as a team, we are working hard every day to deliver world class service to our members and guests."

Founded last year, the Distinguished Clubs of America (DCA) was enacted as a way to honor the employees, departments and programs of private clubs that are "elevating the bar in their respective areas of expertise."

The DCA hand selected an independent panel of "industry experts" representing the various aspects of private club operations to review all of the award entries and nominations. Each of the submitted entries required supporting materials which reflected key elements critical for success in each of the award categories.

"The Sanctuary should be very proud; this club is incorporating ideas that are on the leading edge of private club thinking and management. The industry is typically slow to change," said Wayne Ostrander, Chairman of the DCA. "The Sanctuary received the Emerald Club's highest level of distinction because they are exceeding expectations in every category for which they submitted an award nomination."

In order to be eligible for the Emerald Club Award, the club had to submit and receive back 10 or more Awards of Distinction in the 17 award categories, which included: Club Governance, Club's Green Initiative, Clubhouse, Course, Management, Junior Golf Program, Locker Room, Membership Program, Menu, Merchandising, Regattas, Special Events, Swim/Pool Program, Spa/Fitness, Tennis Program, Weddings and Wine Program.

In addition, there was an open category for overall excellence.

According to Kouril, the club will be further recognized at the annual BoardRoom Magazine awards banquet, to be held in June 2010.

News of the Emerald Club Award comes on the heels of The Sanctuary receiving the coveted Platinum Club of America Award.



The Platinum Clubs of America are comprised of the 235 most highly regarded private clubs in the United States, as voted by the club managers and board presidents from more than 6,000 private clubs across the country. Every three years, the group surveys each club and asks them to complete two nominating forms: one from the club's manager and the other from either the club's owner or board president.

"Earning the recognition as a Platinum Club is notable for two main reasons: every club wants to believe that his or her club is the best in the area in which they reside and, more importantly, new members are always attracted to the best clubs," said John Sibbald, president of the Platinum Clubs of America. "To be selected by the club managers and club presidents of America's 6,000 private clubs as a Platinum Club is the ultimate recognition of club excellence - equivalent to the esteemed Mobil Five Star rating of hotels and resorts."

Kouril added that he and his fellow staff members were equally delighted to be honored among the most highly rated clubs in the U.S.

"We identified the Platinum Club Award as a major goal for the club and set up a program with the board of directors, employees and membership to embrace the idea and work toward achieving such an honor," he said. "It was a real team effort - everyone at the club contributed to this achievement."

Gerald Risch, board president at The Sanctuary, added, "This is a great way of recognizing what many of us already believed to be true. We love this island and we love this club. We believe that we offer something very unique and special, a place where you'll find your best friends."

For more information about The Sanctuary Golf Club, visit www.SanctuaryGC.net.

The Sanctuary Thriving Despite Rough Economy

This year, The Sanctuary Golf Club addressed the paradigm shift in club membership, taking a proactive stance to continue and assure its long-term success as a top-rated and award-winning enterprise.

Club president Gerald Risch led this initiative with the committees and members in evaluating several different approaches on membership offerings, current market value and the economic condition. The result was that The Sanctuary restructured their membership offerings by reducing the membership equity fee.

"Due to the club's strong balance sheet and the member's secure equity positions, The Sanctuary is able to initiate lower fees," said Risch. "Our new equity requirement is much more of an attractive opportunity to prospective members who realize island life and club life can be achieved on Sanibel and Captiva islands."

The new membership equity plan has already drawn positive reviews from club members, including Scot Congress, a longtime local businessman who recently joined The Sanctuary.

"The Sanctuary Club is such an incredible place to be," he said. "I made the decision to join this year because I know the club will be around for a long time and I would really like my children to be a part of this wonderful environment."