



PICTURED LEFT TO RIGHT

KURT KUEBLER, PARTNER KOPPLIN KUEBLER & WALLACE;  
PAUL BASQUIN, PRESIDENT BALLANTYNE COUNTRY CLUB  
JILL PHILMON, GM/COO BALLANTYNE COUNTRY CLUB  
HEATHER NAGLE, PRESIDENT BALLANTYNE COUNTRY CLUB



# HEATHER NAGLE & PAUL BASQUIN

RECOGNIZED AS BOARDROOM'S 2015 DISTINGUISHED CLUB PRESIDENTS

COVER STORY / BY DAVE WHITE

**SOMETIMES THE ORDINARY MAKES THE NEWS (DOG BITES MAN) ...SOMETIMES IT'S THE EXTRAORDINARY (MAN BITES DOG) ...THE ANOMALY. AND THAT'S THE STORY WITH BOARDROOM MAGAZINE'S PRIVATE CLUB PRESIDENTS OF THE YEAR FOR 2015.**

For the first time since BoardRoom magazine established this program of recognizing the private club industry's top private club presidents eight years ago, there are two double entry recipients selected as BoardRoom's Distinguished Presidents.

"It's an anomaly. It's an exceedingly different and enterprising situation and we're delighted to honor two clubs, each with two presidents, as our *Distinguished Presidents for 2015*," explained John Fornaro, BoardRoom magazine's publisher and CEO.

"In reviewing the more than 400 applications from clubs in several countries, we felt we had to recognize the presidents David Mackesey and Hank Salvo from the Diablo Country Clubs, near Danville, CA, and Heather Nagle and Paul Basquin from the Ballantyne Country Club in Charlotte, NC as our *BoardRoom Distinguished Private Club Presidents for 2015*.

"These presidents from both these clubs have made exceptional contributions to their clubs and their members' experiences, and it offered us an opportunity to do something different with our top private club presidents' program," Fornaro added.

"It certainly signifies another successful search for leaders who have contributed so much to their private clubs."

The accomplishments of Mackesey and Salvo at Diablo Country Club were featured in a BoardRoom cover story in our January/February issue. This issue we honor presidents Nagle and Basquin of Ballantyne Country Club.

"I've had the good fortune of working with Ballantyne Country Club for many years now, and can certainly confirm that much of the credit for the club's recent success goes to their presidents Heather Nagle and Paul Basquin," explained Kurt Kuebler of Kopplin Kuebler & Wallace, the private club consulting firm that supports Boardroom in its annual search for the industry's top presidents.

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Ballantyne Country Club faced a most challenging issue ...making the change from being a developer-owned club, to an equity club operated by a management company, to a club that made the decision to govern itself.

General manager Jill Philmon (also president of the Club Managers Association of American this year) joined the club in 2010 with the objective of completing a new master plan.

“The most challenging issue with a developer club is ‘buy in’ from the membership. With developer clubs, the member mentality is more of a resort/guest feel and less of that as an owner,” explained Philmon. “It takes a lot of education and information sharing to help

“To be honest, it’s been one of the most effective teams I’ve ever worked with. Had either of them had an ego, a self-driven agenda, or just not been willing to work as a team, it could have been disastrous for the club. They were so effective. We completed the project on time and on budget, and many of the members that voted against the plan have stated that they were wrong and are thrilled with the results. Our members trusted Heather and Paul and their leadership completely.”

Jill Philmon, GM/COO Ballantyne Country Club

members realize that investing in their club, especially if it’s a neighborhood club, members investing in themselves and their home value.

Also during a transition, there is a lot of miscommunication and not always a feeling of transparency between the membership and the board, especially when assessments are involved.” So at one point there was a lot of contention and mistrust, not an unlikely situation.

Fast forward to late 2013. The club was in the middle of many changes including efforts to get agreement on the club’s new strategic master plan. Heather Nagle assumed the presidency with the sole purpose of moving this plan along.

“President Nagle was extremely effective in open communication, and transparent with the membership in all areas of the plan including the club’s finances of the club. Her ideas to communicate with the membership were new and refreshing, creating a safe and trusting environment for the membership,” Philmon expressed.

Eighty-two percent of the members approved the plan...”an incredible accomplishment for President Nagle, whose term ended in February 2015. We came from a membership that didn’t feel the need to buy in, to a majority that feels great pride in the club.”

Enter President Paul Basquin...an insightful leader who understood how effective his predecessor has been in affecting change. He asked Nagle to stay on in an advisory position, to the great benefit of Ballantyne Country Club.

“To be honest, it’s been one of the most effective teams I’ve ever worked with. Had either of them had an ego, a self-driven agenda, or just not been willing to work as a team, it could have been disastrous for the club,” Philmon confided.

“They were so effective. We completed the project on time and on budget, and many of the members that voted against the plan have stated that they were wrong and are thrilled with the results. Our members trusted Heather and Paul and their leadership completely.”

The result? Ballantyne Country with its maintenance and capital improvement plan has during the past two years completed 99 percent of its projects, on time and on budget...changes made with an extremely high level of membership satisfaction and use.

“Not a single member has come up to me since completing work on the golf course and other upgrades to complain about having to invest in these improvements. That’s the true testament as to how well this process has been handled,” commented member Darren Gale.

“The improvements we’ve made had an immediate positive impact on the members. You could see the uplifted spirits and pride everyone has about their club. There’s a spring in their step and a smile on their faces as they step into the club,” added club member Clark Jackson.

“Our course is in premier shape and members are able to play daily on a tournament conditioned course,” Philmon added. “And as you can see by Mr. Jackson’s comments, our members are extremely proud of their club and appreciate the added amenities.”

Does this team concept of two presidents make any sense? To Kurt Kuebler yes, it does. “Crossover and duplicity of effort and continuity of focus sounds like a great thing to happen in a club,” he expounded.

“He’s right and I’m delighted that the club, our members and and me, as the club’s general manager, have benefited from the Nagle/Basquin team,” Philmon explained.

Presidents Nagle and Basquin have supported GM Jill Philmon strongly. “They never get involved in operations, or as we call it, the “peas and carrots”, but more importantly they support my involvement in CMAA, and they support the staff and their education programs.

“It’s not just CMAA they support but all of the educational allied associations. We have a large education budget but they don’t see that as an expense. They see the value in the education and consider it an asset. They also very much believe in educating themselves.

“Each year the board has a weekend retreat, out of town, to work on governance issues, goal setting and evaluating the job they do as a board. My staff and I are successful because we have a board that understands their role and allows us to do ours,” Philmon opined.

“They’ve had great boards and board members, but Heather so clearly bought into the strategic focus that the board needed to take, and followed so adeptly by Paul,” added Kuebler. It’s a pleasure to see how well things can go when there is exceptional collaboration and an outstanding ‘hand off’ of the baton from one term to the next.

“There are way too many clubs today where that doesn’t happen, resulting in a waste of time, effort and money. When it goes this well and this smoothly, it’s a model to consider!” Kuebler offered. **BR**

## Top Presidents from Worldwide Clubs

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

**BoardRoom magazine’s** outstanding private club presidents for 2015 exemplify the focus on the leadership responsibilities, the accountability and the management of the board, while providing a healthy respect for the club’s macromanagement.

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.

They practice what they preach – outstanding leadership to maintain best

practices and an extraordinary member experience for their members clubs.

These points are exemplified by the selection of **2015’s Distinguished Club Presidents, David Mackesey and Hank Salvo of Diablo Country Club** in Danville, CA, and **Heather Nagle and Paul Basquin**, a presidential duo at **Ballantyne Country Clubs** in Charlotte, NC.

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.

Successful board presidents draw upon the expertise of other board members, the club’s institutional memory and stewardship of the club’s resources. As well, board presidents provide new board members and future presidents with information they need to perform effectively as board members.

**Nominations for top board presidents for 2016 are open. Information can be found on BoardRoom website (boardroommagazine.com) or on page 49. Deadline for entries is Friday, November 17, 2016.**

**For further information, contact John Fornaro at (949)376-8889, ext. 2, or via email: johnf@apcd.com**

# Distinguished President Award a "Team Sport"

**"When Heather (Nagle) and I received BoardRoom's Distinguished Club Presidents for 2015 award, after absorbing the shock, it's really like accepting the MVP award in a team sport. Without the rest of the board, our committees, and Jill (GM Jill Philmon) and her staff, we would not have been in a position to be selected," enthused Ballantyne Country Club's President Paul Basquin.**

Basquin and Heather Nagle, who shared the presidential duties in 2015, are one of two sets of presidents Boardroom magazine has recognized as *Distinguished Club Presidents for 2015*.

Both Basquin and Nagle credit the club's solid committee structure as a key element in developing a successful \$7.4 million maintenance and capital improvement plan approved by 82 percent of the club's members, and which has been completed with 99 percent of the massive multi-facility and golf course plan delivered on time and within budget during 2015.

"Our committee structure is the foundation of Ballantyne's club governance. Our members are engaged and active, thoughtful and caring, and conscientious about their roles on our committees. They make the work of the Board relatively painless," added President Basquin.

In developing, approving, and executing the improvement plan, almost 100 club members were involved through various committees and task forces.

"This was a plan for the members, by the members," stressed President Nagle. "The board presented our *first* facility master plan in the fall of 2013... a culmination of five years of surveys, focus groups, planning meetings, etc.

"As many clubs unfortunately experience, it was not approved. In fact, we experienced some of our most *passionate* town hall meetings ever. The membership spoke and clearly the plan and cost did not resonate. The morale of the membership and staff was at an all-time low and were frustrated."

This was followed by another survey. "We needed to identify specifically what the membership was looking for and how much members were willing to contribute," Nagle added. That turned out to be 1) critical maintenance needs, a list that was expanding, 2) creating a reserve fund and 3) making reasonable improvements, a direct reflection of the club's latest survey.

"Implementation required a huge time commitment, hard work, patience and a positive outlook by everyone," said Nagle. In the middle of all this, the transition in roles happened, as Basquin succeeded Nagle.

"We had a great understanding of what our roles were during this time, because it was incredibly important for us to work together as a team. Paul has become an outstanding board president and great friend!" expressed Nagle.

Other changes have followed. “At the start of this year, we implemented a formal committee orientation... where all serving and new committee members are required to attend a session where we review industry trends, discuss the relative roles and responsibilities of the board and the committees, present the board’s key objectives for the upcoming year, and then break into groups to tour back of the house areas of the club that members don’t normally see,” Basquin explained.

“The value of this orientation is exemplified by the statement of a committee member, after touring the superintendent’s maintenance area, ‘I had no idea!’

“That was exactly the intention. This formal committee orientation will be an on-going annual event at Ballantyne Country Club,” Basquin alluded.

President Nagle was also a member of the search committee that hired Jill Philmon as the club’s general manager and COO. “We hired the CMAA’s very own president, and we’re extremely proud of her and her position with CMAA.

“We equally support her endeavor to encourage all of our employees to be the best that they can be through education. I believe an employee’s accomplishments to be an admirable reflection of any great manager. Jill and her staff have much to be proud of!

“As a new member-owned club, our committees were still developing when Jill came on board. Her support and knowledge has enabled the board to develop further our club governance and create a more effective and efficient committee structure. A system, which I believe to be one of our club’s greatest strengths,” Nagle expressed.

“With the changes we have made over the last 18 months we, as a club, seem to have a renewed spirit and optimism for the future,” President Basquin added. “That, combined with

the professionalism of Jill and her staff, and the support of our committees and the other board members, really makes my role as President pretty fun...”

Ballantyne Country Club celebrates its 20th anniversary this year and “we’ve come a long way and wouldn’t be where we are without all our former board and committee members,” commented Nagle.

“We have also had many wonderful opportunities to work with industry consultants over the last 6 years. All are members of CMAA – an organization that has been incredibly impactful to our club and helped shape where we are headed in the future.

“I also congratulate BoardRoom magazine on its 20th anniversary...your motto is one that every club board should remember – *‘Replace emotion with fact.’*” **BR**

