

Cranor Receives Prestigious Chair's Cup Award



Robert Lane, Kerkering Barberio & Co.; John M. Cranor, III, AFC Enterprises and Shaun Merriman, Gateway Bank of Southwest Florida.

John M. Cranor, III received the prestigious Chair's Cup Award at the 91st Annual Membership Meeting and Luncheon held October 13, 2011 hosted at the Ritz-Carlton, Sarasota.

Cranor, Board Chair of AFC Enterprises, received the 2011 Chair's Cup award sponsored by Kerkering, Barberio, & Co. for going "above and beyond the call of duty" as a Chamber volunteer.

"John has had a strategic and very positive impact on The Chamber, Sarasota County, and the region," said out-going Chamber Chair Rick Piccolo, President and CEO of the Sarasota Bradenton International Airport. "He has worked tirelessly to support our Chamber and is passionate about our community – always looking out for the greater good."

Presented by Shumaker, Loop and Kendrick, LLP, this year's Annual Meeting attracted more than 450 business and community leaders. The meeting focused on celebrating growing local business by featuring local area executives who shared their insights on what is propelling their business success.

Scott Dennis, news anchor for ABC 7, interviewed business leaders Lisa Krouse of FCCI Insurance Group, Norman Worthington of Star2Star Communications, LLC, and Rod Hershberger of PGT Industries. Local Small businesses were also highlighted in short video clips as they shared their story of how The Chamber has helped them grow their business and what it means to them to be a Chamber member.

During the event, Piccolo recognized the efforts of 300 dedicated Chamber volunteers who work alongside professional staff on two dozen councils, committees and task forces. Piccolo also announced the creation of a new award and fund to foster enhanced community collaboration, the "Del Borgsdorf Award"

for unifying greater Sarasota through expanding public private partnerships. Recently retired, Del Borgsdorf was the first recipient of the award named in his honor.

"Along with other Board Members and Chamber volunteers, Rick Piccolo led The Chamber in finding creative solutions to address the current economic challenges and took public private partnerships to another level," said Chamber President Steve Queior.

Moving forward, The Chamber welcomes Shaun Merriman, President/CEO of Gateway Bank of Southwest Florida, as the new Board Chair. Merriman, having served on The Chamber Board for several years, is very dedicated to the organization and knowledgeable about the community and region.

"Over the past decades, we've built a solid foundation for the future," said Merriman. "As we move forward into our 92nd year, it is not business as usual. I am very humbled by the Board's selecting me as Chair, and I look forward to working with community leaders to improve the economic climate and quality of life in our community."

Merriman's goals for the upcoming year:

- Deliver expanded member benefits with increased value through enhanced marketing, technology and education;
- Play an active role in developing Vision 2020 for Sarasota County. This will occur through a collaborative effort of business, government and other community leaders;
- Move the new Downtown Economic Development Initiative forward with the assistance of the City, and other great partners.
- Create a Chamber that allows our members to serve and work with one another in a more efficient and productive manner;
- Work hard and work smart with numerous allies who are serious about the redevelopment of North Trail, and finally;
- Continue to be a strong partner, through key leaders and members of our Executive Committee, in realizing the great potential of the new Suncoast Aquatic Nature Center at Nathan Benderson Park.