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CLUB BUSINESS INTERNATIONAL

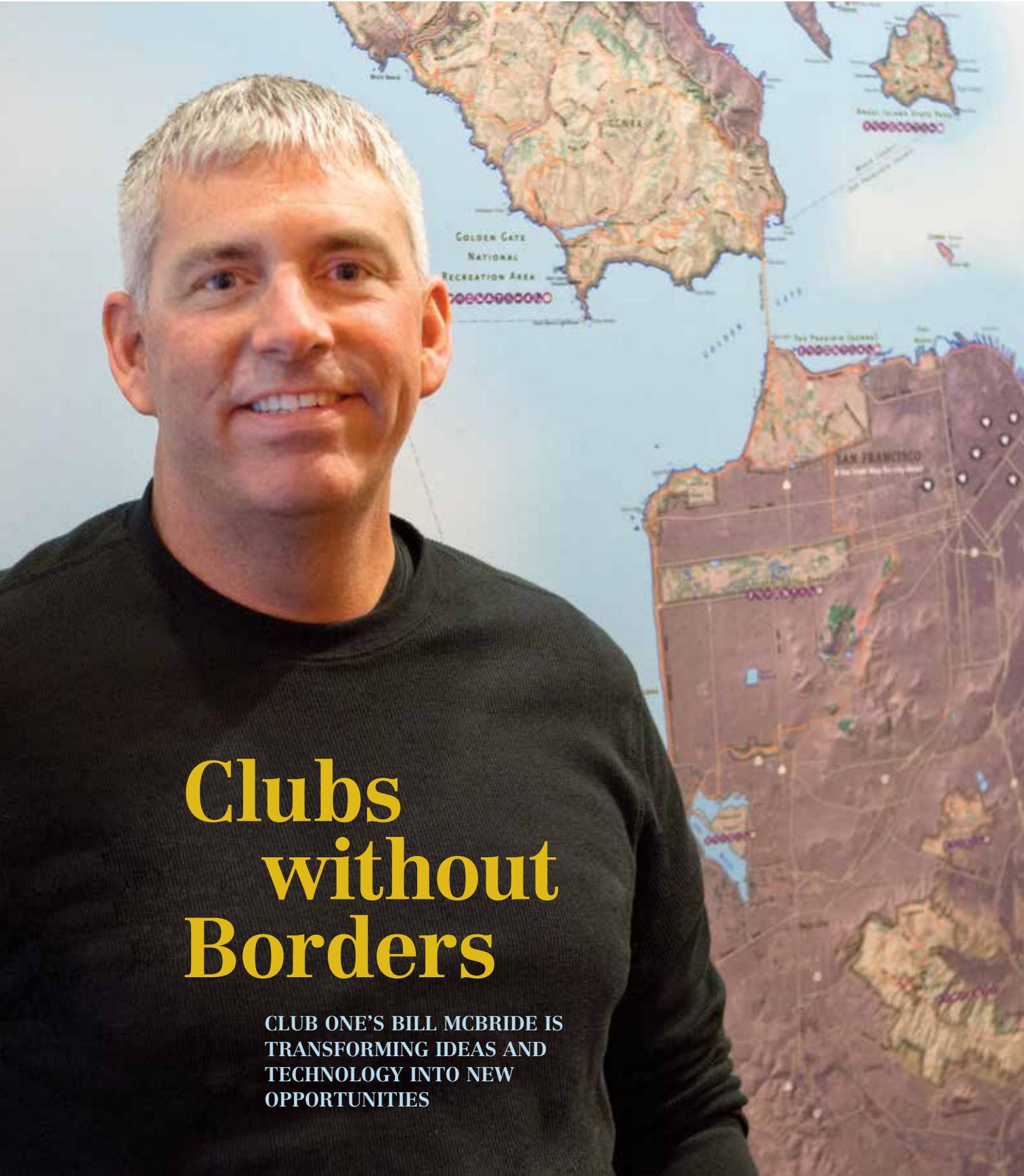
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Clubs without Borders

CLUB ONE'S BILL MCBRIDE IS
TRANSFORMING IDEAS AND
TECHNOLOGY INTO NEW
OPPORTUNITIES

A Healthcare Heroine

The Bay Athletic Club's Trina Gray has transformed her hometown of Alpena, Michigan

By Julie King

Alpena, Michigan, is one of the poorest counties in one of the unhealthiest states in America. It's a place, says Trina Gray, "where fast food, smoking, illness, and obesity were a way of life."

It was those conditions that, in 2006, inspired Gray to found the Bay Athletic Club (BAC), a 13,000-square-foot facility situated in the Alpena Regional Medical Center. Since then, Gray has launched and conducted a crusade to make health, fitness, and wellness serious concerns in this community of 10,000. Thus far, her efforts have touched the lives of half its residents.

BAC currently serves about 2,000 active members, as well as individuals who participate in its ongoing programs, which are open to nonmembers.

"Embracing the notion that fitness and wellness are two of the foundations of happiness, I embarked on a mission to spread happiness throughout Alpena," says Gray, "and the club has made an imprint on the community that's much deeper than I would have dreamed possible."

Her extensive outreach and volunteer efforts, and her success in meeting the public's needs, have produced a surfeit of honors. In 2010, BAC received the Health Leadership Award from the Alpena Regional Medical Center. In 2011, Gray was named the Culture Change Agent of the Year by the Alpena Area Chamber of Commerce. And, earlier this year, IHRSA presented BAC with its 2012 Outstanding Community Service Award.

A member experience

"We make sure that all of our members are plugged into something," explains Sarah Morrison, BAC's community outreach director. "People don't just keep to themselves with their headphones on. We work hard to make BAC an *experience*."

The club boasts a comprehensive assortment of cardiovascular and strength training equipment, and a full menu of group exercise classes, personal training services, and signature programs, including a fat-blasting boot camp and Thinner Winner weight loss competition. Programs such as Train to Run and Train to Release are staged at BAC's Bay Urban Fitness, a satellite training studio, which is located a few miles away from the flagship club.

Getting members involved works wonders, attests Sue Krafft, a BAC member since the club opened. "Between the fantastic staff, and the friends that we attend classes with—you're able to block out negativity, get into your workout, and walk out feeling much better."

BAC honors members who have transformed their lives at an annual black-tie Fitness-Inspired Gala, where they celebrate, share success stories, and receive prizes. "BAC attracts people and creates raving fans because it has heart," points out Morrison. "It's never been about getting memberships—it's always been about helping people to be healthier and happier."

A community commitment

BAC's impact in the community is nearly as productive and rewarding as its in-house efforts. The BAC team conducts weekly chair fitness classes for the residents of an assisted living



BAC Owner
Trina Gray



BAC's Bay Urban Fitness satellite facility sizzles!

center; hosts students from area schools once a month; collects and donates clothing, canned goods, and toys to local organizations; and contributes to booster clubs, athletics programs, and theaters.

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BAC is also a founding sponsor of the Alpena chapter of Girls on the Run, which fosters healthy living and self-esteem among preteen and adolescent girls through a 12-week running program.

The club's six-week Corporate Fit Challenge, which provides firms with coaching, exercise prescriptions, group workouts, recipes, and food/exercise journals, has helped the employees of some 90 Alpena County businesses shed more than 10,000 pounds and 12,000 inches from their waists since February 2008. Many of the dramatic success stories that result are shared both on BAC's Website

and on the *60-Second Inspiration* video profiles that air weekly on the local CBS-TV affiliate.

Gray has packaged the Corporate Fit Challenge and is now sharing it with clubs worldwide.

An industry connection

Eager to become more involved and active in the industry, Gray enrolled BAC in IHRSA two years ago, and has been quick to make the most of her membership. One of the very first things she did was apply to become a presenter at the association's annual convention and trade show.

“I wanted my management team to start attending the convention and reading *CBI* and IHRSA's e-newsletters,” Gray explains. “Entrepreneurs often get stuck in their own ZIP code, just pushing through the daily grind. Having a strong organization such as IHRSA behind me—and leading me—has connected me to the industry in a meaningful way.”

Her IHRSA membership has prompted Gray to travel throughout the country, attending educational sessions, presenting workshops, and conducting Webinars for global audiences. “I love being a leader in my club and community, and I enjoy hearing from others in the industry,” she enthuses. “When we learn, we grow!” —