

How To Make a Difference

Supporting an Ideal



Bill White on the deck of the Intrepid

EDITORS' NOTE

Bill White came to the Intrepid in 1992, before which he worked in the family restaurant and real estate business. He is a member of the board of trustees of the Intrepid

Museum Foundation, the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund, the Intrepid Relief Fund, the Fisher House Foundation, the Fisher Center for Alzheimer's Research Foundation, the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, the New York's Finest Foundation, and the Science Barge, and is on the board of NYC & Company. He served as a volunteer firefighter from 1985 to 1993. The Atlantic Fleet awarded White the Meritorious Public Service Award in recognition of his outstanding support of the U.S. Navy. In 2004, he received the Meritorious Public Service Award for extraordinary service from the U.S. Coast Guard. White also serves as President of the Intrepid Fallen Heroes Fund. In March 1991, he established Operation Support, a volunteer charitable organization that raised more than \$400,000 for the families of military personnel killed in the Persian Gulf War. White obtained his B.A. from Fordham University, and he holds a culinary arts degree from The French Culinary Institute. Bill White is married to his life partner Bryan Eure and resides in Manhattan.

ORGANIZATION BRIEF The Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum (www.intrepidmuseum.org) is one of America's leading historic, cultural, and educational institutions. Opened in 1982, the museum is centered on the aircraft carrier Intrepid (CVS-11), one of the most successful ships in U.S. history and now a national historic landmark. The museum features a range of interactive exhibits and events from historical recreations such as Kamikaze: Day of Darkness, Day of Light to new interactive displays. Visitors also can ride in the A-6 cockpit simulator; explore the Cold War nuclear missile submarine Growler, and tour the inside of the world's fastest commercial airplane, Concorde. The museum also hosts the annual Fleet Week celebration in honor of our military personnel.

Is there an effective understanding today of how vast the interest and efforts are for the Intrepid?

We've been at this for more than a quarter

An Interview with Bill White, President, Intrepid Sea, Air & Space Museum

of a century now, since we opened in 1982. But we haven't saturated the market in terms of getting the word out that Intrepid is way more than a ship or a museum; it has become almost supporting an ideal. Running a museum is enough for any group of people in this economy. As an attraction in New York, we have a great aircraft carrier, and it's unbelievable. We had 920,000 visitors in our first year back after the ship's renovation. Previously, our busiest year ever was 680,000. So we went through the roof in a year with a horrible economy and with the Swine Flu making people very concerned about public venues. Revenues were off, but we have spent the past six years fully devoted to two missions: running the museum and keeping it as our projection platform for other quality-of-life efforts supporting America's military personnel and their families, and then enacting those quality-of-life initiatives. We've been at this since 2000 and we have raised, with the generosity of the American people – nearly one million contributed – more than \$300 million for the families of troops that have been killed or wounded, or are suffering from needs being unmet by the government or the community, or that are beyond their families' means. We're still embryonic in that sense. We haven't gotten the word out there as much as we would like to because we still have a lot of money to raise, and we still have a lot to accomplish. But we feel so proud of the work the Intrepid is doing, and that the public believes in the efforts of the Intrepid and its mission. The will is there to support us, learn about us, and get involved, and we are very grateful.

There is much you do on the ship focused around young people and education. Will you take us through the experience the Intrepid offers in that area?

What we're trying to do with these education programs is use the inspiration of the 3,000 men who saved that ship from five kamikaze attacks in World War II as a way to empower young people. We hope they learn that nothing should stop them from accomplishing what they want to do in life or when facing tough challenges, whether that is working together as a team, fighting alongside 3,000 shipmates defending freedom, or surviving what one can only imagine would be the worst possible experience in life: being in a concentration camp, which was the experience of two of our most recent speakers. This programming, in addition to our science and history curriculum for grades K-12, educates and touches young people in

a very inspirational and practical way. It's exciting to do these programs and to touch young lives.

Your board is very engaged and supportive of what you do. How critical has that been to the success in attracting the type of talent who appreciates and values your efforts?

I'm on half a dozen corporate boards, business boards, and almost a dozen foundation boards, but I have never seen a board like the one at the Intrepid. They are fully engaged; they come to meetings; they answer calls; they're on their BlackBerry responding immediately. Thirteen kids were recently left fatherless or motherless by the bomb in Kabul, Afghanistan that took the lives of eight CIA operatives. Our board members raised \$100,000 in about an hour and we were able to give it to George Tenet to give to those families. That's the kind of board we have. The Intrepid would never be where it is without Zachary Fisher and his family. Charles de Gunzburg and Rich Santulli are outstanding leaders, and every single member of our board is engaged at a hugely significant level from a personal interest backed by energy, enthusiasm, and generosity like I've never seen. They are great patriots all.

What is your key area of focus as you look to the future for the Intrepid?

This year, we're going to open a traumatic brain injury center for our wounded warriors. We spent the last year raising \$60 million, all privately funded; the last \$3 million came from Bob Barker of *The Price is Right* – he is a World War II Naval Aviator who flew Corsairs, the same as the planes that were flown off the Intrepid. This summer, less than a year after we started construction, it will be open. We're also looking forward to welcoming President Obama for Fleet Week 2010, which is going to be our 23rd Fleet Week in New York City and our biggest yet. We're working with the White House right now – he's very interested in coming and we're very excited about it.

We're also working to raise \$10 million to repair the faces of service members who have been horrifically burned by IED explosions, in an effort called Operation Mend spearheaded by a great patriot, Ron Katz. Dr. Tim Miller at UCLA is a world-class facial reconstructive surgeon, and he has already worked on 25 servicemembers – we raised \$10 million for that in the past two years, and we have another 25 new servicemen and women who have lost their eyes, ears, or noses as a result of horrific IED burns, who need our help today. ●