

Opinion > [Commentary](#)

Commentary: Work hard, play hard, live life fully



Kite surfers Erica Oberg and Ryan Bradley haul in their gear after a rough session in Miramar. (File photo Mathew Sumner/San Mateo County Times)

By **BILL TAI** |

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What do a billionaire, Red Bull athletes and Silicon Valley techies all have in common? Not just drive, ambition and smarts but a unique passion for the extreme sport of kiteboarding and ocean conservation.

More than just one of the fastest-growing sports in the world — it has created an opportunity to bring together like-minded individuals and redefine the intersection of what it means to work hard, play hard and to live life fully — by giving back to the environment that defines our playground.

The unique community of “kilters” who encompass global leaders in business and technology and young entrepreneurs come together to raise awareness and provide support for ocean causes.

Today’s blend of wicked smart, high-energy entrepreneurs that have the drive to create next generation companies like Dropbox, Facebook, Google, Virgin Group and Tesla are all led by founders who love the extreme sport of kiteboarding.

While the “old economy” had its “club sport” of golf, the dynamism of these entrepreneurs and their passion for more exhilarating sport is reflective of the dynamism of the faster moving segments of today’s new economy. This generation is defined by a different religion — startup culture and the constant need to innovate to survive, grow, prosper and give back.

Today, truly talented people not only strive to be entrepreneurs, they also strive to give back in a meaningful way. Entrepreneurs today are empowered to try, forgiven for failures so long as the effort provided valuable learning for the next attempt and greatly rewarded on each success.

Driven by these tenets, I teamed with pro kiteboarder Susi Mai to create an action-oriented community now called MaiTai Global to help young entrepreneurs as well as seasoned venture capitalists connect and share ideas.

One of the most rewarding aspects of MaiTai Global is the organization’s dedication to furthering the efforts of ocean conservation through our annual benefit targeted at ocean conservation,

The Ocean Gala. Luminaries Sir Richard Branson, Jackson Browne, Mission Blue heroine Dr. Sylvia Earle and Sharkwater creator Rob Stewart will drive a dynamic program in San Francisco on Dec. 3.

In partnership with The Ocean Elders, an independent group of global leaders who have joined together to serve as a catalyst in the conservation and protection of the ocean at an international level, thus far our efforts have resulted in hundreds of thousands of dollars raised and donated to various ocean related causes.

As the internet and social networks have redefined everything — how we work, how we play, how we are empowered — extreme sports and startup culture has redefined maybe most importantly, how can empower others to “do good” while doing well, for this planet.

Bill Tai is an investor and entrepreneur who has served as a board director of seven publicly listed companies he initially funded as startups. He established CRV's Silicon Valley office and is a backer of Scribd & Wish.com on CRV's behalf. In a personal capacity, he is co-founder chairman of Big Data provider TreasureData and was founding chairman of Linux company IPInfusion, and founding chairman and CEO of iAsiaWorks. He is a board director of BitFury Inc. and Voxer Inc, and an early personal backer of fun startups including Canva, Color Genomics, Shoes of Prey, Tango.me, Tweetdeck (Twitter), and Zoom.us. He is also a sponsored athlete. MaiTai Global's next big event is The Ocean Gala, a fundraiser to support ocean conservation www.TheOceanGala.com

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