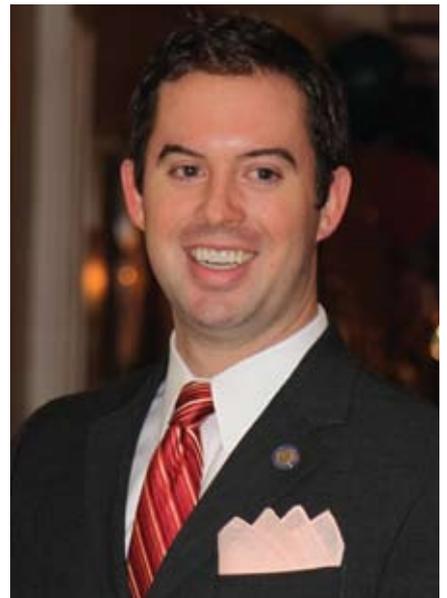




Thrill of the Chase

By Joe Barks, Editor



Hard work is said to be its own reward—and earlier this year for Michael A. Chase, Jr., CCM, that's exactly what it had to be.

As the 2012 Rising Star recipient for the Excellence in Club Management (ECM) Awards co-sponsored by the McMahon Group and *Club & Resort Business*, Chase, Clubhouse Manager of The Loxahatchee Club of Jupiter, Fla., was invited to be recognized, along with the other winners, at the ECM awards dinner in February in San Diego ("Night of Honors," *C&RB*, March 2013).

But the awards dinner was scheduled for the same night as a gala charity ball at Loxahatchee. Showing the keen sense of customer perception that has already helped him advance impressively in his first seven years as a club manager, Chase quickly picked up on signals from members involved with the event that their anxiety levels would increase significantly if he weren't on site for it. So he assured them he'd be in Florida to help everything go smoothly.

In many ways, this dilemma was Chase's own doing. After coming to Loxahatchee as Assistant Food and Beverage Manager in 2008, he quickly began to make his mark with a steady stream of popular new ideas and programs that have filled up the seasonal club's event calendar (see boxes, right, and pg. 52), to the point where there's now rarely a date when something special isn't going on.

"I've just always tried to think about what can be done that would go beyond normal club events," Chase says in explaining how he keeps the idea machine well-primed. "It never hurts to try new things, and if it's exciting to me and those around me, it's probably going to

be exciting to our members as well."

Once new ideas are hatched, Chase has also become known for assuring their success by taking full ownership in how they're developed and executed. "Our [membership] survey results speak for themselves," says Kevin Carroll, CCM, Loxahatchee's COO/General Manager. "Every program Michael oversees has ratings well above 4.0 on a 5.0 scale. Any time he's seen an area that's needed help, he's volunteered to jump in, whether he has experience in that field or not."

That inclination first became evident after Chase came to Loxahatchee from Druid Hills Golf Club in Atlanta, where he was Assistant Manager after graduating with a Tourism/Hospitality degree from Purdue University-Fort Wayne.

Chase's first year at Loxahatchee coincided with an initial season of what Carroll calls "very loose" operation of

the club's new Activities Center. "Michael saw a need for leadership, and volunteered to take over management of fitness, spa, tennis, retail and swimming, in addition to his food-and-beverage duties, by working a few more hours a week," says Carroll. Those "few hours" produced 38% growth in Activities Center revenues in its first year under Chase's direction. "He rose to meet every expectation, in both areas," Carroll says.

"I saw a lot of things I thought I could help touch in a positive way," says Chase, who was a varsity tennis player in college. "[Loxahatchee] is still a golf-centric club, but with the Activities Center we now had the opportunity to also be very

Achievements

AT THE LOXAHATCHEE CLUB WITH MICHAEL CHASE'S INVOLVEMENT/DIRECTION

- Obtained wholesale wine license through HOA corporation and sold \$200,000 in wine at wholesale cost in one year.
- Wine training program helped increase sales by 50% in two years.



Chase and The Loxahatchee Club's F&B team earned an invitation to be part of a select group of 100 restaurant organizations granted professional membership in Epicurean International Associates.

PHOTOS COURTESY THE LOXAHATCHEE CLUB

TODAY'S MANAGER

successful in fitness, tennis, pool-related activities and other areas, and to provide additional programming for children." Progress has come by "leaps and bounds" in all areas, he reports, with tennis showing especially strong (300%) growth.

The club's expanded appeal—and Chase's can/will-do-it-all abilities—has The Loxahatchee Club well-positioned for an impending management transition at the end of this season, with Carroll having been named the new General Manager of the Atlanta Athletic Club.

Chase aspires to attain a GM position himself someday, but for now he recognizes the importance, as his primary

contribution to a smooth succession period, of keeping the staff focused on increasing service and activity levels.

And, oh yes—amid all of this, Chase finally did get his award, when it was presented to him at the club on March 1 (see photo at right). But of course, to Chase it was not the only rewarding part of the night. The presentation was made during one of Loxahatchee's Friday Trivia Nights, another Chase-driven concept that he says is now in its fourth year and has become the club's "biggest regularly occurring" event, consistently maxing out at 225 people.

And here, too, thanks largely to Chase's



Michael Chase finally got his Rising Star Award when it was presented to him at his club by Bill McMahon, Sr. of the McMahon Group (left) and Kevin Carroll, The Loxahatchee Club's COO/GM.

influence, it's become more than just your standard club trivia night. "We put our own twist on it and introduced wine tasting during the cocktail hour," he enthuses. "It's another way we've found to sell a ton of wine." **C&RB**

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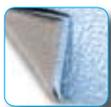


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Ideas

IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY AT THE LOXAHATCHEE CLUB WITH MICHAEL CHASE'S INVOLVEMENT/DIRECTION

- Created popular "Loxminster Dog Show" all-day event that includes dinner and dancing and attracts over 200 members—and 50-plus dogs ("All Dogs Get Their Day," *C&RB*, April 2010).



Chase volunteered to manage the club's new Activities Center and in one year boosted revenues by 38%.

- Instituted popular dinner menu with half portions, and held contest to select house wine. Established wine club to allow members to store wine at club and have first opportunity for seminars and wine dinners.
- Developed successful event concepts such as All-White Havana Party at pool, progressive dinners at members' homes, and Classic Car Show.