

# Fab Five

**M**cMahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, and *Club & Resort Business* have announced the 2011 recipients of the Excellence in Club Management (ECM) Awards program, established in 1997 by the McMahon Group and co-sponsored since 2005 by *C&RB*.

The annual awards are selected through nominations submitted on behalf of qualified candidates by other parties.

Award recipients are selected solely on the basis of their achievements at the club they currently manage; "lifetime achievements" are not considered.

A Selection Committee comprised of a peer group of club managers conducts the judging; the McMahon Group and *Club & Resort Business* are not involved in the selection of the award winners.

A full listing of judges, in addition to information on past winners and on

how to nominate candidates for future years' awards, can be found at the special website for the ECM Awards program, [www.clubmanageraward.com](http://www.clubmanageraward.com)

In-depth articles detailing the achievements that led to the selection of each of the 2011 winners will appear in upcoming issues of *Club & Resort Business*.

The 2011 group has five award winners, because of a tie that resulted from the judging in one category.

## Country/Golf Clubs with 600 or More Full-Privilege Members



**Damon J. DiOrio, CCM, CCE, ECM**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Charlotte Country Club  
Charlotte, N.C.

E-mail messages sent by Damon DiOrio always start (based on the time of day) with a heartfelt Good Morning! or Good Afternoon! and a hope (based on the day of the week) that the recipient has either just had a fabulous/fantastic weekend, or is having a great start to their day.

If the recipient has just been to Charlotte Country Club prior to receiving the message, it's pretty much a given that DiOrio's hope has already come true. It's virtually impossible nowadays for anyone to come away from a visit to Charlotte CC and not feel great, both about the fabulous experiences that come from enjoying the club's lovingly renovated facilities (see "Remaking History," *C&RB*, February 2011) and from the fantastic service provided unflinchingly by the club's exemplary staff.

All of this has become a sure thing because of the direction and leadership of Damon DiOrio, who has worked at Charlotte CC for over 20 years, and been its Chief Executive Officer since 2003. As the club's President, Landon Wyatt III, stated succinctly in nominating DiOrio for the Excellence in Club Management award, "I have been privileged to experience the management of some outstanding clubs, and I would sum up my recommendation this way: Damon is not just the best club manager I have ever known, he is quite simply one of the best managers, period, of any type I have known in my 30-year business career."

The personal honor for DiOrio is also well-timed recognition for the prominence he has brought back to the club. The Centennial Club Ball for Charlotte CC's 100th anniversary in 2010 drew just short of 1,000 members and guests—the largest function ever held in its storied, and now fully restored, clubhouse.



CHARLOTTE COUNTRY CLUB

## Country/Golf Clubs with Fewer than 600 Full-Privilege Members



**Patricia A. Calder, CCM, CCE, ECM**  
General Manager  
Thornblade Club  
Greer, S.C.

When Patricia Calder became the Thornblade Club's new General Manager in 2001, the club was struggling to find its way, according to Jody Gallagher, current President of its Board of Governors.

One possible path, according to Gallagher, would be to become a "pure golf club"—and this would certainly make sense, given that the Thornblade Club was founded in 1989, in partnership with a local developer, by PGA Tour Pro Jay Haas, and features an acclaimed Tom Fazio course.

But there was also a strong push to move Thornblade to the forefront of the then-emerging "family-centric" trend. Adding to the budding identity crisis was the need to come to grips with how to make the best use of a new 55,000-sq-ft clubhouse that had been built to replace the club's original building, after it burned down in 1999.

Ten years later, Calder's Excellence in Club Management award attests to how she was able to skillfully lead the Thornblade Club down all the right roads—and guide it to the best of all worlds. The club has an even stronger golf profile today—the Thornblade Classic pro-am charity tournament hosted by Haas annually attracts top players, and the BMW Charity Pro-Am earns the highest Golf Channel ratings for the Nationwide Tour. Golf's prominence has grown so much at Thornblade under Calder's direction, over a dozen active tour pros now hold special memberships and regularly assist with club events throughout the year.

At the same time, Thornblade's clubhouse is now alive year-round with a full schedule of junior and family programming, and the average age of its membership has declined in recent years "because of the influx of young families, which will help to secure the club's future," says Gallagher.



THORNBLADE

## Country/Golf Clubs with Fewer than 600 Full-Privilege Members



**Lance Sabella, ECM**  
General Manager  
Lakeside Golf Club  
Burbank, Calif.



All club managers have to deal from time to time with members or guests who like to “go Hollywood” on them. But at Lakeside Golf Club—which was founded in 1924 and has had names like W. C. Fields, Jack Nicholson and Eddie Van Halen on its membership rolls over the years—that can be a daily possibility for General Manager Lance Sabella. And Sabella’s consistently calm demeanor when these moments do occur might qualify as reason alone for Excellence in Club Management recognition, says the club’s President, Brian Jackson.

“We are proud to have a diverse membership, and Lakeside’s membership includes many celebrities, as well as business and professional leaders,” says Jackson. “Lance effectively ‘deals with’ members of all personality types, and in doing so gains everyone’s respect, even when they may not be accustomed to being told the rules. Yet Lance handles this challenge flawlessly—resolutely, but with grace.”

Sabella’s full value in his seven years as Lakeside’s GM, of course, has extended far beyond being able to handle hot shots and divas. And 2011 was an exceptional year for what he and his team accomplished. In addition to an unusually diverse event and activity schedule that included an outdoor volleyball league, mixed martial arts bouts, and a chili cookoff, the club completed a \$6 million golf course renovation, and also remodeled prominent areas of the clubhouse.

## City, Athletic or Specialty (Non-Golf) Club



**Jeffrey P. McFadden, CCM, CCE, ECM**  
General Manager/COO  
The Union League  
Philadelphia, PA



In 1998, the city of Philadelphia was still struggling to escape the financial crisis chronicled in Buzz Bissinger’s book, *A Prayer for the City*. And one of its most venerable institutions, The Union League, which was founded in 1862, was even more burdened and threatened. “We were in a terrible downward spiral, both financially and with membership,” recalls a former President, John Zook.

“The doors were in danger of being shuttered.”

But that year brought Jeffrey McFadden to the city to be the club’s new General Manager/COO—and the rest is now history that rivals anything to be found in the club’s landmark 150-year-old, 300,000-sq. ft. building. Annual revenues have more than doubled since 2001, to \$27 million, and membership has jumped during the same period from 2,600 to 3,200. Perhaps most tellingly, the club can once again be referred to as just “The League,” and everyone in the city recognizes, and respects, the brand. The club’s status has even returned to the point where its new fine-dining venue, the 1862 room, was called “the best restaurant in the city that you can’t get into” by *The Philadelphia Inquirer*.

“Jeff has done an extraordinary job of taking a struggling club to one that is the finest, if not *the* finest, in the nation,” says current President Joan Carter. “The League’ is once again the place to be in our city.”

## Celebrating In Style

In addition to presentations at their individual clubs that will be held throughout the coming year, the 2011 Excellence in Club Management winners, along with those from previous years, will be recognized at an Awards Dinner to be held at the New Orleans Country Club on Friday, February 24, in conjunction with the 2012 World Conference of the Club Managers Association of America.

This year’s Awards Dinner will be sponsored by Bollinger Insurance Solutions, Global Allies, and Toro.

For more details on the ECM Awards Program, visit [www.clubmanageraward.com](http://www.clubmanageraward.com)



## 2011 Rising Star Award



**Michael Redmond, ECM**  
Assistant GM of Food and Beverage  
The Metropolitan Club of the City of Washington  
Washington, D.C.



Michael Redmond’s star has been seen on the rise before; as Executive Chef at the Genesee Valley Club in Rochester, N.Y., he was one of the first club chefs to successfully stage guest-chef events for his membership (“Platinum Idea,” *C&RB*, September 2006). Now, his ever-ascending talent is being recognized for how he’s taken to the role that Reinhard Danger, his former GM at Genesee Valley, created for him after Danger became The Metropolitan Club’s General Manager/COO. As Assistant GM of Food and Beverage, Redmond manages the club’s largest staff (a total of 75, with 11 department heads) and also sits on several committees. “In the past four and a half years, I have seen Michael grow as a result of his work with committees and the Board, as well as emerge as a leader in the Metropolitan Club management team,” says Danger. “The entire staff, not only his fellow managers, respects him and seeks him out when issues arise.”

Awards Dinner Sponsored by:

