

Joining the Club

Mcmahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, and *Club & Resort Business* have announced the 2012 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

In-depth articles detailing the achievements that led to the selection of each of the 2012 winners will appear in upcoming issues of *Club & Resort Business*.

The 2012 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 (The James H. Brewer Award)



Robert E. Jones, CCM, CCE, ECM
General Manager/COO
Desert Mountain Club, Inc.
Scottsdale, Ariz.



“Fifteen years is a lifetime for the tenure of a private club General Manager,” wrote Paul Wutz, Chief Executive Officer/President of Desert Mountain Club, in nominating Bob Jones for Excellence in Club Management recognition. And in the case of Jones’ 15 years as Desert Mountain’s GM/COO, Wutz noted, that period has involved several “lifetimes” for the club, which is part of a gated residential community covering 8,000 acres that includes six Jack Nicklaus Signature golf courses, 10 foodservice locations, and serves 2,150-plus members and their families—“in essence, a small city,” Wutz said.

Serving three different commercial real estate conglomerates during his tenure as GM before Desert Mountain’s members acquired the club in 2011, Jones has “skillfully navigated his way through the oftentimes contentious waters involving the bottom-line motives of multiple, for-profit owners, versus the wants and needs of membership,” Wutz said. Through it all, he added, Jones has stood out as a “people pleaser” who has assembled a strong senior management team and extremely loyal staff, and cultivated “valuable relationships with a broad spectrum of people, from the mayor of Scottsdale to Jack Nicklaus himself.”

Since the club became member-owned, Wutz added, Jones has led the accomplishment of an impressive list of initiatives, opening a new state-of-the-art Golf Performance Center, instituting a value-pricing program in the property’s restaurants, and implementing an effective promotional sales program to attract new members. He also directed the club’s hosting of the 2012 Champions Tour Charles Schwab Cup tournament, and planned a celebration for the membership to recognize Desert Mountain’s silver anniversary.

Country/Golf Clubs with Fewer than 600 Full-Privilege Members (The Mead Grady Award)



Eric J. Dietz, CCM, PGA, ECM
General Manager/CEO
Lakewood Country Club
Rockville, Md.



For the first 50 or so years of its existence, wrote Jeffrey Weber, President of the Lakewood CC Board, the club was essentially run by “winging it,” leading to a “lax management style” that “focused on the rear-view mirror” and raised real doubts as to how much longer Lakewood would be able to safely navigate its future course in a highly competitive Washington, D.C.-area club market.

All that changed, Weber added, after Eric Dietz arrived from Rochester (Minn.) Golf & Country Club in 2009 to be Lakewood’s new General Manager/CEO. In nominating Dietz for Excellence in Club Management honors, Weber credited him with taking the lead in “transcending Lakewood to its current position of one of [the D.C.] area’s premier private clubs.” Changes made at the club under Dietz’s leadership have not only been well-received by the current membership, Weber noted, but have also helped the club to “[become] a sought-after ‘home away from home’ for over 150 new member families in the last three-plus years.”

Dietz immediately provided Lakewood with its much-needed forward direction, Weber noted, by leading the development of a comprehensive strategic master plan. He also used member-driven focus groups to identify the club’s strengths and weaknesses, and set targets for closing the gaps. “As a result,” Weber said, “operational changes are occurring at Lakewood that are as ground-breaking as the physical changes the club undertook over the past four years.

“Lakewood is now an exciting place with a young and vibrant membership that demands excellence in all of their endeavors,” he added. “Eric has personally brought a level of pride and accomplishment that never previously existed.”

WINNER

Country/Golf Clubs with Fewer than 600 Full-Privilege Members (The Mead Grady Award)



Paul K. Skelton, CCM, ECM
General Manager/COO
The Country Club at DC Ranch
Scottsdale, Ariz.



Every club manager confronted recession-related fears in 2010, but few were looking at as daunting a list as Paul Skelton when he accepted the position of General Manager/COO at The Country Club at DC Ranch. "When Paul started, he was faced with many challenges," wrote William J. Kamm, Chief Executive Officer, in nominating Skelton for Excellence in Club Management honors. "We had 129 memberships on the exit list. We had poor operating results. We had to bring on board a new Director of Golf and a new chef. We had legal concerns [remaining from] our separation from the developer who created The Country Club at DC Ranch.

"Many people would have run from all of these challenges," Kamm continued. "Paul looked at it as an opportunity, rolled up his sleeves and went to work.

"His accomplishments speak for themselves," Kamm added. "In three years, the state of the club has improved dramatically. Paul researched and developed the market-based initiation program adopted by the members. The exit list has been eliminated. He brought a two-time PGA Professional of the Year on board as Director of Golf.

"Today, the club is without any debt, and has cash reserves that are very impressive," Kamm said. "And Paul has positioned the club for a membership vote to make extensive improvements to [our] facilities."

City, Athletic or Specialty (Non-Golf) Club (The Mel Rex Award)



John P. Dorman, CCM, ECM
General Manager
The University Club of New York
New York, N.Y.



There are sizable food-and-beverage operations in the club industry, and then there are programs on the level that John Dorman has directed for the past 15 years as General Manager of The University Club of New York: annual revenues exceeding \$13 million; over 190,000 meal covers per year, evenly split between member *a la carte* and banquet service; and an average of more than one member event per day of the work week.

Beyond the volume, there's also the service and quality expectations. "Our guest rooms and banquet activity must compete with the likes of neighboring hotels such as the St. Regis, the Plaza and the Pierre," wrote club President Paul Leitner in nominating Dorman for Excellence in Club Management recognition. "Our dining rooms must satisfy the most discriminating palates and compete in one of the greatest restaurant venues in the world."

The University Club of New York more than holds its own in the face of these challenges, Leitner added, because of Dorman's "wonderful ability to please the most sophisticated and discriminating member." He's also proved to be quite the numbers whiz, helping the club go from indebtedness approaching eight figures when he arrived to now having net cash reserves of more than \$20 million, even after investing \$45 million in needed capital improvements.

Celebrating In Style

In addition to presentations at their individual clubs held throughout the year, the 2012 Excellence in Club Management winners, along with those from previous years, will be recognized at an Awards Dinner to be held at the University Club Atop Symphony Towers in San Diego on Saturday, February 9, in conjunction with the 2013 World Conference of the Club Managers Association of America.

This year's Awards Dinner will be sponsored by Bollinger Insurance Solutions, ClubCorp, and Toro.

For more details on the ECM Awards Program, visit www.clubmanageraward.com



WINNER

2012 Rising Star Award



Michael A. Chase, Jr., CCM, ECM
Club Manager
The Loxahatchee Club
Jupiter, Fla.



The Loxahatchee Club's COO/General Manager, Kevin Carroll, CCM, knows it's just a matter of time before Michael Chase moves on from his staff to be a GM himself. When that happens, Carroll wrote in nominating Chase for Rising Star recognition, "He will leave a large void." But Carroll is still glad Chase has stayed in club management, rather than almost making a move in 2011 to leave the industry and work for a developer.

"Members and fellow staff members enjoy [Michael's] energy and personality," Carroll wrote. "I have seen his determination in seeking constant improvement in the club, and for himself. When he saw the need for someone to manage our new Activities Center, he volunteered that he could handle the additional responsibilities, by working a few more hours a week." Chase then proved just how capable his "handling" would be, Carroll added, by reducing labor costs, increasing revenues and adding \$30,000 to the bottom line.

Awards Dinner Sponsored by:

