

2008 Excellence in Club
Management Award Winner
Rising Star Award



Lighting Up the Night

By Joe Barks, Editor



Achievements

AT DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB

WITH CRAIG CUTLER'S INVOLVEMENT/DIRECTION

■ Wrote training/operations manual for a *la carte* service and developed culture for the restaurant team to focus on learning through interactive daily lineups and a process of certification that entails study and testing on all areas of professional knowledge in the dining rooms. The manual became the benchmark model for all



other departments in the club and was critical to implementing the Consistent Performance Process that drives the club's Performance Excellence Process (PEP). The PEP revolves around precise service guarantees and measurements, and has been critical to DAC maintaining standards and earning top service ratings from membership while growing F&B revenues to over \$7 million and more than 200,000 covers annually.

■ Reorganized food and beverage storerooms with new access controls to help drive down waste and stabilize product costs. Year-end food and beverage costs were reduced to 33% and 26%, respectively.

■ Earned Michigan Quality Council's 2008 Quality Leadership Award—the first such award ever earned by a hospitality organization in the state. The award is modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award and must be earned through submission of a detailed application as well as site visits, to verify practices in seven performance categories.



Thanks in large part to the inspired ideas, and diligent follow-through, of Detroit Athletic Club Assistant Manager Craig Cutler (left), one end of downtown Detroit shines as one of the city's brightest spots.

A skyline dominated by a building with the logo of a bankrupt company is nobody's picture of prosperity. But while General Motors' recent reorganization was the latest bit of depressing news out of Detroit, continued inspiration—for both the city and the club

industry—can be found at another end of downtown.

The Detroit Athletic Club (DAC) has been a civic institution since its founding in 1887 and even more so since 1915, when it moved into its landmark six-story, Albert Kahn-designed clubhouse (see photo above) in the heart of the city's theatre and entertainment district.

During all those years, including the current period of woes for domestic automakers, Detroit's been through its share of challenges. But through it all, the DAC has stood as a rock-solid symbol of all that can be right about the Motor City—not only through its building, but also its cultural leadership and as the source and site of unique activities that capture and sustain the city's special spirit, such as the lively bowling league that occupies the club's bottom floor.

And while the DAC has been there to provide support for

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its membership (which has always included some of the area's most prominent business and community leaders) and help them work through the issues confronting the city, the management of the club itself—especially in the last 15 years, under Executive Manager Ted Gillary—has also been a shining example that could be held up on its own as a source of regional pride.

Last year, the club's achievements and reputation for management excellence culminated in the DAC being honored with the Michigan Quality Council's 2008 Quality Leadership Award (modeled after the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award)—the first such award ever earned by a hospitality organization in the state.

To successfully implement the required criteria for the Quality Award, Gillary relied heavily on Craig Cutler, who came to the DAC in 2003 as Restaurant Manager, was named Director of Banquet Services in 2005, and since 2006 has been the club's Assistant Manager. Cutler has played a large role in directing the achievements and ideas (see boxes, this page and opposite) that would earn the accolades for the DAC.

In particular, Gillary gives Cutler much of the credit for how the DAC has helped to bring new life to its end of downtown Detroit, after the club

Ideas IMPLEMENTED SUCCESSFULLY

AT DETROIT ATHLETIC CLUB WITH CRAIG CUTLER'S INVOLVEMENT/DIRECTION

- Conceived, developed and named Stadium Pavilion venue in back parking lot, to take advantage of proximity to new baseball stadium (Comerica Park) and football arena (Ford Field), which is also used to host major events like the NCAA Final Four. Cutler worked with a tent supplier to oversee the design of a 2,400-sq. ft. tent, with a highly visible DAC logo, that provides shelter in the Pavilion area, and also directed custom construction of a heated and air-conditioned mobile restroom to handle the large crowds now drawn to the Pavilion.

- Used classic menu engineering techniques to divide menu items through measurement in four categories — “star, plow horse, puzzle and dog” — and then focus on eliminating “dogs” (non-sellers or low-margin items).

- Redesigned reservation process to help maximize attendance for large special events of over 800 attendees (previously, attendance often fell below peak capacity, because of last-minute confusion over how many more reservations could be comfortably taken off the waiting list). New system of continuous review of seating arrangements led to attendance records being set for seven events in 2007.





“Craig Cutler has played a major role in the continuous improvement of DAC’s restaurants, and special events and banquet departments, since he was hired in 2003,” says Executive Manager Ted Gillary.

had the good fortune of having two new sports arenas built literally in its backyard. Through Cutler’s direction, the club created a new Stadium Pavilion in its back parking lot that now comes alive for every home game of the Detroit Tigers (in Comerica Park) or the Detroit Lions (in Ford Field). The Pavilion has also become the hot spot for other big events such as the NCAA Final Four, held at Ford Field this past March.

Cutler’s ideas have also been instrumental in taking the DAC’s always-popular “Back to the Club Night” party to new levels, such as the conversion of the club’s gym into a “Club Madison” theme (the DAC is located on Madison Avenue).

“The idea converted our gym into a popular and fun late-night atmosphere,” Gillary says. “An old dance floor on its way to the dumpster was salvaged, painted white and combined with other unique touches, including leather lounge seating on risers, special lighting, dancers on roller skates, silhouetted dancers behind colored screens, and a disc jockey with a commanding view of the crowd. All worked together to keep the room filled all night, and other creative party ideas going on simultaneously throughout the club were just as enticing, to help spread 1,200 people comfortably on multiple floors. This event was a crowning achievement for Craig.”

Ambitious ideas like this can only be pulled off with precise execution behind the scenes. Here, too, Gillary gives Cutler credit for creating the standards, and the training, behind the DAC’s Consistent Performance Process that drives the club’s Performance Excellence Process, which revolves around precise, unyielding service guarantees and measurements.

All of these accomplishments, made even more notable for their achievement in a city-club environment in an economically challenged region, have earned Cutler recognition as the 2008 recipient of the “Rising Star” Award, as part of the Excellence in Club Management Awards co-sponsored by the McMahon Group and *Club & Resort Business* magazine.

“[Craig] exemplifies the best attributes of the private club professional with his integrity, robust energy and unfailingly gracious demeanor,” says Gillary. “His responsibilities are essential to the smooth operation of the DAC, and he makes a major contribution to the club’s excellent reputation in the local and national club community.”

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