

# Excellence Personified

**M**cMahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, and *Club & Resort Business* have announced the 2010 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 2010 winners will appear in upcoming issues of *Club & Resort Business*.

## WINNER

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



**Robert J. Crifasi, CCM, CCE, CPA, ECM**  
General Manager  
New Orleans Country Club  
New Orleans, La.

Now that the Saints are Super Bowl champions, that *might* qualify as a more amazing New Orleans comeback win than the one Robert J. "Bobby" Crifasi quarterbacked after Hurricane Katrina swamped the New Orleans Country Club (NOCC). As detailed in *C&RB* ("Restoring the Roots," December 2008), the prompt, decisive action and tireless leadership displayed by Crifasi after Katrina dumped four feet of water into NOCC's historic clubhouse

ensured not only that the club would have a chance to survive, but that it would also contribute valuable assistance to the region's overall recovery, by providing a base from which civic and business leaders could not only operate, but live and recharge.

"I will always be in awe of Bobby's performance post-Katrina," R. Parke Ellis, President of NOCC, wrote in nominating Crifasi for Excellence in Club Management recognition. "Despite his own personal losses, he was laser-focused on bringing the club back quickly and completely. His dedication at that difficult time was remarkable, admirable and yet so typically Bobby. It is all about the membership to him. He was our champion."

After directing the recovery from Katrina, Crifasi, who began as NOCC's Comptroller in 1988 and has been its General Manager since 1992, has redirected the club's focus towards new capital projects and its upcoming 100th anniversary in 2014. "Perhaps it is his four-year stint as Comptroller or more likely his education as a CPA, but he has maintained the club on extremely sound footing in some difficult economic times," Ellis wrote, "and we are eternally grateful for this expertise."



## WINNER

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



**David H. Voorhees, CCM, CCE, ECM**  
General Manager/COO  
Big Canyon Country Club  
Newport Beach, Calif.

When you're the point person for a \$60 million renovation at a club called Big Canyon that involves the complete demolition and rebuilding of a clubhouse, two years of operating out of temporary facilities, and significant capital assessments for members, the potential will be great, if anything doesn't go right, for a lot of wisecracks about how Big Canyon should be renamed the Big Money Pit.

But all David Voorhees has heard is effusive praise for how he not only successfully orchestrated one of the most ambitious projects ever seen in the club industry, but produced some of the most impressive results.

"Our finished new clubhouse is extraordinary," wrote the club's President, Randall C. Luce, in nominating Voorhees for Excellence in Club Management honors. "But more importantly, the way David Voorhees orchestrated and managed the process of designing the new facility, moving out of the old one, operating out of temporary facilities and then coordinating the opening of a new clubhouse was more than extraordinary—it's remarkable.

"Our membership was truly surprised and ecstatic by how well our club operated during the construction period," Luce continued. "Many commented that the management staff did such a good job, our membership grew stronger and closer."

The planning of interim operations during the project was so successful that Big Canyon was able to retain most of its staff and maintain golf operations, as well as 90% of daily member dining levels, for the two-year period. Once the new 62,000-sq. ft. clubhouse opened at the start of 2009, daily member meals at Big Canyon jumped almost immediately by a third, prompting extra nights for both casual dinner service and elegant dining.



Big Canyon Country Club

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



**Thomas P. Spellman, CCM, ECM**  
General Manager/COO  
Genesee Valley Club  
Rochester, N.Y.



One mark of management excellence is having people who work for you get recognized for their own achievements—and then being happy to stand aside and let them get the accolades. That was the case with the 2009 Excellence in Management Awards, when the long-time Assistant Manager at the Genesee Valley Club (GVC), John Corey, was recognized as a “rising star” in the industry. Corey was quick to give credit to his boss of the past four years, Thomas Spellman, for creating a management environment

in which Corey and all of his GVC colleagues could flourish.

Now, Spellman has earned ECM recognition of his own, for these accomplishments that GVC has achieved under his direction, as reported by Past President Peter Greendyke:

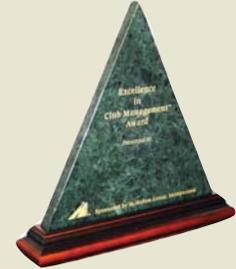
- A 99% approval/member satisfaction rating for dining;
- Club events attracting record attendance;
- The club is coming off two highly profitable years, is debt-free, and just paid for a major facilities improvement in cash.

“Our club, as they say, is firing on all cylinders,” said Greendyke. “Quite frankly, I’m not sure what more we could ask for from our club manager.”

## Celebrating In Style

In addition to presentations at their individual clubs that will be held throughout the coming year, the 2010 Excellence in Club Management winners, along with those from previous years, will be recognized at an Awards Dinner to be held on February 24 at The Country Club of Orlando (Fla.), in conjunction with the 2011 World Conference of the Club Managers Association of America. The Awards Dinner will be sponsored by Bollinger Insurance Solutions, CYBEX Golf Fitness, Global Allies, and Rodney Strong Vineyards.

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



Awards Dinner Sponsored by:



**RODNEY STRONG**  
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**GLOBAL**  
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# WINNER

2010 Rising Star Award



**Justin M. Kolanz, ECM**  
Assistant General Manager  
The Country Club  
Pepper Pike, Ohio

While in high school, Justin Kolanz competed in track and field, specializing in the pole vault, and he has also coached other athletes. His experience with that event seems to have a lot to do with why Kolanz is now having a successful career in club management, says Robert Josey, CCM, General Manager of The Country Club in Pepper Pike, Ohio.

“In his five years [as The Country Club’s Assistant GM], Justin has constantly been reaching higher and looking to raise the bar of excellence for our 121-year-old club,” says Josey. “He not only challenges his staff to excel, but sets an example and encourages other department heads to reach higher.

“This goes for his relationship with me as well,” Josey adds. “I recall one time when he picked out a nice but fairly expensive piece of furniture for an outdoor patio area. When I suggested we could get by with a cheaper alternative, he looked me in the eye and said something to the effect of, ‘I don’t think that’s up to the standards that Rob Josey taught me.’”

In nominating Kolanz for Rising Star honors, Josey credits him for helping The Country Club be on track in 2010 for one of its most successful years ever, attracting almost 60 new members. Kolanz has also helped The Country Club take food-and-beverage revenues to unprecedented heights, Josey says, primarily by improving service. “He has used his commercial restaurant background to challenge his staff to meet and exceed the service level found at other Cleveland-area restaurants,” Josey reports.