

Winning Ways

McMahon Group, Inc., the St. Louis-based consulting firm, and *Club & Resort Business* have announced the 2014 recipients of the Excellence in Club Management (ECM) Awards, 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 for the ECM Awards; the **McMahon Group**

and *Club & Resort Business* are not involved in the selection of the winners.

The Selection Committee for the 2014 Awards was chaired by Kevin Vitale, CCM, General Manager/COO of Baltusrol Golf Club, Springfield, N.J. 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, www.clubmanageraward.com.

In-depth articles detailing the achievements that led to the selection of each of the 2014 winners will appear in issues of *Club & Resort Business* throughout 2015.

WINNER

Country/Golf Clubs with 600 or More Full-Privilege Members
(The James H. Brewer Award)



Christine Pooler, CCM, ECM
General Manager
Merion Golf Club
Ardmore, Pa.

Preparing for a U.S. Open is daunting enough for any club manager. Preparing for the fifth one in the history at a storied property like Merion Golf Club, especially when it was deemed unlikely after the 1981 Open that the club would be given another chance to have a major in golf's modern era, raises the stakes even higher.

But leading up to the 2013 U.S. Open, Christine Pooler not only prepared the Merion team to execute what was hailed as one of the most successful championships in many

years, she did so while also helping the club "post profitable results [and complete] several major capital projects on time and within budget," according to Merion President Harry H. Hill, III.

Overall, Pooler's eight years as Merion's GM have been marked by progressive change that has seen the historic club set new standards with a series of major improvements to its facilities. These include its groundbreaking \$3.8 million "Green Operations" course maintenance facility; a \$2.4 million short-game practice area, tee and range built over four years; and the \$5 million, four-season pavilion that was added to Merion's historic clubhouse in 2014. Under Pooler's leadership, Hill says, "the experience of the membership and their guests has been improved to levels we have not previously seen."



WINNER

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



Mark Bado, MCM, CCE, ECM
General Manager/COO
The Kansas City Country Club
Mission Hills, Kan.

The litmus test for club management excellence comes when a membership is divided about the need for a major capital project. When KCCC wanted to undertake a \$4 million renovation in 2013-14 that included a new irrigation system and pumphouse, new tee boxes, renovated greens, tree removal, new plantings and clubhouse improvements, initially the project was not "universally embraced by the entire membership," reports KCCC President John MacDonald.

"Mark [Bado] showed incredible patience with members who were concerned about the project while providing strong support and guidance to the Board," MacDonald continues. "[His] attention to detail [and] ability to communicate the core elements of the [project]...clearly validated the decision to move forward with the plan.

"Throughout the entire process, Mark was the consummate professional and diplomat," MacDonald adds. "By focusing on the long-term benefits and economic necessities of the capital improvements, Mark and the Board were able to assure the membership that this solution was in the best interest of the club.

"Now that the project is complete, the membership has rave reviews for the finished course and clubhouse," MacDonald reports. "None of this would have been possible without Mark's strong leadership and guidance."



A Celebration of Excellence

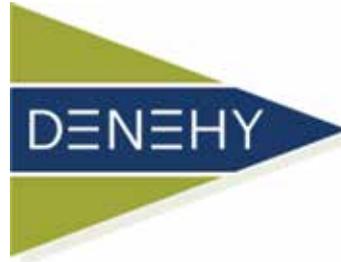
In addition to presentations at their individual clubs that will be held in the coming year, the 2014 Excellence in Club Management winners, along with those from previous years and those participating in the judging, will be recognized at an Awards Dinner to be held at the San Antonio



Country Club on Tuesday, March 10, in conjunction with the Club Managers Association of America's 2015 World Conference.

This year's Awards Dinner will be sponsored by **ClubCorp**, **Denehy Club Thinking Partners**, **Preferred Club**, **Toro** and **Yamaha Golf Car**.

CLUBCORP®



WINNER

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



Gerald Marvel, CCM, ECM
COO/General Manager
The Club at UK's Spindletop Hall
Lexington, Ky.

The revival of two clubs affiliated with the University of Kentucky (UK) has been directed by a manager whose resume should only be printed in one color: a deep shade of Kentucky blue. After starting in 1989 as a busboy at the UK Faculty Club, Gerald Marvel became its Dining Room Supervisor and Food and Beverage Director, before being named Director of Operations in 1995 for another UK facility, Spin-

dletop Hall, located in an historic mansion in the scenic horse country on the outskirts of Lexington.

In 2004, Marvel was named Spindletop Hall's General Manager, and his title was expanded to COO/GM two years later. As its top manager, he has guided Spindletop Hall through a series of challenges and helped it "[take] on the aura of a real club," reports its 2014 President, Dr. Don Frazier. Marvel actually made that aura tangible and permanent by leading a rebranding effort that produced a new name, The Club at Spindletop Hall, in 2010. On January 1 of this year, the brand was further refined to The Club at UK's Spindletop Hall, to continue to strengthen the connection with the university and its alumni network.

Because of his leadership at Spindletop Hall, Marvel was also named in 2011 as General Manager of the faculty club where he began. After its own rebranding, it is now The Hilary J. Boone Center at the University of Kentucky.



WINNER

2014 Rising Star Award



Nick Markel, CCM, ECM
Assistant General Manager
The Country Club
Pepper Pike, Ohio

As one of the U.S.'s oldest and most prestigious private clubs, it's not surprising that The Country Club has spawned many of the most accomplished managers in the club industry. Nick Markel's recognition as the "2014 Rising Star" marks the second time in five years that the winner in this category has come from the club whose shorthand name, "Country," has become synonymous with club-management excellence.

The case for Markel's recognition, according to his General Manager, Robert Josey, CCM, goes well beyond his tangible contributions to the club's success. Markel has been an "instrumental part" in helping the club realize a 17% gain in food-and-beverage revenues in his three years since coming from Cherokee Town and Country Club in Atlanta to be The Country Club's Assistant GM, Josey reports. He has also led implementation of innovative programs in many other recreational and social areas, and is currently directing a major construction project for a new golf cart storage facility.

Equally valuable, Josey adds, Markel has helped to infuse The Country Club with an atmosphere of "positive change" and a "push for excellence in all areas," and has "conveyed this drive to our staff." In all, Josey says, Markel has emerged as "a great asset not just to me and 'Country,' but to the entire club management profession."

