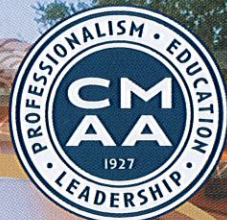


November/December 2009

CLUB



MANAGEMENT

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Michael McCarthy

Named *Club Management's*
2009 Club Executive of the Year



Congratulations, Michael



CLUB EXECUTIVE
OF THE YEAR
2009



If you don't know Michael McCarthy, just pick up the phone, dial Addison Reserve Country Club, and ask to be connected to any department. Ask the person on the other end of the line about the man who manages the club. Ask about his leadership style. Ask about the team that surrounds him. Bluntly ask, "Do you like your job?"

I'll bet breakfast at the Hash House in San Diego that you get a positive response every time you make that random call. That's what made our 2009 Club Executive of the Year's nomination so impressive. Not only has he made significant improvements at Addison Reserve since his arrival in 2007 (learn more on page 20), but 89 employees signed a letter supporting his management style, and nearly 30 others sent personal messages. Some snippets:

- "Mr. McCarthy's philosophy and law of the land here is, 'If we don't have the answers, we seek the means of acquiring them in order to provide the best service to our membership.'"
- "His management style is unique and cutting edge to meet the demands of the new era of country clubs."
- "He spends many hours doing his best to develop each and every one of us not only as managers, but leaders in our fields."

• "Because of his caring attitude, I would say that we probably have one of the most satisfied and happy staffs you could find anywhere in the business."

Michael's board and other industry leaders also had wonderful things to say and likely would agree with one judge who referred to McCarthy as the "biggest turnaround story" of the Club Executive of the Year candidates.

We had an impressive cadre of executives nominated this year, and we'd like to thank those who sent in nominations and encourage them to participate next year. We'd also like to extend a special thanks to the confidential panel of industry leaders who took time out of their busy schedules to review the nominations and select a winner.

We'll honor Michael and celebrate his achievement on February 9, at an invitation-only reception at CMAA's World Conference on Club Management in San Diego. The aforementioned comments from his staff are a reflection of the intangibles he brings to the club executive role, and we look forward to adding his name to the scroll of distinguished Club Executives of the Year.


Jill Andreu
Managing Editor

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Giant steps

CLUB EXECUTIVE
OF THE YEAR

2009



Michael McCarthy named Club Manager of the Year after turning around Addison Reserve

By Nick Gustav

Michael McCarthy grew up in Secaucus, New Jersey, almost within shouting distance of where his beloved New York Giants play their home games. Now, some 1,200 miles away at Addison Reserve Country Club, McCarthy is being credited with pulling off a turnaround that likely would inspire even famed former Giants coach Bill Parcells.

McCarthy, 41, was named *Club Management's* 2009 Club Manager of the Year after supervising extensive facility improvements and providing the Delray Beach, Florida, club with a much-needed steady hand at the helm (he joined Addison Reserve in 2007). The results of his efforts have been improved services for members and sky-high morale among the club's 200 employees.

"Success is measured in happy members, a happy staff and financial stability, and we have it all," wrote Jo Calli, Addison Reserve's director of administration, in her nomination letter. "There is no question in any of our minds that Michael embodies the values, vision and professionalism this award is intended to honor."

McCarthy joined Addison Reserve as CEO and general manager after the club's board evaluated more than 100 resumes of club managers and interviewed about a dozen candidates. Upon his arrival, the club had about \$500,000 in reserves, a figure that jumped to \$3.5 million recently at the end of its fiscal year.

In addition, annual revenue at the club, a golf and tennis community of about 700 luxury homes, has risen from \$15.7 million to \$21 million during McCarthy's tenure, all without a change in the number of members. The club ended its last three fiscal years with significant surpluses. In 2010, the club will continue its improvement plan by redecorating the entire clubhouse, without a dues increase to members.

One of the secrets to the club's success amid a sour economy has been its refusal to cut services.

"Don't cut," McCarthy cautioned other club managers. "When you cut, you upset members. If you take the services away, members are going to leave. I'm not saying people here have gotten through the recession unscathed. Many of our members came



from clubs that were cutting, and those members may not be going back."

Addison Reserve's members took over control of the club from its developer in 2002 and had three general managers before McCarthy. A phalanx of committees made up of members made many of the decisions at the club, a system that left members and staff frustrated and threatened to sink the club. When McCarthy was hired, one of his first acts was to disband the committees.

"They were trying to run this business with volunteer leadership," McCarthy said. "Employees didn't have a lot of direction and didn't know who was in charge, and that led to a lot of chaos here. I told them that professional management needs to run your business."

Time for Change

McCarthy believes in total transparency, and insisted on open board meetings. His board president, Fernando Leal, has been in full support of his leadership and governance model. Clear guidelines were set from day one with a responsibility matrix that spelled out what decisions would be made by the board and management. Leal believes the board has four key responsibilities: hiring and firing only one employee: the CEO; approving – but not creating – the budget; developing a strategic plan; and setting policy. Virtually all other decisions should be made by management.

Another facet of McCarthy's management success is his willingness to listen to members. To that end, McCarthy meets with members every Thursday afternoon, visiting with the club's women for "Tea and Topics" sessions one week and speaking with the club's men for "Brats with the Boys" the next. These sessions have given McCarthy great feedback from members and have afforded him the opportunity to address their concerns and thwart any rumors about the club.

McCarthy believes a club is only as good as its staff, so he rewards employees when the club succeeds. Every staff member at Addison Reserve is part of the profit improvement program where they are rewarded when the club exceeds its goals.

When McCarthy arrived at Addison Reserve, there was a 40 percent annual turnover rate among the club's workers, but McCarthy has helped drive it down to 3 percent, and members have noticed the difference.

"It all ties into the attitude," McCarthy said. "We've created a culture where the attitude of the employees is super positive. They love their jobs. If you have happy employees, you have happier members who are more appreciative of the job the employees do. And when employees feel appreciated, they're more willing to work hard for the members."

Members also are reaping the benefits of a \$10 million Esplanade project that features a spa and fitness complex, a casual-dining restaurant and a children's activity studio, and the club recently renovated 27 holes on its golf course. The improvements helped Addison Reserve become recognized by the Club Leaders Forum as a Platinum Club of America in 2009.

Kurt Kuebler, CCM, of Kopplin & Kuebler, which co-sponsors the Club Executive of the Year award, said of McCarthy: "We have both (he and Dick Kopplin, CCM) known Mike for many years and watched first-hand as his career has developed. More importantly, we've seen how effectively he has been able to take his dynamic core leadership and management beliefs and overlay them in an environment like Addison Reserve, where they have propelled him and the club to never-before-seen heights of success and member satisfaction."

Added Henry DeLozier, principal of co-sponsor Global Golf Advisors, "Michael McCarthy is the epitome of excellence. He is a most deserving recipient of the Club Management award that recognizes the Club Executive of the Year. We, at Global Golf Advisors, are privileged to honor such a remarkable executive."



Career Started Early

McCarthy's career began at age 13, when he became a dishwasher at a bar in his hometown. Within two weeks, he was cooking for customers after the woman in charge of the grill became ill.

McCarthy worked at Italian restaurants throughout high school before enrolling in Hudson County Community College's culinary arts program. Professor Gary Bensky became his first mentor and helped him get a job as executive chef at Lake Mohawk Country Club in Sparta, New Jersey.

"Before that, I never knew what a country club was," McCarthy said. "There are no country clubs in Secaucus. I never knew one or got to see one, but when I got that job at 19 years old, it was like I'd died and gone to heaven."

"And Gary taught me about being a professional and always handling myself in that fashion."

McCarthy worked at Lake Mohawk from 1988-95 before a four-year stint as general manager at Greenbrook Country Club in North Caldwell, New Jersey. He then moved south to BallenIsles Country Club in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, where he eventually became COO and general manager.

McCarthy enjoys fishing and taking skiing trips with Irene, his wife of 15 years, and two daughters, Molly and Emma. He's also involved with charities such as the Palm Beach County Special Olympics and Toys for Tots.

A self-described workaholic, he said he got better about putting family above his job after he lost his mother, Julia, to kidney cancer at the age of 65 in 2007. "Mom made me think about what was really important in life. Those family values will always be first and everything else will follow."

But it's still quite common for him to e-mail colleagues at 4 a.m. before heading to the gym and then to the office.

"I'm a passionate guy – everyone knows that," McCarthy said. "I don't sleep. My entrepreneurial skills are always kicking in at 3 or 4 in the morning."

McCarthy said his management philosophy is simple: "Surround yourself with the most talented individuals around, spread your message of constant improvement for yourself and the business, be persistent in pursuit of excellence, lead by example with a great attitude because that's everything, and constantly show appreciation and respect for employees." ■



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