



By Derek Wilson, CMCA

Derek is an onsite community manager with Community Association Management Professionals (CAMP). He is part of the team that oversees the operations at Oak Creek Club Homeowners Association located in Upper Marlboro, Maryland, the WMCCAI “2016 Community Association of the Year” in the large-scale category. Derek has worked in various roles in the real estate industry since 1999 to include real estate sales, multifamily and mixed-use property management, and homeowner associations.



## How to Achieve *the* Community Association of the Year Recognition

Have you ever thought about your community being recognized as the Community Association of the Year (CAY)? Or what it takes to win this recognition? If so, please continue reading as I would like to share my journey of being a part of a community (Oak Creek Club Homeowners Association, Upper Marlboro, Maryland) that was recognized as the WMCAI Large Scale Community Association of the Year for 2016.

The CAY Award recognizes the communities that best demonstrate excellence in all facets of association operations and governance based on Best Practices recommended by CAI. To achieve this recognition it requires participation from all levels of leadership within the community. This includes your

board of directors, committee volunteers, and your management team.

**Achieving this award takes far more than just beautifully landscaped grounds and well-appointed homes.**

Having an Olympic-size swimming pool, walking trails, fitness center, gated community, restaurant, and golf access within the community will not guarantee your community a chance of winning this award. The best way to achieve this recognition is through a well maintained and managed operation with engaged residents, members of the board, and committees

Preparing for this recognition started years ago when the developer envisioned the community and the lifestyle that it would afford those that called it home. The preparation for recognition has continued through the years by having good management practices, strong leadership from the board of directors, and volunteers on the committees giving of their time to make sure that their community continues to excel. While having residents that care about the community that they call home.

Having a board of directors that understand community association leadership has been valuable in leading the community towards award-winning recognition. Our board meets regularly to keep the business of the association moving forward. They are informed, engaged and does not take their responsibility lightly. The board and the management team have a good line of communication and business relationship which has allowed for the business of the association to be accomplished.

Our board of directors encourages participation at the committee levels. The board encourages transparency and communicating out to the community. A recent example of this is when our Grounds Committee worked on a recommendation to install pet waste stations in the community. The board wanted to make sure that the committee heard from the membership at large and suggested that signage was put out at each proposed location. In addition to the signage, several communication pieces were sent out to the community advising of the committee meeting dates to discuss this recommendation along with providing an email address for the members that would like to share their comments but could not make it out to one of the meetings. As a result of the committee’s work, it was decided that pet waste stations were not something the community needed to move forward with at that time.

Another example would be our annual budget preparation process. The board encourages the Budget and Finance Committee to be transparent during this process and for the membership to participate. There were multiple communications sent out to the

membership advising of the dates for the meetings as well as additional meetings scheduled during the budget preparation season to afford those that would like to be a part of the process an opportunity.

The board's effective leadership and engagement, has assisted with having productive well run board meetings; where the membership is encouraged to participate. The board ensures that comments and inquiries are received and responded to in a respectful manner. They also encourage educational growth about community association for the leaders in the community and the membership at large.

## Having effective committees play a large role in being an award-winning community.

Our committees maintain a regular monthly meeting schedule. The committees welcome participation from the membership at the committee meetings. The volunteers participate in an annual jump start meeting hosted by the board and management. The meeting is an opportunity for the board to review the goals for the year, share their appreciation for the successes and share best practices. Our committees are engaged in the process and have been instrumental in assisting with moving recommendations forward to the board.

One example of how the committees contribute to an award-winning community would be our Grounds Committee speed mitigation awareness campaign that brought awareness to our community around the established speed limit within the community and pedestrian best practices. This campaign resulted in a recommendation for the installation of additional signage within the community and overall a better-informed community around the benefits of maintaining appropriate speed and pedestrian best practices within the community. As part of this process, the committee created informational fliers that were sent out to the membership with various speed mitigation best practices. The committee also participated in the process of researching best practices around speed mitigation and went out into the community to assess the potential locations for additional signage. There is great value in having informed and engaged committee volunteers. The committee volunteers have been helpful with sharing their knowledge around various initiatives within the community with their neighbors, further ensuring the transparency of the association.

Another important layer in achieving award-winning recognition is having the right team in place managing the day to day operation. A management team that understands association management and follows the best practices will help to ensure your community is operating in an award-winning manner. Some important attributes of a successful management team should include attention to detail, leadership ability, communication skills, accountability, knowledgeable, engaged, and empowered. These attributes are important to assist with managing tasks such as community inspections, oversight of the financials, accounts receivables and payables, vendor management, capital project management, grounds management, risk management, and enhancement recommendations are just a few of the areas that an award-winning management team will consistently excel in.

As you may have gathered by now, there is no magic formula to follow for your community to be recognized as an award-winning community but rather a journey that involves the community. In line with the old saying "it takes a village to raise a child," in the association industry, "it takes a community to achieve Community Association of the Year Award." 

## COME AND JOIN THE ZALCO TEAM!



**ESTABLISHED IN 1971,**

Zalco Realty, Inc. is one of the Washington area's premier real estate management firms.

### Offering A Comprehensive Menu Of Customized Real Estate Services Under One Roof:

- CONSULTING
- SET-UP SERVICES
- IN-HOUSE ENGINEERING
- FACILITIES MAINTENANCE
- FINANCIAL SERVICES WITH IN-HOUSE CPAs
- ONLINE PAYMENT & REPORTING
- FULL & LIMITED SERVICE OPTIONS

### Providing Service For:

- CONDOMINIUMS
- COOPERATIVES
- HOMEOWNERS ASSOCIATIONS
- APARTMENTS

### Contact us today!

Arthur N. Dubin, CPM, PCAM, CMCA  
President  
301-495-6633  
adubin@zalco.com  
www.zalco.com

AMO • IREM • AAMC • CAI