



By Ron Dionne

Ron serves as the Vice President of the Westridge Swim and Racquet Club Homeowners Association in Woodbridge, Virginia. He also serves as a member of the Covenants Committee and is an active volunteer in the community.

WHY WE DIDN'T SUBMIT TO COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION OF THE YEAR + HOW IT HELPED US GROW

“If it ain't broke, don't fix it.” We've all heard this expression and it is generally true. Why tinker with something that is doing the job and risk causing a problem? Such was the case with my HOA, Westridge Swim and Racquet Club. When I first moved into this community three years ago, I jumped right in and became a part of the management team with a seat on the Board of Trustees and as a member of the Covenants Committee. As I sat in meetings learning the ropes, and after reading articles in Quorum, I realized that we were using best practices in nearly every area. We clearly did not need to change since we were doing great.

In 2016, I was asked to write the essay for the Community Association of the Year Awards. We had won this award before and

I was anxious to bring home another title for our HOA. But, this time we didn't win. When I was again asked to write the essay in 2017, I accepted at first and then gave serious thought about the process. Yes, I could go through the motions again, but was there a way to improve our chances? Was this award rigged for newer communities with lots of “stuff”?

In my head, I decided to rebrand this award as Community of the Year. The “Association” part was on auto pilot, doing everything well. The part that was missing was COMMUNITY. I approached the Board and recommended that we skip our participation in 2017, and focus instead on how to make Westridge a better place to live for our residents. Balancing budgets, addressing grievances, holding meetings, maintenance,

reserve studies, and winning awards, etc., all have a proper place, but those alone would not make Westridge “The Natural Place to Be,” as our masthead states. Instead, we had to energize our people and show them how WE can become a great community.

We read each question asked in the Community Association of the Year Award application to decipher WHY that question was asked. The results of this analysis paid off. For a successful community, it is not enough to have great amenities or proper governance – you have to nurture good citizens.

And so, we set out to improve our community relations and programs. We reactivated a social committee, formed a pool guidance committee, had brainstorming sessions, met with neighborhood boards, renovated the clubhouse, and installed an electronic bulletin board...and, lots more. We are investing in our people and are INVOLVING our community, so winning an award is moot.

In 2018, Westridge knows that our community is a winner, title or not! Did I write the essay for this year's award? You bet I did! I'm darned proud of our HOA and its people. Submitting that essay was my way of showing how Westridge *fixed what wasn't broken*. Putting words into action makes a difference.

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