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CAI awards designations to community assoc. managers

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Community Associations Institute (CAI) has awarded professional designations to more than 350 community association managers, among them 295 Association Management Specialist (AMS) designation recipients and 67 recipients of the Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM) designation which is the highest professional designation awarded to community managers by the institute.

CAI's designation programs were established in the 1990s and early 2000s to elevate the level of professionalism in the community association marketplace, a dynamic segment of the U.S. housing market that now encompasses more than 60 million Americans in an estimated 304,000 association-governed communities. To date, more than 1,860 managers have earned the PCAM designation while 4,832 have earned the AMS.

Professional Community Association Management

As most community associations and managers know, professional community association management is designed to aid the board in successfully overseeing the many tasks associated with the effective management of the community. Professional community association management isn't new and has in fact been available for many years but it wasn't until the late 1960s that firms began to specialize in this industry. Although experience and education have increased the professionalism of community association management firms over the past several years, according to CAI's Guide for Association Practitioners, Choosing a Management Company, the number of experienced firms still falls short compared to those in other property management specialties.

The services of professional community association management companies' are retained by associations to preserve assets, maintain value, establish continuity and provide professional assistance in a variety of management and financial matters. While providing these services, community association managers must also have a basic understanding of human behavior, real estate and corporate law, management fundamentals, communications, accounting, budget process, taxation, and insurance to do their jobs efficiently. And in addition, they must also be familiar with federal and state laws, and other regulatory matters. It takes time to find, train and retain managers with sufficient knowledge and skills and it also takes a budget that allows the association to pay salaries commensurate with these qualifications and experience.

With more than 60 million Americans living in an estimated 304,000 association-governed communities throughout the country, more than a million volunteer leaders, have a fiduciary responsibility which requires them to make decisions that can have a profound financial and social impact on their associations and owners. Receiving professional and accurate guidance on issues such as reserves, maintenance, insurance, budgets, contracts and the law can make the difference between a well managed association and an association in chaos. Many experts who work in the community association industry including attorneys, accountants and engineers to name a few must

earn degrees and pass tests to be certified. So why would a board hire professionals who may not have the qualifications or experience to look after their homes and their community?

CAI and NBC-CAM Designations and Certification

CAI designations and the National Board of Certification for Community Association Managers (NBC-CAM) certification help associations in making informed decisions about the professionals they hire by ensuring that managers who have completed the designation and certification requirements have the knowledge and experience to provide the best possible service to the association. So that volunteer leaders can make responsible decisions when contracting for services in their communities, it is important that they have knowledge about credentialed professionals and an understanding of what those credentials mean. Managers who hold CAI and NBC-CAM designations and certification have made a substantial commitment and investment in their education and career, as well as the welfare of the communities they serve. Shouldn't community association volunteer leaders make the same commitment and investment in their own community? To help ensure that your association has the expert guidance you need, look for professionals with these designations and certifications.

Certified Manager of Community Associations

The only national certification program designed exclusively for condominium, cooperative, and homeowner association managers, the Certified Manager of Community Associations (CMCA) program launched in 1995 provides standards for association management and gives homeowners and boards confidence in their managers' fundamental knowledge and ability to provide professional service. Managers with this certification have successfully completed CAI's M-100: The Essentials of Community Association Management course and have also passed the National Certification Examination administered by (NBC-CAM). Along with adhering to standards of professional conduct, managers must continue their education with additional course work every two years to maintain their certification.

Association Management Specialist™ (AMSTM)

Introduced by CAI in 1990, the AMS designation builds upon the knowledge gained in earning the CMCA requiring that AMS designees have at least two years of professional management experience and have passed one of CAI's 200-level courses which include:

- *M-201 Facilities Management
- *M-202 Association Communications
- *M-203 Community Leadership
- *M-204 Community Governance
- *M-205 Risk Management
- *M-206 Financial Management

AMS designees also show their commitment to their profession by complying with CAI's Manager Code of Ethics and must continue with additional education requirements every three years to maintain the designation.

Professional Community Association Manager (PCAM)

The PCAM designation is the highest professional recognition available nationwide to managers who specialize in community association management. Created by CAI in 1982, managers who have earned the PCAM designation have displayed a significant commitment to the industry and through extensive education requirements, they have gained an understanding of all aspects of community association management.

To obtain the PCAM designation, managers must earn the AMS designation and maintain the CMCA certification, pass all of CAI's 200-level courses, complete an extensive Case Study which is a comprehensive examination of an actual community association, combining classroom instruction with an extensive on-site inspection which explores a community's profile in depth through meetings with the community's managers.

Maintaining the designation requires additional education every three years. A manager with a PCAM designation is a dedicated professional at the top of their field.

Accredited Association Management Company (AAMC)

The AAMC accreditation is awarded to companies that specialize in community association management and that are committed to providing unique and diverse services to their clients. A company that holds this designation requires at least 50% of the company's managers must hold designations or certifications and the senior manager must hold a PCAM designation. In addition, the company must have a minimum of three years experience providing community association management service. An Accredited Association Management Company commits to upholding the highest ethical standards and is required to meet CAI's financial management and reporting standards.

How to Find a Credentialed Professional

Community associations should look for the certification and designation letters (CMCA, AMS, PCAM, AAMC) behind the names of management companies and management professionals who work for them or those they might hire. During the hiring process, ask candidates if they hold a professional certification or designation. For a complete and updated listing of designated professionals log on to CAI's Web site at www.caionline.org and click on Directory of Credentialed Professionals to search for a credentialed manager in your area.

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