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Best of the Best by Needa Groskind

June 25, 2015 - Spotlights

Anyone ending up by mistake in the ballroom of the Burlington Marriott on the evening of March 13th might have assumed they had wandered not only into the wrong space but into the wrong time period - circa 1920s, to be precise. That was the theme of CAI-NE's annual banquet, and to say that everyone was "into it" this year would be an understatement. Women dressed in flapper-style dresses, complete with boas, feathers and beads and men sporting boutonnieres, bow ties (and the occasional gangster look) filled a room that had been transformed into a speakeasy. With jazz playing in the background, "cigars" on the tables, a casino in operation and dancing in full swing on the floor, Elliot Ness and Al Capone would not have been at all out of place. CAI-NE members who have attended many banquets over the years said this was definitely one of the best.

The main event, as always, was the presentation of the chapter's annual awards. Outgoing President Frank Lombardi and incoming President Janet Aronson (partners, respectively, in Goodman, Shapiro, & Lombardi, LLC and Marcus, Errico, Emmer & Brooks, PC) did the honors, recognizing the achievements, service and contributions of managers, board members, vendors and community associations.

The Hall of Fame Award, CAI-NE's most prestigious honor, went to Pat Brawley, CMCA, AMS, PCAM, owner of Central Management and Consulting Services. The award recognizes members who have served the organization and the industry "with honor and distinction" throughout their careers. In presenting it, Lombardi described Pat as "a consummate advocate" for community associations, "a reliable and ever-available resource to committees, members and staff," and a tireless volunteer, developing content for educational seminars (for CAI-national as well as CAI-NE), speaking at chapter programs and conferences, and contributing articles regularly to Condo Media. As a member and chair of many committees over the years, Pat developed and implemented numerous educational programs and has been "instrumental" in their success, Lombardi continued. That list includes the annual banquet, which Kansky helped to create 19 years ago. "She has always recognized the importance of volunteers and the role they play in community associations and CAI," Lombardi added. The award, he said, recognizes her years of service to the association, the "unflinching support" she has provided and the contributions she has made to CAI-NE and the condominium industry.

Outstanding Service

Matt Gaines, a partner at Marcus, Errico, Emmer & Brooks, PC, received the chapter's "Outstanding Service Award," recognizing volunteers who have gone "above and beyond" in contributing their time and "sharing without hesitation their expertise in advancing the interests of the industry."

As a long-term member and 2014 chairman of the Massachusetts Legislative Action Committee, Lombardi noted, "Matt has tirelessly championed legislative causes, meeting with legislators, testifying before legislative committees and rallying support through effective grassroots efforts and

calls to action."

In addition to his tireless work on the LAC, Matt has coordinated legislative update seminars for board members and managers, spoken at homeowner and manager programs, volunteered at countless chapter events (including the annual Conference and Expo and golf tournament, and contributed articles to CondoMedia.

Most recently, he facilitated a training program for managers and board members at which local officials explained the new energy reporting ordinances affecting condominiums in Boston and Cambridge.

The industry colleagues who nominated Mark noted that his efforts "have benefited every community association in the state."

Manager of the Year

Association Manager of the Year award went to Jennifer Pappas, CMCA, of American Properties Team.

The on-site manager of Sheffield Heights Condominium Association for the past 16 years, "Jennifer is trusted, respected and even loved by all in the community," Aronson noted in presenting the award. The board members and vendors who nominated her cited her skilled coordination and oversight of many major projects, including the replacement of underground power lines, repaving the community's parking lot and updating of the association's website and notification system. The holiday party and end-of-summer social Jennifer organizes every year "are widely acclaimed," Aronson noted, "and have made a significant contribution to community spirit and goodwill."

Volunteers of the Year

Barbara Reilly and Rich Powers were selected Chapter Volunteer and Association Volunteer of the year, respectively. The chapter award recognizes an individual whose efforts have furthered the goals of CAI and the chapter, which Barbara has done in many ways and on many levels, Lombardi noted. The owners' representative on the CAI-NE, board, "Barbara presents a great perspective from that side of the table -- and I should know," Lombardi added, "because my firm represented the condominium association Barbara headed as president" for several years. In addition to serving on the CAI-NE board, Barbara assists regularly with chapter programs and is a frequent contributor to CondoMedia, for which she writes the popular Homeowner column, among other articles.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of the communities they serve," Lombardi noted, and Rich Powers, the Association Volunteer of the Year, illustrates why that is true. Chairperson of the Great Island Homeowners Association in Yarmouth, Rich contributes countless hours to his community. He serves as the board's liaison to the landscape committee, plays an active role on the sports and veterans committees and runs the association "knowledgably and efficiently," Lombardi said.

Creative Solutions

Barbara Kansky, on-site manager at Devon Wood Condominium Trust, won the "Creative Solutions" award, recognizing individuals who solve difficult problems in nontraditional ways. The challenge she faced: Designing, financing and implementing a plan to replace the entire building envelope at this 398-unit community. This daunting project required coordinating the efforts of five board members, three engineering firms, two banks and three attorneys - and persuading owners to support the project.

"It involved meeting after meeting, phone call after phone call and presentation after presentation," Aronson said. When the community remained divided after two "traditional" community-wide meetings, Kansky took a different tack: "She invited the entire community to participate in an

orchestrated onsite walk-through led by one of the engineering firms. The turnout was excellent," Aronson noted, "and the impact was significant." Owners who had been divided reached a consensus, and the project is now under way. "This award recognizes the perseverance, creativity and personal commitment Barbara used to overcome complexity, chaos and disagreement."

Bob Linney, CMCA, AMS, with Great North Property Management, received the Recruiter of the Year award, for recruiting the most new members last year and Statewide RM was CAI-NE's Service Professional of the Year, recognizing "exemplary service" to associations boards and residents. The firm, which provides waterproofing and masonry services, was cited for its "extensive knowledge and outstanding communication skills resulting in smooth-running projects and happy trustees and owners."

Recognizing Associations

CAI-NE recognizes the achievements of associations as well as individuals. The Green at Shrewsbury Condominiums was singled out in the Landscape/Community Beautification category for transforming an unused wooded site from "an eyesore" into a magnificent playground area, with state-of-the-art equipment, picnic tables and benches that have made the area a popular gathering place for residents.

Adams Farm condominium in Shrewsbury won two awards recognizing "Excellence in Service" for both Special Events and Communication. In the special events category, the community was nominated for creating a vibrant clubhouse "with community spirit in mind." As Lombardi explained in presenting the award: "Residents can often be found taking in a show on the flat screen T, cooking a gourmet meal in the caterer's kitchen, or reading a storybook with grandchildren in the 'Grandchildren's Nook,." An active and creative social committee keeps things humming with a regular schedule of programs and events, all posted on a website "created for the sole purpose of engaging residents in dialogue."

The communications component of this dual nomination targeted this website, along with a separate social website (where photos and conversation can be posted) and a linked website for conducting association business. The association communicates effectively with residents, Lombardi noted, and "it has captured the true meaning of an active adult community lifestyle."

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