



# Profiles *in* Excellence

**Tim Bakels, CCM, CCE**, is chief operating officer and general manager at Colleton River Plantation Club in Bluffton, SC

**Q:** Some people take a lifetime to decide what they want to do with their careers. You knew before you turned 16. What drew you to the hospitality business?

**A:** I had an uncle in the business who inspired me to get into club management. I knew I had to start at the bottom, build a solid foundation and work my way up. So the day I turned 16, I rode my bike to Howard Johnson, a local restaurant, and started up as a dishwasher.

**Q:** You've described yourself as the "luckiest guy in the world." Why do you feel that way?

**A:** I have been very blessed to have two passions that are also my hobby—my family and my career. Both are the things I enjoy the most.

**Q:** You give credit to a number of people who helped you advance your career. How are you trying to give back to the next generation of club managers?

**A:** I try to give back to the industry I love by mentoring up-and-coming managers. Out of this has come an annual tradition—we call it Bakels' Burgers and Beer—where we take a group out

for dinner at our national conference. These managers are some of the finest. Even today, here at Colleton River, we have some of the brightest young managers. I am always asking them questions, encouraging them to set goals, and sitting down with them for frequent reviews. I am honest, frank, and direct, celebrating their successes as well as their losses.

**Q:** You're famous for some of your sayings. What does "Throw the snake on the table" mean?

**A:** If you have an issue, it's best to deal with it before it bites you. You cannot run from issues; you must go forward and put it all out there, always doing the right thing in as timely a way as possible.

**Q:** Colleton River Club is about to embark on a \$4 million capital improvement program. With the memories of the recession still fresh in members' minds, was that a tough sell?

**A:** The years 2008 to 2012 were especially difficult in this part of the country. We are very lucky to have a forward-thinking leadership and very supportive members who understand you must invest in your community

to preserve assets for the future. We continue to invest in enhancements that improve our member experience, as well as assets that improve the long-term marketability of our properties.

**Q:** What is your management philosophy?

**A:** My management philosophy is a simple one: You must take care of your staff, understand the needs of your members, and know your central goals. We are, of course, in the happiness business. I like to say we are family serving family.



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