

Norm Cates'

# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Eric Schmitz and California Athletic Clubs *"Your Happy and Healthy Place."*



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# CLUB INSIDER

CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

## Eric Schmitz and California Athletic Clubs "Your Happy and Healthy Place."

By: Justin Cates

One of my joys each month is getting to learn the story of another successful club business professional, then sharing it with you. It's a beautiful thing, and it keeps me going each and every month: *motivated, inspired and slightly more educated*. This month, that club business professional is **Eric Schmitz**, *President of California Athletic Clubs*, and folks, let me tell you: **Buckle Up!**

This cover story interview with Eric is one for the ages, and if you take notes throughout, you will fill pages. The vast quantity of information and takeaway nuggets shared cannot be understated, and it is my privilege for *Club Insider* to share it with you. I'd normally write more of an

introduction, but it would not be worthy of the space compared to what you are about to read. So, with that, let's get right into it!

### An Interview With Eric Schmitz, President of California Athletic Clubs

**Club Insider (C.I.)** - Where were you born and where did you grow up?

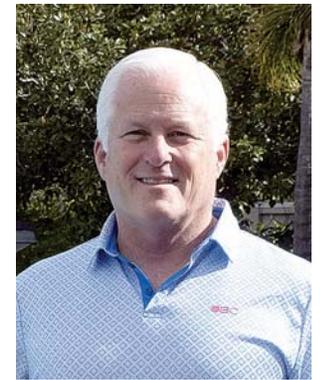
**Eric Schmitz (ES)** - I was born in a town called *Madison*, which is in southern Wisconsin. It's a great town. When I was young, in 2nd grade, we moved out to the country, and I grew up near a little town called *Verona*, which is about five miles southwest of Madison. We lived in a ranch style house with horses and beautiful woods on the property. Growing up in the country as a kid was great; it was an

amazing place to grow up. We had a lot of adventures in nature that shaped my values for the future. Madison, being the capital of Wisconsin, was a pretty big town, and the surrounding areas were small towns. Most of the land was farmland, but now, it has been developed and grown unbelievably. Verona has grown by over 300%.

**C.I.** - Where did you go to school, and what did you study? Did you play any sports?

**ES** - I went to elementary through high school in Verona. My parents were into tennis, so growing up, I played a lot of tennis. We had an AFS student stay with us from South Africa when I was a sophomore. He was an exceptional athlete and finished in the top four in the State in tennis. I also

(See **Eric Schmitz & CAC** Page 10)



Eric Schmitz

## Statement From IHRSA President and CEO, Liz Clark, On Congress' Failure to Provide Relief; Update on Rebranding

**BOSTON, MA** - Despite broad bipartisan and bicameral support, Congress has once again left our industry, which has been disproportionately affected by Government mandates, without Federal relief. The small business owners and millions of employees we represent have faced devastating losses since the beginning of the pandemic, and allowing them to continue to drown is a dereliction of duty by our elected officials. As a result, they've continued to put the health of Americans on the back burner and perpetuated the devastating economic impacts of this pandemic on local studio or gym owners.

Nevertheless, our industry has a lot to be proud of. We stood together in an unprecedented way, and despite Congressional inaction suggesting otherwise, we know the essential role we play in communities all across the country. And, we'll continue to prove them wrong in the weeks, months and years to come.

IHRSA's voice and profile is growing in Washington, D.C., thanks to the tremendous amount of work that has been done over the last two years. It is through this work that we secured over 150 House sponsors and 30 Senate sponsors for the GYMS Act, garnered national attention and

were at the same table as organizations that spend millions of dollars on advocacy every year.

I came to IHRSA to build the advocacy powerhouse the health and fitness industry deserves, and we now have a strong foundation to build upon. I'm impressed and humbled by the dedication and community spirit I've witnessed from IHRSA members and fitness professionals since starting my tenure as *IHRSA President and CEO*.

We are the solution to combating chronic diseases, reducing the growing

(See **Liz Clark** Page 6)



Liz Clark

## Inside the Insider: Edition #340

- Exercise IS Medicine - **By:** Mike Alpert
- "Why Would I Do A Group Fitness Workout?" - **By:** Jeffrey Pinkerton
- A Club's Cycle of Life - **By:** Karen Woodard-Chavez
- Connecticut Supreme Court Rules: Women-Only Gym Areas Violate State Law - **By:** Paul R. Bedard, Esquire
- In Case You Missed Them: March 2022 Headlines
- And, of Course, *Norm's Notes*

## Norm's Notes

■ **Hello Everybody! This is your Club Insider Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993** checking in with our **340th monthly edition of the 29-year-running Labor of Love we call Club Insider!** Read on with vigor Ladies and Gentlemen, as this month, we bring you an amazing cover story interview with **ERIC SCHMITZ**, *President of California Athletic Clubs*. And, as we do every month, we have several articles from industry experts on our **esteemed Contributing Author Team**. Plus, folks, **DON'T FORGET THESE NORM'S NOTES** where I will give you the inside scoop on a lot that's going on in our amazing industry... scoops you won't find anywhere else!

■ **Is America a GREAT Country, or what? God Bless America!** As we continue to face the worldwide pandemic caused by **COVID-19**, sadly... now our great country and Europe is faced with another really scary situation. And, for sure, this one is a monster because of the nuclear weapons and missiles the now rogue country of **RUSSIA** has. Sadly, in the past month, we've seen **RUSSIA** relentlessly attack **UKRAINE**, a country that is about the size of Texas and home to a population of almost 50 million peace-loving citizens. **Let's all**

pray for **UKRAINE** and The World!

■ Out of *Venice, California*, in commemoration of what would've been **JOE GOLD'S 100TH BIRTHDAY**, Gold's Gym brought together icons of the past and the future to celebrate the incredible legacy of community he created in Venice Beach. Members and invited guests were treated to a panel discussion of weightlifting stars, hosted by *bodybuilding personality*, **RICK VALENTE**, and featuring *iconic fitness trainer*, **TR GOODMAN**; the *world's oldest bodybuilder*, **89-year-old JIM ARRINGTON**; and "*The Black Prince of Bodybuilding*" and *Mr. World Universe Winner*, **ROBBIE ROBINSON**. And, *Celebrity Trainer*, **MIKE RYAN**, directed a weightlifting competition across five different exercises to crown the biggest and strongest inside the gym and win a full year membership.

Throughout the afternoon, those in attendance enjoyed craft BBQ while marveling in the debut of the new members lounge and retail space. Various DJs enhanced the vibe, led by none other than Gold's Gym Venice member and *March Men's Health* cover athlete, **JOSEPH BAENA**. As a further nod to the important

connection between the Gold's Gym community and the surrounding Venice Beach community, a portion of retail sales from the day were donated to the *Venice Heritage Foundation*.

"We are extremely proud of our Gold's Gym Venice bodybuilding community and the communities Gold's Gym has fostered around the world," *Gold's Gym CEO*, **SEBASTIAN SCHOEPE**, said. "It's heartening to see what Joe Gold started in 1965 still resonates so passionately with people today."

"Gold's Gym is such an incredible community because you can see people from all walks of life, from all backgrounds, and we support and uplift each other," said *Celebrity Trainer*, **Mike Ryan**. "I've been in gyms all over the world, and nothing beats the feeling of being here. I love seeing professional bodybuilders working in sets with total beginners; everyone is equal and feeds off the energy of being in 'The Mecca' to achieve their goals."

The Gold's Gym fitness empire has created a multi-generational enduring legacy beginning in 1965, with an iconic heritage that few brands today can parallel. Uniting legends such as **ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER** and **LOU FERRIGNO** to the modern-day stars like **SIMEON PANDA**, Gold's Gym has spanned decades of history to become one of the world's largest fitness chains, without losing touch of the Venice roots at the heart of the brand.

■ Years ago, as part of **Faust Roundtable #1**, I became familiar with the work of **DR. KEN BLANCHARD**. Recently, I happened across something by him, and



Norm Cates

I want to pass it on to you. With the goal of helping all of you improve your club's performance financially and otherwise, Ken hereby submits the following guide for your consideration... Try to use time, energy and money to improve things you can control.

### Things you can control:

- Your beliefs;
- Your attitude;
- Your thoughts;
- Your perspective;
- How honest you are;
- Who your friends are;
- What books you read;
- How often you exercise;
- The type of food you eat;
- How many risks you take;
- How kind you are to others;
- How you interpret situations;

(See *Norm's Notes* Page 7)

### About Club Insider

## CELEBRATING 29 YEARS OF TRUST

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### Thanks and Appreciation

At *Club Insider*, we are excited to be in our **29th Year** of this home-based health and fitness club trade publication! The thought that this publication was *founded to serve an industry I truly love*, and so that *I could become a Mister Mom for my son, Justin*, is still *intriguing and amazing* to us. So, I wish to extend my most sincere **Thanks and Appreciation** to everyone who has made this amazing 29-year run possible.

A very sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* go to **Rick Caro**, the *late Dr. Gerry Faust* and the **Faust Executive Roundtable #1** for helping me decide in 1993 what my home-based business would be. *Thanks and Appreciation* to my long-time friends, **Ron Hudspeth** and **Cathy Miller**, formerly of *Atlanta's Hudspeth Report* for the tremendous assistance they provided. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of the folks at **Walton Press** in Monroe, Georgia. They've done an absolutely excellent job for us all these years and have printed every one of our monthly editions! And, of course, *Thanks and Appreciation* to the **United States Postal Service** for sending those editions to our readers! *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **READERS**. Sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to our **Club Insider Advertisers**, past and present, for their kind and dedicated support of this publication. *Thanks and Appreciation* to all of our **Club Insider Contributing Authors**, past and present. *Thanks and Appreciation* to **IHRSA** for all it does for all of us. And, sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to my son, **Justin**, who has become our Publisher and is a truly great partner. You name it and Justin does it each and every month!

Last, but surely not least, this writer who refused to fear failure when many told him he didn't have a chance of surviving the publishing business for even a year did survive. And, he would like to give his sincere *Thanks and Appreciation* to the power that made that survival happen: **God**.

Very sincerely, with love in my heart for you all,

*Norm Cates, Jr.*

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# Exercise IS Medicine

By: **Mike Alpert**

**Publisher's Note:** As always, we want to thank **Mike Alpert** for his valuable article contributions. In many of his articles, it is likely he is sharing something with you that you already know, but Mike does an excellent job of providing new facts, stats and figures that continue to prove *how important Exercise is as a Medicine*. We publish Mike's articles in *Club Insider* for a few reasons: First, we want you to have the updated facts, stats and figures. Second, we want to bring it back to the basics. We hope that *exercise being medicine* is why you are in business. And, finally, please always feel free to print out any of Mike's articles and provide it to members. People are motivated in different ways. Maybe an article such as what you are about to read can motivate one or more of your members, and in that, a life or more can be saved.



When we talk about the benefits of exercise, you need to know that it is really about leading an active and healthy lifestyle. As health club owners and operators, you hope the activity part takes place in your facility, and so do I. But, the reality is that only 20% of the total U.S. population actually goes to a health club or gym. And, a significant percentage of that 80% lead a sedentary lifestyle with many being either overweight or obese.

For two years now, we have lived

with a disease that shut down most of our country and caused so many deaths, and just now, as I write this article, we are returning to a somewhat normal existence again. No one foresaw something this devastating coming. During the pandemic, we were told that those who were most at risk were people over the age of 70 and people who had undergone an organ transplant. I believe that, when the data is published, we will find that the number three cause of death from COVID was people who lead a more sedentary lifestyle, and as a result, were severely overweight or obese. **Consider this fact: 70% of adults living in the United States are overweight, and 39% are obese.**

I am reading **Tony Robbins'** new book, *Life Force*, and I find it fascinating. He talks about the innovation that is taking place in restorative medicine: genomics and biotechnology and the amazing potential to cure so many debilitating diseases. He designated only one chapter (#14) on exercise, but it was an impactful one. He begins this chapter as follows:

"What if I told you there was something you could do for just a few minutes a day that could..."

- Reduce your risk of cancer by 40%;
- Cut your risk of a stroke by 45%;
- Slash your risk of diabetes (the most costly illness in the world to treat) by 50%;
- Half your risk of premature death from heart disease;

I've been fortunate that the *Board, IHRSA Staff, Members* and *Industry Partners* have been tremendously supportive of the changes so far. But, we've only just begun. Up next is our boldest and most public-facing change: **a rebranding.**

While the name IHRSA is well-known in industry circles, it doesn't travel well outside of our sector. When the Association was founded 41 years ago, the name made sense, but those days are far behind us. For instance, racquet sports are an important element of our industry, but they are no longer a primary feature of fitness facilities.

We are currently hard at work strategizing a new name that will better communicate who we are and what our goals are. The new brand will be announced at *IHRSA 2022 in Miami Beach, June 22 - 24.*

## A Name That Describes Our Power and Purpose

This rebranding is more transformation than evolution. We want to be all-inclusive of everything health, wellness,

■ And, if you are a woman, protect you from osteoporosis.

What is this nectar of the gods? The answer is exercise."

According to a study in the *Lancet*, exercising just fifteen minutes a day can slash the risk of death by 14% and boost life expectancy by three years on average. As we know, heart disease is the number one killer of Americans, accounting for one in four deaths. Globally, one out of five people will die of heart disease, more than any other disease. It accounts for about 18 million deaths per year. It kills almost 50,000 people every day. As Tony Robbins points out, "You have the power to influence your heart health through factors that you control. These include choosing the right foods to eat and avoid, maintaining a healthy body weight, limiting your alcohol intake, not smoking, getting sufficient sleep and exercising regularly."

A major study from the U.K. showed that walking twenty to thirty minutes a day can cut the risk of dying from a heart attack in half! So, something as easy as this can improve your overall health and quality of life tremendously by dramatically reducing your risk of many chronic illnesses, including cardiovascular disease. And, in addition, exercise also increases the blood flow to your brain, improving your cognitive function.

**Bottom Line:** Regular exercise does a



Mike Alpert

wonderful job of improving your health and vitality. And, two of the most important organs in your body, your heart and your brain, will perform much better if you eat healthy by consuming more fruits, vegetables and whole grains while staying away from fatty foods, refined carbs and sugar.

In football, defense wins games. In health, prevention and wellness are the single best defense against heart disease and most other chronic health problems.

## Stay Active and Remember that Exercise IS Medicine!

(Mike Alpert is the COO of Smart Health Clubs. He can be contacted at [mike@smarthealthclubs.com](mailto:mike@smarthealthclubs.com) or 951 - 205 - 1136.)

## ...Liz Clark

continued from page 3

mental health crisis, reducing America's healthcare costs and building a healthy population to withstand whatever the world throws at us next. We are essential. And, we will be a powerful voice in Washington, D.C.

Onward!

## Rebranding IHRSA for Empowerment and Growth

As Published in March 2022 Edition of *CBI Magazine*:

When I was hired to be the *President and CEO of IHRSA*, I was tasked with remaking the Association. In short, the *IHRSA Board* gave me the mandate to be a *Change Agent*, and I knew that meant making challenging decisions. Change isn't easy, even for a change agent. It requires difficult but necessary choices. That means shake-ups in staffing and organizational priorities.

and fitness, and our current name falls well short of that. My vision is that we become the umbrella organization for every category that touches this space: gyms, fitness centers, yoga, sports, medical fitness, fitness technology, healthy aging, wellness and recovery. The sky is the limit.

We also want to expand our list of industry partners to include apparel manufacturers, nutritional companies and other businesses that now see us in a separate category. We all have the same goals. Let's reach them together.

I'm pleased that we've had an overwhelmingly positive response from our members who have learned of the rebranding. In fact, many think it's overdue. They agree that we need to be more inclusive and welcoming to all who share our commitment to a healthier world.

The rebranding also provides an opportunity as a reset button for some current and former IHRSA members who have felt disenfranchised by the organization and to recruit small studios, personal trainers and other fitness entities that have yet to link arms with us.

The rebranding is just one of many

developments designed to empower the entire industry... to unite us to work together to accomplish great things. And, let's face it: The name *IHRSA* doesn't exactly land well on the ears. Some even joke that it rhymes with *MRSA*, and nobody wants to be associated with that!

A rebranding of this scope is not a simple process. I understand the obstacles and costs, and I'm committed to making the difficult choices in transforming our organization, to help lead us to our ultimate potential. I have spent countless hours meeting and speaking with as many members and industry partners as possible but have only scratched the surface. I am overwhelmed by the support I have received from all of you. The best is yet to come.

-Liz Clark  
IHRSA President and CEO



## ...Norm's Notes

continued from page 4

How kind you are to yourself;  
 How often you say, "I Love You;"  
 How often you say, "Thank You;"  
 How you express your feelings;  
 Whether or not you ask for help;  
 How often you practice gratitude;  
 How many times you smile today;  
 The amount of effort you put forth;  
 How you spend and invest your money;  
 How much time you spend worrying;  
 How often you think about the past;  
 Whether or not you judge other people;  
 Whether or not you try again after the setback;  
 How much you appreciate the things you have.

■Speaking of birthdays, **ELAINE LaLANNE**, a/k/a "LaLa," the widow of my friend, the one and only **JACK LaLANNE** recently celebrated her **96th Birthday... so a belated HAPPY BIRTHDAY, ELAINE!** And, folks, I'm also pleased to report to you that Elaine has just published a new book, entitled: **Pride & Discipline: The Legacy of Jack LaLanne** with **GREG JUSTICE**, her partner in the book's production. They officially launched it on March 22, 2022, so check out the **Ad** about their new book on **This Page**. And, of course, order it today by going to [amzn.to/3wjhtKB](https://amzn.to/3wjhtKB).

■This **SPECIAL Norm's Note** is to wish former **ATLANTA MAYOR, the HONORABLE ANDREW YOUNG, a HAPPY 90th BIRTHDAY**. The great man, also referred to as **AMBASSADOR**, was Atlanta's Mayor back in the 1980s. And, I'll always be grateful to and honored to call

Mayor Andrew Young my friend.

In 1983, I owned one club, a 24,000 square-foot converted racquetball club called the **Lenox Athletic Club**. That year, I built and opened **The Downtown Athletic Club (DAC)** in what was then called **The Omni**, now known as **The CNN Center**. The DAC was a 46,000 square-foot, three-level club. The contractor I hired to build the DAC was a great fellow named **LOU OFF**. During the design phase of this project, my architect figured out how to add an extra 20,000 square-foot mezzanine, enabling the addition of a 1/8-mile indoor track, a free weight room, a Nautilus room, business and sales offices, two suntanning rooms and viewing areas for the basketball courts and the racquetball courts. **HOWEVER**, there was a little problem. The deal I had signed with **Cousins Properties, the developers of The Omni Mega-Complex**, was for this new club to be 26,000 square feet, and the funding they were providing me to build the club did not include funding for the extra 20,000 square feet.

Because the projections were that this new 46,000 square-foot club was going to become a significant income producer, I was able to get the contractor to go ahead and proceed with finishing the construction without me finalizing the SBA Loan for \$450,000, which I had been promised I would qualify for. Testing Lou's patience a whole lot, and after struggling for two months to obtain this SBA loan to pay for the additional floor, as well as buying additional equipment that was very much needed, we pressed on, and I opened the club.

One day, not long after we opened, I spoke with Mayor Young, who upon our opening had become a daily DAC workout enthusiast. I candidly explained my dilemma to Mayor Young. I explained about building the second floor without additional funds and that I was in dire need of the SBA Loan to pay off those construction costs and to buy more equipment and was getting nowhere with the SBA Application process. Since he, as Mayor, was frequently in touch with **LONNIE SABOOR**, who managed the **Downtown Atlanta SBA Office**, the agency where the loan application had been languishing for over two months, Mayor Young went back to his office and called Saboor about my loan application. **Truly, and in my mind, miraculously, I was notified the very next afternoon that my SBA Loan had been approved, and I was going to get the funding in less than a week! Thank You Mayor!!!**

**HAPPY BIRTHDAY  
 MAYOR ANDREW YOUNG!**

Folks, this story will be continued in the next **Note** about recently seeing Mayor Young in person for the first time in many years at a funeral of another friend of ours here in Atlanta, **former ATLANTA MAYOR, the HONORABLE MAYOR SAM MASSELL**. So, please read on...

■Until **March 13, 2022**, there was a very special man... a truly wonderful human being, **former ATLANTA MAYOR, the HONORABLE MAYOR SAM MASSELL**. Mayor Massell passed away on Sunday, March 13 (Ironically, Mayor Masell passed

away at age 94 on the same day as Mayor Young's 90th Birthday, something I will remember forever). On March 16th, I attended Mayor Massells' extremely well-done funeral service with over 500 others in attendance at *The Temple on Peachtree Street*, here in Atlanta. I was honored to get to know Sam personally years ago, when we became members of a special group of Atlantans identified by an *Atlanta Journal Constitution (AJC)* writer, my long-time friend, **RON HUDSPETH**.

For many years, five days a week, Ron had written a daily *AJC* column on the night life of Atlanta. Eventually, Ron was ready to leave the *AJC*, so I urged him to be creative and use the fame he had generated writing his column to create a new income-producing entity. He created a newspaper called **The HUDSPETH Report**, and for years, he was assisted by the lovely **CATHY BROWN**. Another thing he created was a group called **The GREAT CHARACTERS of Atlanta**, and he would throw an annual party for this group that routinely drew a large attendance. Mayor Massell and I were honored to be members, among many other well-known Atlantans at the time.

About 20 years ago, Ron decided to retire, and he moved to a mansion on a hillside down in Costa Rica. When he moved to Costa Rica, he stopped doing the *Great Characters* events, so after about three years without one, I was approached by enough people asking me to restart the parties that I finally I agreed to do it. Since Ron moved to Costa Rica over 20 years ago, I've now produced almost twenty *Great Characters* (See *Norm's Notes Page 8*)

## Pride and Discipline: The Legacy of Jack LaLanne

*Pride and Discipline: The Legacy of Jack LaLanne*, was put together by National Fitness Hall of Fame Inductees, **Elaine LaLanne (NFHOF 2017)** and **Greg Justice (NFHOF 2017)**.

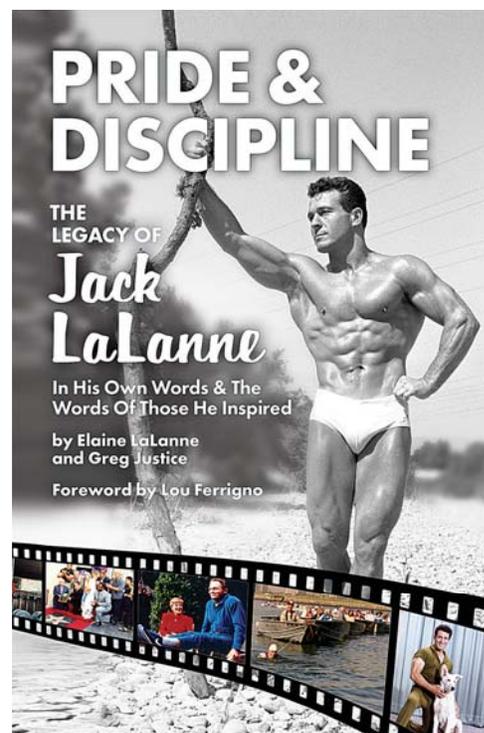
This is a book nearly 100 years in the making, and it includes some never seen before material by Jack LaLanne, along with a timeline of Jack's life. To say these pages are full of motivation, inspiration and life-changing material is an understatement, and we're so excited to share it with the world.

*Pride and Discipline: The Legacy of Jack LaLanne* was compiled as a tribute to the *Godfather of Fitness*, and to introduce an entirely new generation to his life and legacy.

**For Club Insider Readers Only:** Order Your Copy and receive "You Are An Architect," a never seen before column written by Jack LaLanne.

Order Via The Link Below:

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**...Norm's Notes**

continued from page 7

events. It has been our honor to have had **MAYOR SAM MASSELL** as one of our esteemed **GREAT CHARACTERS of Atlanta Honorees**.

**MAY the late and HONORABLE MAYOR SAM MASSELL REST IN PEACE. WE ALREADY MISS YOU SAM!**

■ **JUSTIN** and I want to say Thanks for reading Club Insider!

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■ **God bless our troops, airmen and sailors worldwide and keep them**

**safe. Thank you, Congratulations and Welcome Home to all of our troops who have served around the world. God bless America's Policemen and women and Firemen and women; keep them safe. Finally, God bless you, your family, your club(s) and your members. God Bless America! Laus Deo!**

*(Norm Cates, Jr. is a 48-year veteran of the health, racquet and sportsclub industry. He is the Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993 of Club Insider, now in its 29th year of monthly publication. In 1981, he was IHRSA's First President,*

**Make It Fun!**

*and a Co-Founder of the Association with Rick Caro and five others. In 2001, he was honored by IHRSA with its DALE DIBBLE Distinguished Service Award, one of its highest honors. And, in 2017, he was honored with Club Industry's Lifetime Achievement Award. He can be reached by phone at 770-635-7578 or email at Norm@clubinsideronline.com.)*

You have to learn the rules of the game. And then you have to play better than anyone else.

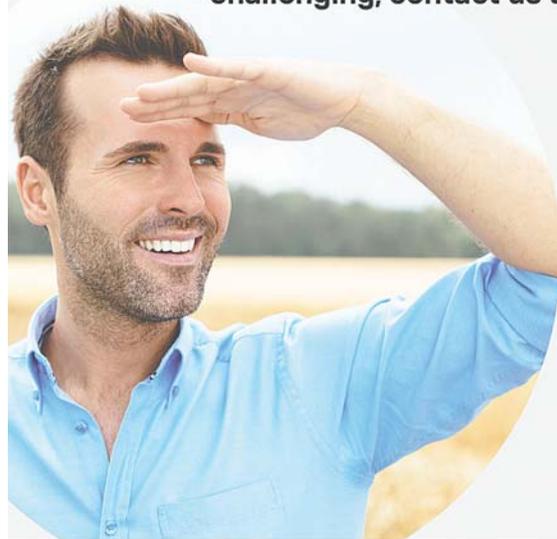


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## ...Eric Schmitz & CAC

continued from page 3

played hockey. I was on the first hockey team at our high school. An odd mix, but those are my two big sports. I also played trombone in the band. Music was huge at my high school as we had an amazing Band Director. So, I had a great high school career and completed all the college prep classes. It was a great high school experience.

Both my parents went to the *University of Wisconsin (UW)*, so I ended up studying at that university and became a Badger. It's an awesome place. Even back then it was huge. There were over 45,000 undergrads. I started working right away to make some extra money. I worked as a waiter, bartender and cook in various restaurants throughout college. One day, in 1985, I was walking through the natatorium on campus to go swimming. I saw this flyer for a triathlon, and I thought, 'What's a triathlon?' I had never even heard of that. The swim was in Lake Mendota, a local lake. The university is on an beautiful isthmus surrounded by three lakes, which makes Madison a pretty unique midwestern city. The bike and run course followed suit near the lake. It looked super interesting, so I got into triathlons during college.

I think one of the reasons I really got into long distance events was because my dad was having a lot of health issues. He had a drinking problem, and his health wasn't doing well at all. I was trying to go in the opposite direction and be super healthy. Madison definitely is a party school so trying to be healthy was tough. Training for and competing in that triathlon put me on a 25-year path of competing in all sorts of endurance events around the country. It also led me to working in the health and fitness industry.

Then, I thought, 'What is my major going to be?' I knew it had to be something to do with the human body. I had taken Chemistry and Biology, so I thought pre-Med. Then, one day, I was looking through the course catalog and saw they had this degree called *Exercise Physiology*. I thought, 'Wow, that sounds super interesting.' I completed all the prerequisites to get into that, and I continued my Junior and Senior years studying *Exercise Physiology* at the UW.

Along the way, I had some friends who I was taking classes with, and they also had started doing triathlons. We started a Triathlon Club for UW. We competed in *The Bud Light Triathlon Series*. The series used international distances: 1,500-meter swim, 40-kilometer bike and 10-kilometer run, and we ended up in one of the early *Collegiate Championship Triathlons*, which took place at the *University of Illinois*. It was in the spring, so it was still cold. The main thing I remember is that it was so cold I couldn't feel my feet the entire 10-kilometer run. Like high school, college was a great experience.

### Santa Barbara Athletic Club

**C.I.** - When and how did you become involved in the health and fitness club industry?  
**ES** - My best friend in high school had moved to *Santa Barbara, California*. His grandmother had retired out there. We did a lot of fishing together when we were young, and he always wanted to become an Aquatic Biologist. So, he moved out there right after high school, and he ended up getting his Master's in Aquatic Biology.

That's how I ended up moving out to California. I graduated college in the spring of 1987, and I thought, 'What am I going to do now?' Triathlons had really taken off and California was a hotbed for them, so I moved out to Santa Barbara and lived with my friend. Back then, with the Exercise Physiology degree, you would have normally gone to Grad School, then maybe get your Ph.D. But, the late '80s was the beginning of the rapid growth of Personal Training. It was perfect timing to have that degree and to move to a town like Santa Barbara, a very active, fitness-minded town.

I started working on the fitness floor as a Personal Trainer at the *Santa Barbara Athletic Club (SBAC)* in 1988, and **Julie Main** was the *General Manager*. The club was situated to attract a good demographic. The original owner had moved on, and the guy who acquired it was a good businessperson who would continually invest in it and make it better.

**C.I.** - Please take us through some of your key experiences and lessons learned during your time at SBAC.

**ES** - Working at SBAC, I was promoted to the *Department Head of Fitness and Personal Training*. Julie was a great leader who took care of her department head team. She took care of us so we could take care of all the frontline staff, and then, we would *all* take care of the members. Learning opportunities that would come

along from my time at SBAC included:

**Service:** This is probably one of the biggest themes I've always been about. I started work when I was young and worked in many restaurants, all in positions of service. As I've moved up, my roles have changed, but I've always tried to think in that regard. What can we do to make front line service positions better for those working them? What can we do every day to add more value to what our customers are experiencing and to be of service? So, that was a lesson.

**Culture:** Another big common theme that will come up a lot in these questions is that **a good culture is everything**. It's not easy to have, and when it changes, it can be tough. But, it's so important. Back then, it wasn't even talked about or thought about. Now, it's sort of overkill, right? Back then, for us, it was just having people who care for each other... people who love to work together. It's interesting... I look at my social media now, and most of the department heads that I worked with at SBAC are all still connected 30 years later. **Picking a good team because of their values and**

**who they are as people leads to a good culture.** And, that is unbelievably effective for employee retention.

**Constant Improvement:** With a good culture in place, one of the things that we tried to do was just constantly improve. What could be done to make it better? How do we add more value to the membership? As I mentioned, luckily, the owner at that time was also on the same page to constantly improve.

**Quality:** People will pay for quality. SBAC had the highest prices within the local club market. Besides the local Gold's Gyms, there wasn't a ton of competition back then. We always offered the best in facilities, equipment and programming. The group exercise instructors were so great that some of them competed in the *National Aerobics Instructor Championship*. We really did many different things and with quality at the forefront.

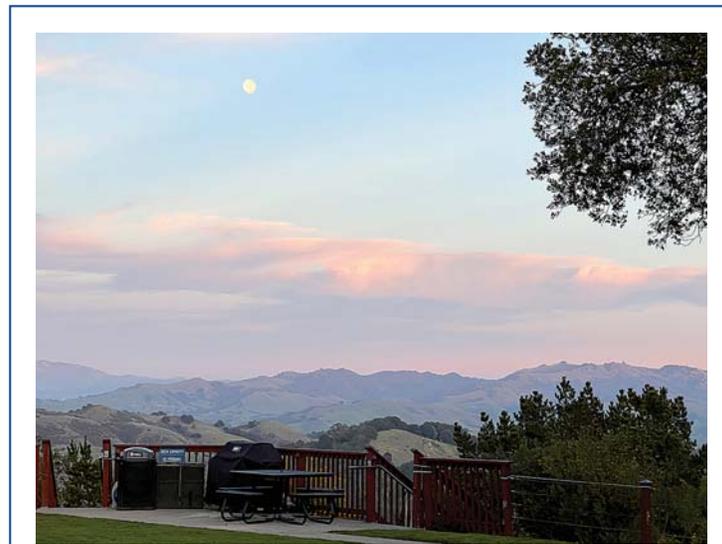
**The Right Location:** One of the biggest lessons that I learned from SBAC is that picking the right location for your club is probably the biggest factor to success. The owner took it over in the early '80s. He was an accountant, and it wasn't something that he really wanted to do. But, hindsight is 20/20, and being in a market like Santa Barbara, which is affluent and extremely fitness-minded, has paid off big time.

**Outdoor Fitness:** I think we were one of the first clubs in the country that had outdoor fitness. We wanted to expand the club, and the only way we could go is up. But, adding square footage would have added parking requirements. The owner was so smart that he did it as a big outdoor expansion. There were no walls, so technically, it didn't count as parking square footage. In the early '90s, we were doing Spinning outside! It was covered and had retractable walls, but you could see the view of the mountains from the Spinning room. Spinning was crazy popular. **Johnny G** lived near the club and would come in from time to time, which was super cool. So, we were constantly doing new things to invest in the club and to make it better in order to add more value. That is a lesson I learned way back then.

**Innovation:** We were also one of the first clubs that put TVs on machines in the early '90s. I remember I had to go to the Radio Shack and get these little five-inch black and white TVs. We made these brackets to attach to all the *StairMasters*. That's just one example. We were always trying to be innovative in what we did back then, and we were ahead of the times on a lot of things.

**Nature:** This has been another common theme for me. Growing up in southern Wisconsin, one of the things that I significantly valued in my life was nature.

(See *Eric Schmitz & CAC Page 12*)



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## ...Eric Schmitz & CAC

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Being in the country was beautiful. That's one thing that is common with all of our clubs: beautiful natural outdoor space with great views. We're lucky with the weather, and the natural beauty of California is a market differentiator for us because we have brought that into our clubs.

### West Coast Athletic Clubs

**C.I.** - How did *West Coast Athletic Clubs* come to be, and how were you involved?

**ES** - I was a *Fitness and Personal Training Director* for a while, and then, there were some changes with ownership. The original owner of SBAC got some partners and invested in the real estate of similar clubs across different markets. That grew, and then, he got out of it and sold the business to Julie and another partner. They formed *West Coast Athletic Clubs (WCAC)*, which was a group of five clubs. Julie became *President of WCAC*, and I became the *General Manager of SBAC*. I was in that position for three years.

Unfortunately, as you know, Julie lost her long battle with cancer. A great legacy that she left was the *Cancer Well-Fit Program*. She and a personal trainer named **Paula Lily** started the program in the early '90s, and they had done it successfully at the club. We would have trainers work with small groups of cancer patients who were going through treatment. Paula and Julie learned a lot about what works and what doesn't work. That's a great legacy because it has just grown so much within the industry. The benefits of proper exercise during treatment cannot be understated. We run the *Cancer Well-Fit Program* at some of our clubs to this day.

The partner took over the company after Julie's passing, and I was promoted to *Executive Vice President of WCAC*. He was different, coming from corporate real estate, so unfortunately, one of the things that happened was a shift in culture. In fact, the culture shifted a lot, and that was challenging.

### California Athletic Clubs

**C.I.** - How did that lead to the formation of *California Athletic Clubs*?

**ES** - Back to culture and the shift of it, things changed, and the ownership group decided to part ways. There were five clubs: two clubs (SBAC and Cathedral) went with the other partner, and the remaining three clubs became a new entity. *California Athletic Clubs (CAC)* was formed in February of 2011, and I was hired to run it. We started with the three former WCAC clubs, and we have acquired four additional clubs.

My transition and experience from WCAC was growth as a leader, moving from a Manager of one club (SBAC) to being the Regional Manager of five clubs (WCAC). Concurrently, having a culture

shift from how things were to something new created a growth opportunity. Then, moving to be part of creating this new entity, CAC, was an exciting experience. That was a very fluid time in my career.

**C.I.** - What a story so far! Continuing on, each of your facilities are different, so can you take us through the story of how each came about? Because they are different in concept, how do you deal with the differences between each?

**ES** - The three clubs that went with CAC in 2011 were the *Ojai Valley Athletic Club*, which is about 45 minutes south of Santa Barbara; *The Hills Swim and Tennis Club*, which is in this little town called Montclair Hills, north of Oakland, an unbelievably beautiful place; and *Avila Bay Athletic Club*, which is in Avila Beach, 90 minutes north of Santa Barbara. Also in 2011, we acquired a club called *Paso Robles Sports Club*. In 2012, we acquired two clubs: *La Madrona Athletic Club* in Santa Cruz and *Westlake Athletic Club* in Westlake Village, which is a little bit north of LA. Then, in 2014, we acquired *Ogden Athletic Club*, which being in Utah is a little bit of an anomaly, but I'll explain that. Overall, our model is pretty similar across the board with all seven clubs:

**Good Real Estate Investment.** Is it an opportunity where there's an upside beyond the club business itself?

**The Market:** How is the market? What is the size? Is there a lot of competition? We'll tend to go to a smaller market where there's not tons of competition. We would look at the acquisition as a single owner that has a tennis club who's thinking, 'I'm ready to retire and move on.' Then, we look at it as, 'There's an opportunity to adjust and improve on the services offered to the members. We want to be *THE* local, full-service athletic club.' It's a little bit old school when you think about it, but I think

that has been a strength for us, especially during COVID.

**Authenticity:** I feel that a truly authentic, local feel and culture has a lot of value because there's a good connection to the community. With tons of capital coming into our the fitness industry, I think there is a bit of a dark side in that authenticity is stripped away. When we created CAC, I thought, 'I don't want to go CAC Ojai, CAC Avila, CAC Westlake, etc.' I want the local feel to remain and the local vibe to be strong because each community is a little bit different. We kept the local names of the clubs, and it has worked out very well.

*Clubs that came from WCAC:*

**Ojai Valley:** This club was purchased in the early '90s by the group that had purchased SBAC. It was a tennis club, and then, a huge clubhouse was built. We have all the amenities there; it's full fitness. And, we were super lucky in that we were able to have a lot of our fitness go outside because we have an outdoor fitness pavilion. There are two huge pools, one with a diving well and a huge lap pool, so we have a great Master's swimming program there. Also, what's unique about Ojai is there's the *Weil Tennis Academy* adjacent to our property. Students come from all over the world to study and master their tennis skills. Their students are our members as well. It's interesting... Ojai's a small town, but it's a hotbed of tennis. We host the *Pac-12 Women's Championship* and the *Westcoast Conference Championship* at our club. That's very unusual. You wouldn't think of it because Ojai is a small town, but tennis is very big there. Finally, Ojai has a super cool vibe; it's a chill town. There's not much competition at all, so they do great.

**The Hills Swim and Tennis Club:** This club is built in the hills above Oakland, and

it has an incredible 20-mile, 180-degree view of the mountains. We redid the pool there in 2012, and it has an infinity pool where there are no edges, adding to that view. It's primarily a family club where families go to just get away from the city. Very interestingly, the membership model has remained the same since it was purchased. A unique aspect of that membership model is that the members can resell their membership. They don't have any equity in the business; we just have a limited number of memberships, so the family membership is going for \$19,000 now! It's like a country club without golf. That kind of gets to what CAC is about. We offer a high-service, relaxed country club vibe but without the attitude.

**Avila Bay Athletic Club and Spa:** This is a full-service athletic club 90 minutes north of Santa Barbara... tennis, swimming, fitness, spa, etc. And, they do a lot of social events and weddings. They have a full-service cafe, a conference room and it's about five minutes from the beach. It's tucked away from SLO which is nice.

*Club acquired after CAC formed:*

**Paso Robles Sports Club:** Purchased in 2011, this club is in Paso Robles, which is about two hours north of Santa Barbara. In addition to a tennis club, we have two pools there: a lap pool and a warm pool for exercise. We built a big fitness center there that has tons of TRX and a turf room. It has batting cages, and we have Olympic lifting. Given the fitness offerings, as well as swim and tennis, it's primarily family memberships there.

**La Madrona Athletic Club:** Purchased in 2012, the name comes from a tree, the *Madrone*, and that's the street it's on. Located in the hills of Santa Cruz, it's a very beautiful club. It was a tennis club, but after we acquired it, we added a lap pool and a group fitness building. It's a pretty small club, but they have a waitlist of over three years. I'm always thinking, 'Why can't we make it bigger!'

**Westlake Athletic Club:** Purchased in the same year, 2012 was a busy one for us, this club used to be called *Westlake Swim and Tennis*. They're in Westlake Village, just north of LA. There are twelve tennis courts, and we added some pickleball. There's a pool, and we have fitness in the clubhouse. We have outdoor fitness offerings as well. Based on location, they probably have the largest tennis program of any of our clubs. They're huge in tennis, because there's a hotbed of tennis in that area.

**Ogden Athletic Club:** This club is an 85,000 square-foot indoor tennis, swim and fitness club in Ogden, Utah, just north of Salt Lake. It was originally acquired by WCAC, but I think because of cultural challenges, it was  
(See *Eric Schmitz & CAC Page 14*)



Poolside at Avila Bay Athletic Club and Spa

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**...Eric Schmitz & CAC**

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not working well for them. So, we were able to acquire it. While it might seem different, we do the same thing at every club. We try to provide the best experience for our members. We want to truly be of service.

**C.I.** - Some of your facilities are far apart geographically. How do you deal with distance in your operations? What challenges/benefits come from this?

**ES** - The biggest challenge, if looked at as a challenge, is **TRUST**. If there isn't a strong foundation of trust between myself and the general managers, it doesn't work. So, hiring the right people, mentoring them to grow and trusting them to make the right decisions is what CAC is all about. That style of leadership really works for us. The foundation of trust is everything. Don't micromanage. Give some guardrails to stay within and let them show their individuality. Finally, give a sense of ownership.

I don't think getting the right people is a challenge because I think that a culture like ours attracts good people. So, the biggest challenge may simply just be just getting to the clubs. Between the The Hills and my office, it's a six-hour drive. I don't see that as a major challenge, though, because it gives me the opportunity to listen to audio books during my trips.

**Here's how I manage:** I'll have a weekly hourly call with each manager. I use great software called *Weekdone*, and it asks: What are your objectives? Your results? We have a set agenda every week that covers the major aspects of operations. They fill in the agenda before our call, and we'll check in about how things are going. Two big metrics that I always check with them on a weekly basis are:

- From 1 to 5, what is your employee happiness level?
- From 1 to 5, what is your self-care level?

You want a hard job over the last two and a half years? Try being a manager in a health club. I have so much respect for what they've gone through. Each day is different and challenging. The whole mask thing in and of itself has been super tough... You have equal people on both sides, and in California, it went on longer than most States. Our managers have been through the wringer the last two years. So, we have our weekly meeting, and then, I'll have projects that we're working on. We communicate and use the *Google Suite of Apps* to coordinate.

One of the benefits from the geography is that I get to see bigger picture issues within our industry. I get to see how things are done differently within different counties, how the markets are different, and for me, that's a good learning opportunity. You could think of all this as diversification in a way. If one

area is challenged economically, one might be better. The variety is a benefit.

**C.I.** - We have talked about a lot already, but boiling it down, what do you consider CAC's Key Market Differentiators?

**ES** - Local, authentic service. A good local coffee store recently went out of business and was replaced by a Starbucks. It is what it is, but there's a difference. There are some people who are good with ordering on their app, but what does Starbucks learn about the local people and the community? So, I think a differentiator for us is the non-corporatization of our locations. I've been in this industry a long time, and I see the exact opposite happening throughout our industry. It does worry me.

**Core Values**

**C.I.** - The company's Core Values are: *Integrity, Caring, Passion, Creativity and Excellence*. Please tell us about the selection of those and their importance. How do you teach them, and how do you ensure they are being delivered?

**ES** - This question is what we're all about. We've already discussed a little bit of the background, but I'll give you the full background. Moving from SBAC to WCAC, then Julie passing away, the shift in culture that happened caused many things to change. As soon as CAC was formed, I thought, 'We have to define what it means to be us.' We had a big Department Head Retreat at Avila, and we went through a process to come up with:

- What are we about?
- What are our values?
- What does that mean from a day-to-day behavioral standpoint?

If you have everyone on the same page, it makes management and leadership much easier. As a result of that workshop, we created what we call the *'Our Values Blueprint.'* A lot of companies have it, but what we did was establish five behaviors associated with each Core Value (See **Graphic on This Page**). It's not rocket science; *it's good common sense, but common sense isn't necessarily common practice in the work world.* As employees change, and as we get younger people to work for us, there's a shift. The clearer we define it, the better.

A question that recently came up was: *Are we going to change our values?* I'm thinking, 'You know what? We haven't changed this organization; why are we going to change our values?' We've been doing operating a certain way and it's working well. We might tweak the behavior associated with a value a little bit, but this is what we're about.

We have a blueprint for values, and we also have one for customer service. What does it mean to give good customer service at CAC? So, that's how we came up with those five values and how we define them. Then, the way we teach them is that we have booklets that every new employee receives. They learn and study, then go through it with their Department Head and the General Manager as well. We teach

them, but most importantly, the leadership team leads by being good role models. In creating these blueprints, then over-communicating them, we create clarity, and that is very valuable.

**C.I.** - You use the word 'over-communicating.' That is fantastic. And, with over 500 employees, that's a lot of people to get on the same page; it makes a lot of sense.

**ES** - Yep, **over-communicate**. As I tell the managers, there is a constant opportunity to improve. And, there are younger people coming into the workforce all the time. I think that working in a club, especially a front-facing customer service position, is an important developmental experience. Positions in fast food and other industries will disappear more and more, but these younger people need to learn about what good communication is. Good body language, good eye contact, not having your phone with you at your workstation... all those basic steps that we've known forever. That's important for them as they go off into the workforce.

**C.I.** - I've always joked that part of high school should be having to work one year in a frontline, service position. What one learns about work ethic, respect and the value of money cannot be understated.

**Mission**

**C.I.** - The company's Mission is: *To provide the finest club experience, where our priority is your health and wellbeing.* Following up on what we discussed in previous questions about typical CAC facilities and your key market differentiators, please tell us about this statement.

**ES** - This was created at WCAC, so it was prior to CAC being formed. We kept it because, ultimately, this is what we want to do. This is why we exist... for our members' wellbeing. There are many different software platforms out there, but we're a big proponent of using *MXM* as our *Customer Experience Management Platform*. We use it because we can see how we're doing in the experience that we're delivering. Again, there is always an opportunity for improvement. In no way are we perfect, but it's a check-in that we can learn from. Not in the manager's eyes but in the eyes of the true boss, the *members*. How are we doing? How can we circle back around to improve the experience?

In 2021, nationally, there were only 31 clubs that received *MXM's Five Nine Award* (average score of 9 or higher in at least five member feedback categories), and two of them were ours: *Avila Bay* and *Westlake*. Those clubs also won that award in 2019. We are very proud of that achievement!!!

Of course, like any fitness business, we do need to expand our offerings. There's a lot of anti-aging programs that we need to get more into.

(See *Eric Schmitz & CAC Page 16*)

<p><b>Values</b></p> <p>Our core values, along with their associated behaviors, guide everything we do.</p> <p><b>Mission</b></p> <p>Our mission is to provide the finest club experience, where our priority is your health and well-being.</p> <p><b>Vision</b></p> <p>We enrich people's lives.</p>	<p><b>We Live in Integrity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Be truthful and ethical in all that you do.</li> <li>2. Follow through on what you say you are going to do. Be <b>accountable</b>.</li> <li>3. Display open, honest and effective communication.</li> <li>4. Establish and communicate clear expectations.</li> <li>5. Maintain appropriate professional relationships.</li> </ol>	<p><b>We Demonstrate Caring</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Treat others the way you would like to be treated: with <b>respect, acceptance and kindness</b>.</li> <li>2. Take pride in being part of the California Athletic Clubs family by respecting your club, your team and your members.</li> <li>3. Practice healthy teamwork.</li> <li>4. Contribute and connect to your community in a meaningful and positive way.</li> <li>5. Deliver random acts of kindness.</li> </ol>
<p><b>We Live and Work with Passion</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Possess and maintain a positive attitude.</li> <li>2. Go the extra mile to help others to be successful.</li> <li>3. Overcome obstacles with tenacity.</li> <li>4. Embrace great ideas no matter where they come from.</li> <li>5. <b>Give 100%</b> all the time.</li> </ol>	<p><b>We Encourage Creativity</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Challenge yourself and don't accept the status quo.</li> <li>2. Innovate constantly by thinking outside the box.</li> <li>3. Do more with less.</li> <li>4. Pursue learning and growth with energy.</li> <li>5. Be an active part of creating a <b>fun and happy</b> club environment.</li> </ol>	<p><b>We Deliver Excellence</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Seek to improve yourself and your club daily.</li> <li>2. Exceed expectations with <b>enthusiasm</b>.</li> <li>3. Take all the necessary steps to assure safety.</li> <li>4. <b>WOW</b> the members with great customer service.</li> <li>5. Focus on activities that create amazing results.</li> </ol>



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## ...Eric Schmitz & CAC

continued from page 14

That's part of our Mission, and I think we need to be constantly updating services as wellbeing expands. Offering a clean, safe and friendly place for members to go to seems simple, but it has a substantial value in today's world.

**C.I.** - Here's a deep philosophy question for you, and I want you to think of this in terms of a club company that does not have Core Values or a Mission yet. Over the years writing cover stories like this, it seems that companies that truly define Core Values and a Mission, and stick to them, have strong cultures and derive success from the combination. But, it seems like a chicken or egg situation... Do the Core Values and Mission build strong culture? Or, does strong culture enable the execution of Core Values and Mission? I welcome your thoughts as it relates to the strong culture of your organization.

**ES** - That is a good question. In my experience, my first quick answer would be: Of course Core Values and Mission build a strong culture. But, with what I've shared with you so far, in some ways, there's no right or wrong answer. I would almost shift it because we had a strong culture through all the years at SBAC before WCAC was formed. At that time, Core Values weren't a big thing. It wasn't on top of every business' mind all the time. I think the people who were there through the hiring of the right people made the culture strong because of who they were.

If you're starting from scratch, though, to expedite getting to that point, I think one would want to clearly define Core Values. Everyone's different, so how people define their Core Values and to what extent they go into them is different. The same with a Mission as well. I think having them transparent and clearly defined attracts the right people. Also, even more importantly, if someone does not fit in with an organization's Core Values and Mission, it's almost like they self-select not to be there. It just never works out.

Again, we were unique in that we were sort of opposite if you think about it. We had a strong culture, then the shift in ownership resulted in culture change. So, we needed to make sure we knew what we were about because it had worked for a long time. We did it differently than I recommend here, and it worked as well.

### REX and Industry Leadership

**C.I.** - I believe the pandemic taught us all that we cannot live a siloed existence in an industry like this. Please tell us some of the key learnings you have gained from involvement in *Roundtables for Executives (REX)*, pre-, during-and/or soon to be post-pandemic.  
**ES** - I am a member of *REX Crew*, which has been in existence for twelve years. Being

part of an organization like REX, there are a multitude of lessons that I've learned. As a leader, a manager, a business owner, can you take time out of your busy schedule to share experiences with like-minded people who are doing the same thing you are so you don't think you're going crazy? You may think, 'There's no possible way someone is going through the same thing!' Then, you find out many people are. That's the power of a roundtable or mastermind group. It is unbelievably powerful.

**Eddie Tock** is very good at putting the correct people together in a group, just like building the right team is of utmost importance to the success of an organization. We have a great culture within our roundtable, and picking the right people is super important. We certainly have that with our REX Crew group. **Kevin McHugh** at the *Atlantic Club*, **Paula Neubert** at *Club Greenwood*, **Mel Kleist** at *East Bank*, **Cher Harris** at the *Houstonian*... These are the mammoths of the industry, and it's interesting to see how similar they are but how different they are. The entire REX Crew are all super successful and a joy to be with. There are many ways to run a successful business, and its great to share with the best.

As for lessons, **self-care** is probably one of the most important things a leader can do, but it's one of the most neglected things because it can be perceived as selfish. What are you doing everyday to make sure that you are optimized to lead your team? What are the unique self-care things that work best for you? Make sure that you put them in your calendar and take care of yourself.

Another lesson is having a total **growth mindset**. Learning, reading and taking classes are all important. But, being in a roundtable or mastermind is key because you're leveraging the relationships you have with all the people in your group. In addition to sharing what you've learned, others in your group share all the things

they've learned. Because of the people, new ideas and places, it really puts you into a growth mindset. And, being in that place is motivating and energizing. If you don't have a growth mindset, you need to have one or you won't last.

**C.I.** - Absolutely. I love it! Well said. What are some of the key lessons you would like to share for up-and-coming future General Managers, Regional Managers, Presidents, CEOs, etc.

**ES** - Learn all you can about the values of the company you're working for or the company you want to work for. Make sure you know your values. If you don't, figure them out. This is key. You have to for you and your family. Then, do your values fit your employer's values?

If you're the owner or manager, how clearly can you define them, and how will you hire the right people to match them? That is so important; don't sell it short. If you're moving up the ladder of leadership, don't sell your values short just for the sake of moving up. Don't go somewhere you're not feeling in good alignment, because guess what, it's not going to work. You'll be unhappy, and that's going to be show up in your family life or your health. It's not going to work.

Next, are you truly a person of service? Or, are you a business person who just got into the fitness industry? If you got into our industry, and you're not truly a person of service, it's not going to work. Even if you're not in direct interaction with the members, you have to be in complete service to your team because it's such a service-driven industry. So, are you truly a person of service?

As you go up the ladder of leadership, how can you up your self-care? As you move up, you'll get less and less support from others because you're the one who has to give it all. And, as I mentioned before, do you have an unbelievably great growth mindset? Are you adopting

constant and never-ending improvement for yourself? Are you consistently learning and improving? What is your growth plan? What online courses are you taking the rest of the year? What books are you going to read? What in-person workshops are you going to attend? Who are the key mentors within the personal growth field that you resonate with? How are you going to get their material? That's a big one for me; I've always done that. I started out as a trainer, and that's how trainers are wired. I always had to get to the next certification. That can move into leadership as well. It's just the idea of always wanting to get better. It doesn't mean that you're not good right now. You're not judging, just always looking at new ideas. Belong to a roundtable or a group of like-minded individuals where you can share your challenges and feel safe and share your successes. That's super powerful. There are many different ones, but we're lucky that we have REX within our industry.

Define your ideal day, your ideal week and stick with it. Be intentional with your time. In this world of constant distraction, unless you're disciplined to disconnect when appropriate, you'll be overrun by distractions. That just leads to being inefficient and unproductive. Define your week into "Pomodoro" time blocks where you can have deep work sessions so you can focus on certain projects. How much time are you spending day-to-day as a firefighter and how much are you spending as an architect? Making sure to devote time to being an architect and plan is important, especially in this industry. It's tough to do especially in a club setting, but you have to do it.

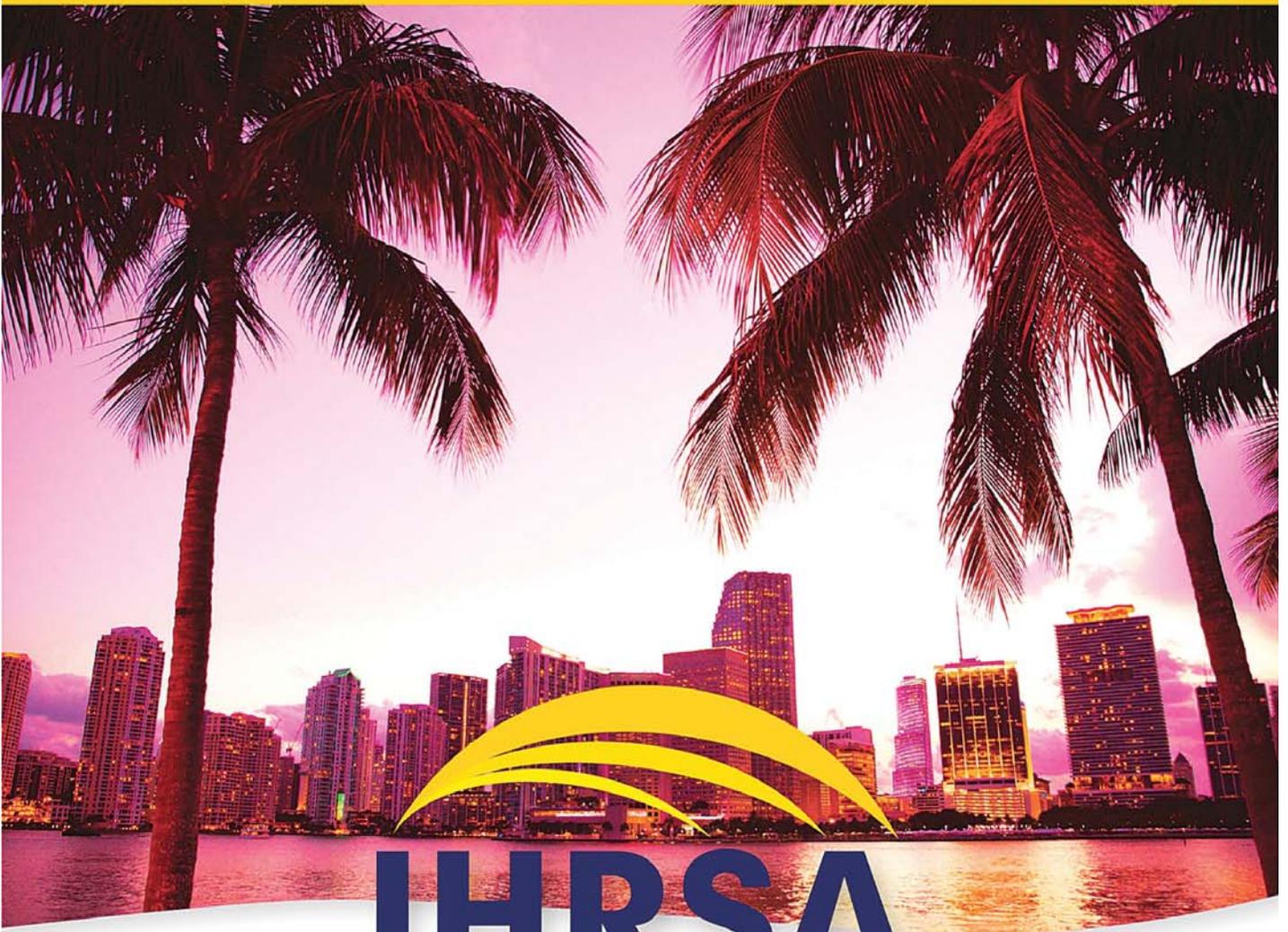
**C.I.** - These are fantastic. What gives you optimism heading forward?

**ES** - With the position we are in, I know we can have a positive effect on our members' lives, and the value of that is only going to increase in the future. The managers' big job is: *Is the club clean? Is the staff nice? Does everything work?* That sounds simple, but doing those three things consistently is hard because it's neverending. *MXM* went through all of their data, and that's what members want. Is the club clean? There's always an opportunity for improving on that. Can the front desk person connect beyond just the basics of service? People aren't going to go away because we're in this hybrid fitness model. Most members aren't just going to work out at home; people need human connection and to have places of respite where they can go to escape the chaos of the world and recharge. This is a differentiator for us. We have acreage, and the natural settings are beautiful. That's only going to be more valuable in the future. Places for members to connect with others will never go down in value. Now, even in California, most people aren't wearing masks; it's hard to believe. I think for us, this summer with our return of

(See *Eric Schmitz & CAC Page 18*)



Outdoor Group Exercise at Ojai Valley



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## “Why Would I Do A Group Fitness Workout?”

By: Jeffrey Pinkerton

That is precisely what I said when my wife asked if I wanted to do a class with her. “Why would I do a group fitness workout?” To get the full effect, imagine me fifteen years younger, a year or two fanatically into the super-hobby of triathlons, heart-rate monitor worn for most workouts, and when I replied to my wife’s request, I put an unnecessary emphasis on the word “I” while shaking my head and raising my eyebrows. “Why would I do a group fitness workout?” I can’t remember every detail of our interaction, but I do remember that it was chest and tris day.

My wife and I had a good morning routine. I worked from home, so after dropping the kids off at school, we would go to the gym together. As I am sure you’ve guessed, we didn’t actually work out together, but the act of going together was a nice way to keep each other accountable to exercising. She would go do one of

the group fitness workouts, and I would do a workout that vaguely resembled the workout schedule I learned from my football player roommate in college: chest and tris, back and bis, legs and shoulders, three sets of eight, four sets of ten. I grew up a soccer player (no weight room really) and had a short stint on the wrestling team in the 103-pound and 112-pound weight-classes (also, no weight room really). So, it wasn’t as if I actually knew what I was doing aside from maybe a few workouts from *Men’s Health* or *Triathlete Magazine*.

Thankfully, my wife was persistent, and even after a few times of being turned down, she asked again. “I really think you would like this class. It’s not what you think. It kind of hurts my feelings that you won’t even come try it.” Message received. “I will go into the aerobics room, with a 20:30 women-to-men ratio, and I will do this ‘toning’ workout with you.” Now, that’s not exactly what I said, but that’s what I was thinking. Because our discussion about

the day’s workout had gone on for a few minutes of back and forth, once we got into the group fitness room, the only available spots were in the front row. Not a problem.

The instructor happily greeted me, welcomed me to class and gave me a few tips on navigating the workout. I smiled and nodded, secretly thinking to myself, “I’m used to swimming and biking and running for hours. I’m sure I’ll be fine in an hour-long toning class.” As we put our weights on our bar, my wife smiled and reminded me, “This isn’t like lifting on the weight-room floor. It’s probably more reps than you are used to. You probably need to lift less than you think. It’s endurance strength training.” All I heard was the “endurance strength training” part, and I replied, “Okay. Endurance. Cool. Maybe this will be a good way for me to train for triathlons.” I am sure that I said it as a bit of a joke. As it turns out, the workout was absolutely no joke.

The warmup, which was full of full-body movements, pushed my heart rate up



Jeffrey Pinkerton

a lot higher than I was anticipating. When that song ended, I tried to hide my huffing and puffing from my wife. “You good?” she asked as we changed our bars for the  
(See [Jeffrey Pinkerton Page 22](#))

### ...Eric Schmitz & CAC

continued from page 16

social events is going to be huge.

This is similar, but a little bit different: Are you safe, caring and truly of service to the members? Being able to go somewhere where you’re going to be taken care of, it’s safe and clean, and you can socialize with your friends is so important. Again, it seems simple, but the value of that is going to be more important than ever post-COVID. These are just simple things that we’ve always done. I’m very optimistic about it in the future because what is old is new again, right? A lot of clubs have done this forever, but what they do now is more important than ever.

**C.I.** - Finally, what does 2023 look like for CAC? And, what is on the horizon for CAC in the next three to five years?  
**ES** - We’re lucky in that our revenue in 2021 was higher than 2019. I called the managers and said, ‘You have no idea what a great job we have done! This is crazy!’ Our revenue was right where we were pre-COVID, which is surprising. This year and next, we’re looking at improving on what we’ve already been offering, getting the facilities the best they can be: improved tennis courts, adding pickleball courts, improving pools, adding more outdoor fitness, etc. Also, how can we have this outdoor fitness model be forever without taking away tennis courts and the social areas? We’re also converting our management software system, so that’s a big, big deal for us.

We’re always looking for the right opportunity to add additional locations, as long as it fulfills our quirky model of

good real estate, a single club owner, etc. Thinking back, we probably should have been aggressive looking for new clubs last year. It would have been hard, because in a million years, you never could have thought of anything that could have been more challenging to our industry than COVID. But, yes, we’re always looking for the right opportunities to add locations and improve operations. Sales never end. Maintenance never ends. Getting better never ends. So, just improving what we’re currently doing while always looking for additional opportunities.

Finally, one thing I want to add that I didn’t say is our new tagline is in process of getting a trademark, and it is:

**‘Your Happy and Healthy Place.’**

**C.I.** - I love it!

**ES** - I’ve been working in this industry for a long time, and I can say to this day that I still love it! The impact I have is different now than when I started on the fitness floor in 1988, but working in an industry that helps so many people makes it easy to love. Making a positive impact on your community is what it’s all about.

**C.I.** - It’s a beautiful thing to be able to do something you love as your ‘job.’ As they say, then it’s not a job, and not everyone gets to experience that. It’s a very fortunate thing. Thank you for this incredible interview.



Thank you to **Eric Schmitz** for this incredible interview, as well as all the support activities required to bring a story like this to our readers.

(Justin Cates is the Publisher of *Club Insider*. Having been born into a club business family in 1985, Justin grew up in the health and fitness club industry. He has lived and breathed this industry for 36 years, since his own day one, and he loves it dearly. Graduating from the Terry College of Business at The University of

Georgia in 2007, Justin has run day-to-day operations of *Club Insider* for 13 years. Justin was elevated to Publisher of *Club Insider* on April 5, 2020. Justin’s Dad, Norm Cates, continues to serve as Founder and Tribal Leader Since 1993. You can reach Justin by phone at 863-999-2677 or email at [Justin@clubinsideronline.com](mailto:Justin@clubinsideronline.com).)

### Eric’s Top 25 Personal Development/Leadership Books

1. *The Big Leap* by **Gay Hendricks Ph.D.**
2. *The 15 Commitments of CONSCIOUS LEADERSHIP* by **Jim Dethmer, Diana Chapman and Kaley Warner Klemp**
3. *The Leadership Challenge* by **Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner**
4. *Atomic Habits* by **James Clear**
5. *Built on Values - Creating An Envious Culture That Outperforms the Competition* by **Ann Rhoades**
6. *Lead More Control Less* by **Marvin Weisbrod and Sandra Janoff**
7. *Deep Work* by **Cal Newport**
8. *Essentialism and Effortless* by **Greg McKeown**
9. *It’s the Manager* by **Jim Clifton and Jim Carter**
10. *Leadership* by **John Maxwell**
11. *The Seven Spiritual Laws of Yoga* by **Deepak Chopra M.D. and David Simon M.D.**
12. *Uplifting Service* by **Ron Kaufman**
13. *Start Finishing* by **Charlie Gilkey**
14. *The 12 Week Year* by **Brian P. Moran and Michael Lennington**
15. *The Almanack of Naval Ravikant* by **Eric Jorgensen**
16. *Life Force* by **Tony Robbins, Peter Diamandis M.D. and Robert Hariri, M.D., PH. D.**
17. *Tracking Wonder* by **Jeffery Davis**
18. *The Obstacle is the Way* by **Ryan Holiday**
19. *The Practice of Groundedness* by **Brad Stulberg**
20. *Principles* by **Ray Dalio**
21. *The Art of the Impossible* by **Steven Kotler**
22. *The Compound Effect* by **Darren Hardy**
23. *The Success Principles* by **Jack Canfield**
24. *Peaks and Valleys* by **Spencer Johnson**
25. *Unbeatable Mind* by **Marc Devine**

# A Club's Cycle of Life

By: **Karen Woodard-Chavez**

A club's cycle of life is a very simple one, and it is actually the same for any business. I use this as a very visual example for my clients in the health and wellness industry, as well as other industries. The only difference is that the language may change for each stage in the cycle based on the business. If you are using this article as an educational tool for your staff outside of the health and wellness industry, simply substitute the positions for your business type. Let's briefly walk through it together. Then, we will break it down further to enhance the outcomes for your long-term success.

**Prospect:** You can see at the very top of the cycle is "Prospect." The club gets a prospect through its marketing mix, or perhaps, a member refers him. He comes into the club. He meets with your membership staff, sees a beautiful facility, experiences terrific programming, and the membership staff is *informative, inspirational and persuasive* rather than simply informative.

**Member:** The prospect moves to the next stage in the cycle, which is "Member." Because the membership staff did a terrific job of asking questions to understand precisely what outcomes the member wants to achieve and was *not only informative but inspirational and persuasive* as well, they were able to immediately get the new member to the next stage of the cycle.

**Engaged:** By getting the member involved in programming that would speak to his results at the point of sale, the member becomes "Engaged." Because the new member is *immediately engaged* in the club, he is using it more frequently. And, with directed intention, he moves to the next stage in the cycle *faster*

**Results:** When members are using the club more frequently in a structured/programmed manner, he is connecting with more people, building relationships and getting "Results." This is *SUCH* an important part of the cycle. It is critical that every staff member he comes into contact with understands their part in making

this happen. If they are not clued into the importance of their role in the cycle, then the cycle stops.

**Referrals:** When these things do happen, then the member moves to the next stage in the cycle, which is "Referrals." Members who are using the club and getting results are the ones who refer. Members who are not using the club and are not getting results do not refer.

**Repeat:** Notice that, when we hit the stage of referrals, we start the cycle all over again because that leads to "Prospect" again, and we have the opportunity to continue the cycle of life at the club. Pretty basic, isn't it?

Let's look at what makes the cycle work smoothly and what can muck it up. *The only way the cycle of life can continue is if each step is successfully completed.* In other words, we cannot create a prospect unless we have a great reputation, which means staff are happy and understand their role in the cycle, and members are happy,



Karen Woodard-Chavez

using the club, getting results and referring. Members will not be happy, get results and refer if they are not immediately engaged. If your membership staff does not know precisely what outcomes the prospect seeks, as well as what would possibly make them hesitate to join and build solutions (See **Karen Woodard-Chavez** Page 21)

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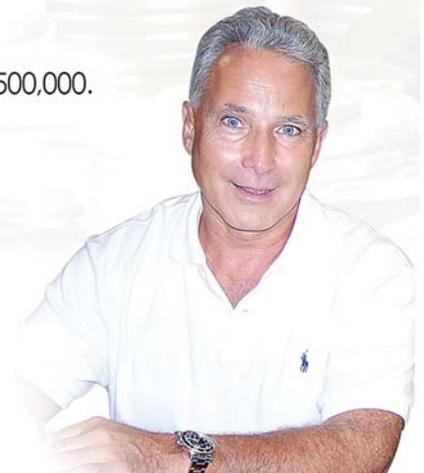
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# Connecticut Supreme Court Rules: Women-Only Gym Areas Violate State Law

By: **Paul R. Bedard, Esquire**

Health clubs, like hotels, restaurants, banks and other places generally open to the public, are legally classified as places of public accommodation. *Title II of the Civil Rights Act of 1964* bans discrimination based on race, color, religion or national origin in places of public accommodation. In addition to this Federal law, most States have nondiscrimination laws that offer expanded protection to added designated classes. Although these protections vary by state, these additionally protected classes may include marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, veteran status, military status and pregnancy/childbirth status.

On January 25, 2022, *Connecticut's Supreme Court* ruled that women-only gym areas violate Connecticut's nondiscrimination statute. The question before the court was whether *Connecticut's Public Accommodation Act* includes an implied customer gender privacy exception to its general prohibition against sex-based

discrimination. The court concluded that the exceptions to the general prohibition against discrimination based on sex in public accommodations are limited to those expressly provided by the plain language of the statute. Therefore, there is no implied customer gender privacy exception in Connecticut.

The complainants in this case were male members of the defendants' gyms, *Club Fitness* and *Edge Fitness*. These members complained of delays while waiting to use equipment in the larger and more crowded coed areas of the gyms. The complainants asserted that they were being discriminated against based on sex due to the defendants providing women-only fitness areas in their facilities. Connecticut's anti-discrimination statute makes it discriminatory to deny any person access to any place of public accommodation based on race, creed, color, national origin, ancestry, sex, gender identity or expression, marital status, age, lawful source of income, intellectual disability, mental disability or physical

disability. However, an exception applies to separate bathrooms or locker rooms based on sex.

The court noted that it was undisputed that the women-only workout areas did not fall within the plain meaning of "bathroom" or "locker room" and that these areas were, therefore, not encompassed by the statutory exceptions. Rather, the defendants argued that the statutory exceptions should be interpreted to contain a third implicit exception to the prohibition against sex-based discrimination, that of a broad gender privacy exception. The defendants argued that this exception is implied by the bodily privacy interests protected by the statutory exceptions and that including this third exception would therefore be consistent with the statute. The defendants further asserted that the exception to the ban on sex discrimination in employment when sex constitutes a bona fide occupational qualification was evidence of the legislature's intent to include an implied gender privacy exception to the ban on discrimination in places of



Paul R. Bedard, Esquire

public accommodation.

The court declared that the legislature could have included a third exception to the general ban on sex-based discrimination had it intended to do so. The court further contrasted the legislature's (See *Paul R. Bedard Page 21*)



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**...Karen Woodard-Chavez**

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into the conversation, the prospect will not become a member. Each previous step has to happen flawlessly in order to advance to the next step.

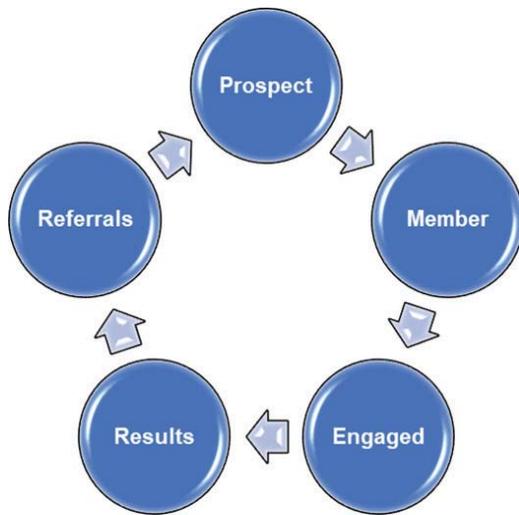
Several questions are important to answer now:

1. Does this cycle happen every time and consistently with every new member?
2. If not, where does your club get stuck in the cycle? This is important to identify and resolve.
3. Is the entire staff aware of this cycle? *This is crucial.* You may initially believe that it is just the membership staff who drive the cycle. That would be partially correct.

The reality is that it is ALL staff who drive the elements of this cycle. Introduce this concept at your next all staff meeting and include it in all new staff orientation and onboarding. Talk about it often.

Getting the cycle down consistently is critical to the growth of what I refer to as your **"Indispensable Three"** - Results, Retention and Revenue.

*(Karen is President of Premium Performance Training in Boulder, Colorado and San Jose del Cabo Mexico. She has owned and operated clubs since 1985 and now consults with and trains club staff throughout the world. She provides her services on-site, online, by phone and through her books and manuals. She can be reached at 303-417-0653 or karen@karenwoodard.com.)*



**...Paul R. Bedard**

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inclusion of the exception within the employment statute versus the conscious lack of an express exception within the public accommodation statute. The court also highlighted how *Connecticut's General Statutes* treat employment discrimination separately from public accommodation discrimination. The court opined that the determination of where to limit anti-discrimination protections was best suited for the legislature, the policy-making branch of the government.

This recent Connecticut Supreme Court ruling is just one of the many laws that shape the legal duties within places of public accommodation. Although this ruling is specific to Connecticut, it offers an example of what could potentially transpire in any state while providing insight into the type of legal analysis that may be involved. Like any potential legal issue, health club owners and operators should stay abreast of developing caselaw within their jurisdiction, allowing them to be best prepared for a ruling like Connecticut's. In the meantime, Connecticut health club owners and operators have been put on notice of this recent ruling.

**This article is not intended as legal advice. It is offered only for**

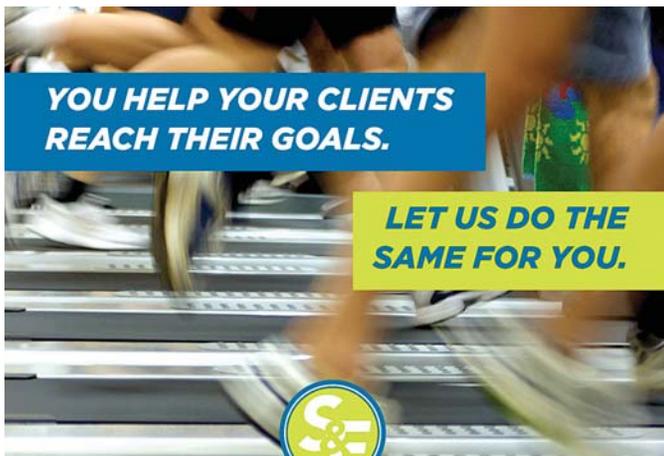
**informational purposes. Widely varying state and local laws, and factors unique to every situation, prohibit one-size-fits-all recommendations. Please contact your attorney for specific direction to determine what is appropriate within your current situation and legal environment.**

*(Paul R. Bedard, Esquire has nearly twenty years of management, leadership and operations experience in the health and fitness industry. As a practicing attorney, Paul's health and fitness industry experience provides him with a unique perspective when advising health clubs regarding employee training, handbooks, policies, contracts, disputes or premises liability claims. When not practicing law or spending quality time with his wife and daughters, Paul strives to be active in his local community. Paul has served as the Assistant Town Attorney for the Town of Southington, Connecticut. He has also served on the Southington Zoning Board of Appeals and the Board of the Central Connecticut Regional Planning Agency. Paul is a solo practitioner at The Law Office of Paul Bedard, LLC, in Southington, Connecticut. Paul can be reached at AttorneyPaulBedard@gmail.com or 860-414-0110.)*

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**...Jeffrey Pinkerton**

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second song. "Yeah, of course." Legs were next. Good. Perfect for cycling. I took a quick look at the instructor and the weight she was putting on the bar and did some quick math. I'm about twice her size, so I'll use twice as much weight. Boom. As the music started up for the second song, my wife looked at me nervously and said, "I think that's going to be too much weight." I smiled and nodded to her confidently. I'm good. As it turns out, I wasn't, and as it turns out, the instructor, who was happily coaching and crushing rep after rep, was not only half my size but was literally twice as strong. I would love to tell you that, after the warmup and the legs training, I had learned my lesson. Actually, not at all. Chest, in honor of chest and tris day, went about the same, with me holding the bar in the air or rested on my chest after burning out after the first two minutes. And, by the time we got to the biceps track, I really did think I made a fair adjustment (just a little more than the instructor was using on her bar) but relented and put the bar down to take plates off halfway through the song. Each time I skipped a rep, paused in place

or pulled off a plate, my wife graciously smiled, tried not to laugh, and shook her head.

After the workout, the instructor checked back in. "How did you do?" she asked. A generous question considering I was on the front row, and she had been a witness to all the rep-skipping and plate unloading. "Jenny told me that you do triathlons. You should keep coming back. I think Group Power would be a great way to train for triathlons." I smiled and shook my head. "No. I disagree. I think that triathlons would be a way to train for Group Power."

*MOSSA creates group fitness workouts for health clubs to maximize participation and get more people moving. With powerful marketing campaigns and purposeful member onboarding tools, MOSSA helps facilities leverage the power of group fitness to drive member engagement, build connection and community, impact retention, and drive membership. To learn more, visit [www.mossa.net](http://www.mossa.net).*

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**In Case You Missed Them: March 2022 Headlines**

- Registration is Open for IHRSA 2022
- Tennis Sees Significant Growth in 2021 Participation, Equipment Sales
- ACSM Certification Releases 2021 Annual Report
- Orangetheory Fitness Opens 1,500th Studio in Los Angeles Neighborhood of Mar Vista
- Statement from IHRSA CEO & President Liz Clark on Congress's Failure to Provide Relief
- Gold's Gym Celebrates Legacy of Joe Gold on his 100th Birthday
- TITLE Boxing Club CEO Todd Wadler Appointed to the Board of USA Boxing Foundation
- Peloton Expands Team With Hire of Andrew Rendich as Chief Supply Chain Officer and Promotion of Shari Eaton to Chief People Officer
- Fitness Franchise Founded by Floyd Mayweather Opens New Location in His Hometown, Grand Rapids, Michigan
- Power Wellness Renews Partnership with NorthPointe Wellness to Manage Fitness Facility
- Matrix Fitness Relaunches Digital Solutions with Improved Interface and Additional Features
- Retro Fitness Announces New State-of-the-Art Fitness Clubs Across America
- Echelon Fitness Trade-In Program Available for Commercial-Grade Connected Bikes
- Jonas Fitness, Inc. Appoints Fitness Industry Veteran Sean Kirby as Vice President of Sales
- Xponential Fitness Launches XPASS Nationwide and Appoints Digital Strategy Expert Danyal Ali as President of XPASS
- Mayweather Boxing + Fitness Exceeds 200 Units Sold and Squares up for Knockout Year in 2022
- Mindbody Executes Global Agreement with TRIB3
- ACE Expands Growth in Middle East Region
- UFC GYM Looks to Enhance Member Experience with ABC Fitness Solutions
- Myzone and Wellonomics Make Moves to Unite More People Through Physical Activity
- Life Fitness Australia Welcomes FITBENCH to Portfolio of Brands
- Project 435 - Uniting the Fitness Industry to share ONE Message with One Voice!
- New Mayweather Boxing + Fitness Gym Is Opening at La Cumbre Plaza in Santa Barbara
- REGYMEN Fitness Rides Growth Momentum Into 2022, Aims for 20 New Units by End of Year
- Crunch Fitness to Open in Columbia, to Become City's Largest Fitness Center
- Flexit Announces NBA Champion Jason Terry as its Head of Athletic Performance
- As Pickleball Explodes, Life Time Announces Grand Opening for its First Pickleball-Only Destination at Bloomington North
- 9Round Set to Open New Studios in Vietnam and Indonesia

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