

Phil Walton

Phil Walton is not someone who seeks accolades or the limelight. He prefers to stay quiet, do his job and do it well.

So, when the Water Coolers began singing their song about him, indicating that he had won the Restaurateur of the Year award, “the back of my head must’ve turned red,” he said. “I would not have expected this in a million years; I’m just a guy doing my job.”

Ever so humble, Walton prefers his work ethic to speak for itself. He believes in always following through on your word, and this mantra has served him well as Regional Facilities Manager for Red Lobster, where his vast knowledge and dogged dedication evoke a great sense of trust with everyone he works with.

“Phil is a great facilities manager,” said Jack McNertney, CRFP, Senior Director of Facilities, Building and Campus Services at DARDEN Restaurants. “He knows his restaurants and is well respected by his operations teams. He can be counted on to do whatever is asked of him.”

“Phil Walton, a tenured Red Lobster Facility Manager, is extremely skilled technically and, coming from construction, understands the building envelope’s critical needs, which enables him to provide dedicated, over-the-top support to his operators, to me as his director and to his Red Lobster teammates,” said Debbie Nelson, Red Lobster. “He is driven, conscientious, a great family man and a good friend to many. We value him as an integral part of the Red Lobster Facilities team!”

In addition to his day job, Walton serves as the Co-Chair of RFMA’s Membership Recruitment Committee, where he works hard to increase awareness of RFMA among restaurant facility professionals. Many in the industry also regard him as a subject-matter expert in finance, which is why he’s helping to develop a study guide for that portion of the CRFP exam.

“I have really enjoyed working with Phil while developing the online CRFP exam prep course,” said Debi Kensell, Education Director at RFMA. “He’s just one of those members who gives 100 percent when asked to participate on a project.”

“Phil Walton has been with RFMA since our inception,” said Tracy Tomson, Executive Director at RFMA. “Always happy to be involved but not someone who sought out a leadership role, Phil was content to work quietly as part of the team. But as they say, sometimes all you have to do is ask and a new leader will emerge. That’s precisely what happened when we asked Phil to co-chair our Member Recruitment Committee. He stepped right into the role and proved to be a natural leader who had a great deal of insight to offer into how to attract new restaurant members. He also joined our curriculum task force that is currently developing the new CRFP online prep course. Phil’s extensive knowledge will now be shared with all who take the online course and will benefit facilities managers for years to come.”

Walton loves his job, and he sees RFMA as part of his job because it allows him to be a better facilities manager.

“It is the only organization for restaurant facility managers,” he said. “You can learn, source vendors, ask questions and get answers. Everything you need to be successful in your job is there. If you ask a question, whether by phone or email, you’ll get an answer in less than a day, and often from someone who has 30 years of industry experience. Giving my time and commitment to RFMA is my way of saying thank you.”

Walton feels an allegiance to the organization that has helped him achieve his success. He has grown with RFMA, and it has grown because of dedicated people like him. To Walton, RFMA isn’t an association; it’s a big, happy family. The Restaurateur of the Year award makes Walton feel like a welcomed member of that family.

“RFMA has given me a family outside of my own family,” he said. “If you’re having a personal problem, you call your parents, sibling, aunt or uncle. With RFMA, if you have a problem, you go to another member of the organization. They never turn you away. This award solidifies my feelings of RFMA being the family that it truly is.”