

# 2017 Restaurateur Of The Year

Robert McNeill, CRFP

Director of Construction and Facilities at The Learning Experience®

“UHC had the pleasure of working with Rob on the remodel of several Wendy’s locations during his tenure with Starboard. Rob’s experience and knowledge of both the construction and operations side of the restaurant industry were clear throughout the remodel process. He was always available, and his hands-on approach brought everyone together and made the remodel process a smooth one. Working with Rob was certainly a pleasure. We congratulate Rob on a well-deserved award.” — Bryon Hamad, CEO of UHC Construction Services

Robert McNeill, CRFP, learned he had won the Restaurateur of the Year award via a text message from his friend, Ron Wilhite, CRFP. He was not able to attend this year’s annual conference.

“Having observed the high level of character and professionalism possessed by the prior years’ recipients of the coveted RFMA Restaurateur of the Year Award, I am not at all surprised to see the 2017 award go to Rob McNeill,” Wilhite said. “Rob is not only a true professional who takes pride in his work, but he is also a genuinely great guy. Congratulations, Rob!”

McNeill has been a RFMA member since 2010 and was quickly identified as someone with vast industry knowledge and a desire to share that knowledge with his peers. He has guided new facility managers in the Emerging Professionals group, volunteered for RFMA Gives, served on RFMA’s Red Carpet Crew and has been a key player in supporting membership development. He recently agreed to serve as Chair of the newly formed Benchmarking Task Force and will continue to make a difference for RFMA members in the years ahead.

“Rob is always willing to help out in any way he can, and he brings valuable insight to franchisee recruitment,” said Tracy Tomson, CAE, Executive Director of RFMA.

“Rob is always looking for ways to improve the facilities function,” added John Getha, Director of Facilities North America, Wendy’s. “He engages with his peers, business partners and excels in developing new relationships. He is passionate about sharing ideas and best practices to gain insight and to help others. Rob has led the facilities function for one of Wendy’s largest franchisees, taking pride in all he does and is well respected in the Wendy’s brand and in our industry.”

After seven years of working in the restaurant industry, McNeill is switching paths. He is starting a new job in the early childhood education field. He said it’s bittersweet for him to receive this award when he’s leaving the restaurant industry.

“If you’re going out, go out on top, right?” McNeill said, laughing.

His new position is still a construction and facilities one so he expects a seamless transition.

"I'm still doing what I love doing," he said.

While he's looking forward to new challenges, he'll miss the emergencies and sense of urgency that happen in the restaurant world.

"I'll miss my whole day turning upside down in a minute," he said.

McNeill will continue being an active member of RFMA. He'll stay in contact with his peers and looks forward to going to next year's annual conference and reconnecting with everyone.

"Rob McNeill is one of the most respected facility management professionals," said Michael Zografos, Director of Facilities at Longhorn Steakhouse. "As our paths have continued to cross over the years, I am more and more convinced that his humble yet assertive demeanor, along with his vast knowledge of facilities management, has made him a true asset in every role he has taken on."

McNeill will proudly showcase his award in his new office as a reminder of his accomplishments in the restaurant industry.