

# 2018 The Jack McNertney MVP Award

John Getha

For John Getha, receiving RFMA's Jack McNertney MVP award at this year's annual conference was the perfect bookend to a long, successful career in facility management. After nearly 24 years at Wendy's, he will retire on Friday, June 29, 2018. On the following Tuesday, Getha, his wife and their youngest son, who are all avid campers, will pile into their RV and head west for 30 days, visiting national parks.

Getha, who loves to work, will spend part of the trip pondering what he'll do after retirement. He's ready for something different and has a long trip to think about what that might be. But one thing is clear: He wants to remain active with RFMA. He has developed many close relationships and does not want to lose them. It is this dedication and history of going above and beyond for RFMA that have earned him this year's MVP award.

Since Getha joined RFMA in 2006, he has served on the Resources, Online Learning and Conference Curriculum Committees; as treasurer, director, vice president/chair-elect and chair of the Board; on the Editorial Board; and as a team leader for RFMA Gives. He also recently earned his CRFP. RFMA has benefitted from his passion and commitment over the past 12 years.

"I first heard John speak at a RFMA educational session, and he impacted me by how much integrity went into his work, and over the next several years I learned so much more about what an incredible person he is," said Brian Davies, Manager of Facilities at Border Foods. "John has made a lasting impact on me. He has made me a better facility manager and better person, and I will forever be in his debt for that."

"John has made our industry better," added Tim Corcoran, PMP, CRFP, with Jack in the Box/Qdoba. "He is a great role model for all of us. I am a better person thanks to his friendship and the great conversations we have had."

Before Getha was hired as a Wendy's maintenance technician in Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1994, he was in charge of facility maintenance for a commercial high-rise building. His brother-in-law had worked for Wendy's and had convinced him to apply by lauding the company's growth opportunities. This decisive juncture has led to a remarkable career. In 1999, Getha was promoted to division maintenance manager, overseeing the Kansas City and Minneapolis/St. Paul markets. In 2005, he moved to Columbus, Ohio, accepting a position at the corporate headquarters as equipment and systems manager. In 2006, he was promoted to director of facilities at Wendy's.

“His foresight into building a facilities program that concentrates on managing the business at the asset level has resulted in what Wendy’s considers a world-class internal maintenance organization,” said Butch Clements, Regional Director of Facilities at Wendy’s International. “His process of managing at the asset level did not stop at the restaurants’ equipment or structure, it also encapsulates our team’s most important assets, the facility technicians and managers. Concentrating on efficiencies that would result in better operating margins for our restaurants, John brought the team along with him as he developed a program that helped us increase efficiencies and reduce costs year over year. Much of this is due to his very calculated and controlled approach to the business. There were several times when he was preparing to ‘sound the charge and take the hill,’ and I would end up halfway to the top of the wrong hill because I hadn’t waited for all the calculations to play out. This controlled and calculated approach has been one of the greatest learnings I have taken away from John’s leadership.”

Getha has stayed with Wendy’s for so long because of the culture founder Dave Thomas has built.

“Even though he’s gone, there is still purposeful drive to continue his culture,” Getha said. “You can see it even in the franchise community. There is lots of tenure within the brand.”

Reflecting on his career, Getha's highlights include serving as RFMA’s board chair, his opportunities to develop within Wendy’s and working with his team on what they’ve built together. He notes how his team particularly shines during emergencies. Hurricanes are what comes to his mind, especially Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans.

“It’s always a nerve-wracking time as our team prepares for an approaching storm,” Getha said. “There have been too many over my career, and each one conjures stories of how we have worked through them. It is always great to see our facilities team step up in leadership roles to get stores back up and running.”

“I have always been fascinated by John’s calm and laid back style,” said Thomas P. Cullen, FCSI, CFSP, President/CEO at Facility Solutions Inc. “John tends to appropriately contemplate a response before speaking—the sure sign of a leader. Leadership at the core is about being willing to push someone forward, do anything for their success and give them credit for it. His team members, associates and colleagues thrive when working with John.”

As Getha prepares to leave the company, he has been mindful of Wendy’s transition from 1,400 company stores to 330. He has been on a mission to ensure the franchisees have the support they need. He is proud to leave behind a comprehensive resource library for the brand. It includes everything he and his team have learned and best practices for maintaining Wendy’s restaurants. The library includes a collection of tools and resources, a facility maintenance manual, a reinvestment tool that calculates a 20-year capital plan for a franchisee’s entire portfolio of restaurants, historical documents and a facilities forum on the internal social network that allows facility managers to interact with peers within the brand.

"John is a perfect example of how one's passion for facilities can lead to a successful 38-year career—from a tool-bag-carrying technician in the trenches to the facilities department leader for a very large restaurant concept with hundreds of stores under his supervision," said Rob Wach, Vice President of Facilities at The Habit Restaurants. "No doubt John's calm yet confident and honest approach has benefited both the operators he has served and the many facility professionals he has mentored. John's support of RFMA was capped with his recent CRFP designation achievement which epitomizes the 'lead by example' that is part of his ingrained value system. We will now proudly stand upon John's shoulders as we carry on the RFMA legacy he has passionately nurtured."

"It was great to see John receive the MVP award; I can't think of a more deserving person," said Terry Byerly, CRFP, Client Success Executive at Corrigo. "John has given back to the industry in so many different ways. Back when I was with Pizza Hut, John was very instrumental in the rollout of our CMMS program. He took the time from his busy schedule to share best practices and explain how to best set up the system based on his experience and in-depth knowledge. I can't thank John enough for all that he has done. John will be missed, and I wish him the best with the next chapter of his life."

Getha said the MVP award is a nice and humbling acknowledgment of his RFMA involvement over many years.

"It is an honor to be able to give back to an organization I got so much out of," he said.

When Getha first joined RFMA, his focus was on making connections, networking, learning about the industry and sharing best practices. Now, as a seasoned veteran, he credits his leadership roles as being instrumental in his personal development and growth. His warm relationships with vendors have allowed him to speak to their organizations about solutions and best practices. He still takes every opportunity to coach and to be coached. He encourages his colleagues and peers to do everything to grow personally and professionally in order to take on leadership roles at their companies. He advises on the importance of listening, considering other perspectives, being open to new ideas and bringing different people together to solve problems. His one big piece of advice is: Don't miss an opportunity to lead.

"John's mentoring, which he has provided long before I reported directly to him, has helped me personally reach goals I never even saw as opportunities," Clements said. "With our offices being next to each other, I see him every day providing the same guidance to anyone that seeks it. He is always willing to take a call or open his office door and offer a seat at his desk to discuss anything, whether professional or personal."

Getha says he could not have been as successful without his wife, Patti, who has always supported his career.

"My wife has put up with a guy who is on the road a lot and manages things at home well so I don't have to worry about them," he said. "She is a key contributor to my success."

"It has been my pleasure to connect with John on several occasions," said Mark Courtney with In-N-Out Burger. "His dedication, enthusiasm and insight are inspiring to many of us in the restaurant facilities management business."

"John gives 110 percent to everything he is a part of, and RFMA has been the beneficiary of that passion and commitment for the past 12 years," said Tracy Tomson, CAE, Executive Director at RFMA. "Thank you, John, for all you have given to RFMA and our industry. You have certainly left a lasting mark on both."