



## *News Release*

Ken Ellens  
KEN ELLENS COMMUNICATIONS  
201-758-2864-Phone / 201-951-9511-Cell

[KenEllens@aol.com](mailto:KenEllens@aol.com)



@Ken Ellens

### **Chris Steffich, Director of Operations for Eaglewood Resort & Spa, Receives the 2016 Bob Zappatelli Award for Culinary Excellence**

**The Woodlands (Houston), Texas, July 2016 ...** [Benchmark Hospitality International](#) has announced that Chris Steffich, director of operations for Eaglewood Resort & Spa, is the recipient of the 2016 Bob Zappatelli Award for Culinary Excellence. Eaglewood Resort & Spa is a Benchmark Resorts & Hotels-brand property located in the Chicago market. Benchmark Hospitality International announced the merger of Benchmark Resorts & Hotels and Gemstone Hotels & Resorts earlier this month.

Benchmark Hospitality presents the Bob Zappatelli Award for Culinary Excellence each year in memory of Mr. Zappatelli, who was the company's highly respected first vice president food & beverage. Zappatelli had also served as executive chef for multiple Benchmark properties prior to heading up the entire food and beverage department. The Bob Zappatelli Award is given annually to a member of the company's food and beverage team who best exemplifies the extraordinary spirit, legacy and culinary gifts of Mr. Zappatelli.

"Chris is a most worthy recipient of this honored award within our company," said Co-President Greg Champion. "Much like Bob Zappatelli was, Chris is always willing to go where we need him for a new professional challenge, or for temporary field staff support. He is an invaluable member of our team, and is also an important champion of Benchmark's 'Be the Difference' customer service program."

A long-time Benchmark employee serving at properties in multiple markets, Chris Steffich has held director of food and beverage positions at a variety of hotels and resorts for the company, and has invested many years of his distinguished career within the culinary arts. In addition to his property responsibilities, Mr. Steffich serves as field staff support within the Benchmark food and beverage organization. In this role, he acts as a departmental expert, mentoring his colleagues, and supporting special projects and development. He shares a passion for food and beverage comparable to the legacy of Bob Zappatelli. Earlier in his career Steffich was

employed by Walt Disney, Inc.

Chris Steffich attended West Virginia University at Morgantown and Fairmont State University of Fairmont, West Virginia. He lives in the Chicagoland area.

**The Bob Zappatelli Award for Culinary Excellence** was instituted in Mr. Zappatelli's honor to be presented each year to a member of Benchmark Hospitality's food and beverage department who best exemplifies the traits for which he was so highly respected and widely admired. These traits become the qualifiers for the Bob Zappatelli Award, and include:

- An intense passion for the culinary arts
- Acute awareness of current trends in dining and consumer food and beverage preferences
- Demonstrates excellence in food and beverage operations within their property, regionally or nationally
- A profound appreciation for the importance of each and every food and beverage team member's contribution
- A willingness to go above and beyond the norm to help ensure a superb food and beverage experience for their property's customers

Mr. Zappatelli was a tireless champion of his food & beverage team and the culinary program at Benchmark Hospitality International, having held several positions within the company while developing his career there. At each step of his illustrative career, Mr. Zappatelli served to inspire, mentor and provide vision for the food and beverage team.

The Bob Zappatelli Award, which honors an internal culinary professional within Benchmark Hospitality, is complemented by the Bob Zappatelli Culinary Arts Scholarship. The scholarship is presented annually in partnership with the [James Beard Foundation](#) in New York to a deserving student at one of the nation's top culinary arts schools.

Benchmark Hospitality International's signature brand portfolio, Benchmark Resorts & Hotels, recently completed a successful merger with Gemstone Hotels & Resorts, both recognized global leaders in the management and marketing of resorts, hotels and conference centers. The new company has 58 unique and distinctive properties domestically and internationally with 8000 rooms and 10,000 staff members globally. The epic merger of these two legendary hotel companies has created the industry's most vibrant and robust experiential and lifestyle-centric portfolio.

**Attached photo: Chris Steffich, recipient of the Bob Zappatelli Award for Culinary Excellence.**

**About Benchmark Hospitality International®**

[Benchmark Hospitality International](#)® is a recognized global leader in the management and marketing of resorts, hotels and conference centers. The company's two distinctive portfolios of properties, [Benchmark Resorts & Hotels](#)® and [Personal Luxury Resorts & Hotels](#)®, represent the finest in guest-dedicated hospitality in unique destinations across the United States, in the Caribbean and Japan. [Benchmark Conference Centers](#)® maintain the highest standards for certification in meeting excellence. Benchmark Hospitality was launched in 1980 as an independent company and today operates worldwide from offices in The Woodlands (Houston),

Texas, and regional offices in New Jersey, Washington State, Japan and Chile. For additional company information visit [www.benchmarkhospitality.com](http://www.benchmarkhospitality.com). To become a fan on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels](http://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels](http://www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels).

### **About Benchmark Resorts & Hotels®**

[Benchmark Resorts & Hotels®](http://www.benchmarkresortsandhotels.com) represents the finest in lodging, dining, recreational and meeting accommodations. Many are certified by [IACC](http://www.iacc.com), the leading professional organization governing the multi-billion dollar conference center industry on five continents, and many have also been recognized with the coveted [Benchmark Conference Centers®](http://www.benchmarkconferencecenters.com) certification of meeting excellence. Benchmark Resorts & Hotels deliver highly specialized service that anticipates guests' needs and ensures a hospitality experience unsurpassed and long remembered.

[www.benchmarkresortsandhotels.com](http://www.benchmarkresortsandhotels.com). To become a fan on Facebook, visit [www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels](http://www.facebook.com/BenchmarkResortsandHotels), or follow us on Twitter at [www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels](http://www.twitter.com/BenchmarkHotels).

### **About Gemstone Hotels & Resorts LLC**

Headquartered in Park City, Utah, with offices in Stamford, Connecticut, and Miami Florida, [Gemstone](http://www.gemstoneresorts.com) is a full-service management company that specializes in luxury and upscale hotels and complex resorts. Gemstone currently manages 19 hotels and resorts throughout the United States. For more information about Gemstone, please visit [www.gemstoneresorts.com](http://www.gemstoneresorts.com).



[Benchmark Hospitality's Lifestyle Journal](http://www.benchmarkhospitality.com/lifestyle-journal)

[Mosaic Traveler Blog](http://www.mosaictraveler.com)

###