Maxine Rivera, Central Training Manager

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No matter where members of The Landings Golf & Athletic Club choose to dine—at one of the four clubhouses or at The Deck—the service they experience should be the same. Making sure that happens is partly the responsibility of Central Training Manager Maxine Rivera.

“We want a warm, inviting environment in each of them,” she says. “I may be handing you a buzzer to let you know your food is ready, as at The Deck, but it shouldn’t feel like a McDonald’s on I-95.”

Rivera works to ensure all food and beverage staff have the technical skills they need to do their jobs well. Staff members also are expected to become familiar with the Georgia state health code as it applies to their position. A third aspect of her responsibilities pertains to bartenders and servers, helping them become certified in a national system of protocols for serving alcohol safely.

But, perhaps the most important element of her job, is building and maintaining a proper work culture, one that values integrity, respect, teamwork, and creating great experiences for members. “We don’t say, ‘Be nice to members,’ ” Rivera says. “We say, ‘Treat everyone well.’ We’re living those values and, if you live them and lead by example, then people know you believe them, and they will follow.”

She said Kevin Walters, the Director of Club Operations for The Landings Golf & Athletic Club, does not hesitate to pitch in, providing a good example. He “will walk right into a banquet on a Friday night, and jump in and pick up a tray of food” and deliver it to tables, she says. “Everybody knows actions speak louder than words.”

Rivera, 32, had the perfect background for the job when it was created three years ago. She had worked in the restaurant business in the Orlando, Fla., area off and on for 13 years, starting out as a server in a breakfast café while attending Rollins College in Winter Park, where she earned a degree in international business. After graduation, she became the restaurant’s assistant manager,

then general manager, and, after that, she led a team that opened new locations for the chain, focusing on staff training.

As with her current position, she made workplace culture a focus. “I’m super passionate about creating a culture where people love to come to work, and love what they do,” she says.

At The Landings Golf & Athletic Club, Rivera leads classes when employees are off duty, gives brief lessons during pre-shift huddles, and gets her hands dirty, working side by side with cooks, servers, hostesses, and managers. She also helps recruit, interview, and on-board new employees.

Unlike many restaurants, The Landings Golf & Athletic Club pays employees for the time they spend in mandatory trainings and also covers employees’ costs for obtaining specific certifications, such as TIPs (Training for Intervention Procedures) for employees who serve alcohol.

She says paying for training shows employees that The Landings Golf & Athletic Club values their time and is willing to invest in their professional growth. “That changes peoples’ attitudes about training, and it’s rare and special, and it’s one of the reasons I really love where I work.”

By Rick Colvin, a member whose career as a journalist included 12 years with the Los Angeles Times.