

20 Under 40: Andrew Bowman is an agent for change



Andrew Bowman of Oneida is a recipient of the 20 Under 40 award. LEWIS MARIEN/The Register-Mail

Posted Oct. 25, 2015 at 6:30 AM - The Register Mail
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GALESBURG — This week's recipient of the Young Professionals of Galesburg and the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce's "20 Under 40" award to be profiled is Andrew Bowman.

Bowman is owner of Bowman Farms and Pilot Knob Comforts, Oneida. In addition to his farming operation, Bowman has launched Pilot Knob Comforts, a specialty hull-less popcorn business he markets on the Internet and sells directly to grocery stores.

"Andrew is a leader in the ag industry and has received the honor of being named a 2012 National Young Farmer in America," according to his nomination form. "He has also completed the Illinois Ag Leadership Program that lobbied nationally for agriculture and traveled overseas

representing the U.S. and Illinois agriculture."

Another nominator wrote: "Andrew Bowman is a change agent. He's not one to sit around and wait for opportunity. He seeks opportunities and if he can't find them he creates them."

He also teaches Sunday school and is a youth leader at his church.

Here's more about Bowman in his own words:

What do you do in your current position?

A. We farm in northern Knox County outside Oneida and have an insurance agency serving local communities. I oversee the operations involved in growing and marketing our seed soybean, non-GMO food grade soybean, food grade white corn, and regular corn crops. I serve area insurance clients along with my father. My wife and I have also expanded into specialty no-toothpicks-required popcorn under the brand Pilot Knob Comforts. I love what I do and am never bored! Just this week, I jumped into a combine after a morning meeting in a suit and tie and later was on the phone with a woman from Georgia who ordered our popcorn. There's never enough time in the day, but the days are rewarding.

How are you involved in the community?

A. I serve as a junior high Sunday school teacher and youth group co-Leader each Sunday. It's a wonderful way to be humbled — junior higher's can be merciless! — while making an eternal impact in this community. I'm also the chair for the Illinois Leadership Council for Agricultural Education, which can be viewed as the Chamber of Commerce for the IL AgEd community. We within industry advocate for the future of our farms and businesses through a better future for youth statewide.

Of what achievement are you most proud?

A. I am most proud of my son, Ryker, and my wife, Karlie. Through them, all other achievements reach their zenith. I was honored as the 2006 Star Farmer of America and the 2012 National Outstanding Young Farmer by the Jaycees and John Deere, for example. While I am proud of these honors, they don't explain the "why." I am a fifth generation farmer and have been blessed with great opportunities. When I look at my wife and son, I see what really matters in life, what God has given me. The awards and achievements, to me, are really benchmarks on the journey, not ends in and of themselves. And I'm blessed to have my family on this journey with me.

What advice do you have for other young professionals?

A. Be a contrarian and set goals. I've observed that most people that aren't successful simply don't set goals. And those that do often compare themselves to others too much (something I struggle with too, admittedly).

So set goals and be proud of being yourself, contrary to the norm. It'll pay better in the long run and be far more fulfilling.

What's the most important thing people should know about your community?

A. We are filled with potential. It's easy to look at what Galesburg and surrounding communities "used to be." There's some truth to that, but it's too short-sighted. It overlooks the strategic resources — agriculture, transportation, and human capital — that we have. And it certainly overlooks that this is a wonderful place to raise a family.

Andrew Bowman: Age: 29: **Residence:** 1026 Knox Road 2600N Oneida, IL 61467 (Country): **Profession:** Farmer: **Education:** B.S. University of Illinois Crop Science, licensed insurance agent and certified crop adviser: **Family:** Karlie Elliott Bowman (spouse, 29 – Galesburg Community Foundation), Ryker Bowman (son, 2); Lynn and Sally Bowman (parents and partners, Oneida); Matt & Liz Hulsizer (brother-in-law and sister, farmer and trust officer F&M Bank, Galesburg)

About the award

The Young Professionals of Galesburg and the Galesburg Area Chamber of Commerce have launched the "20 Under 40" award.

This award honors 20 individuals under the age of 40 considered to be "movers and shakers" in the community.

Honorees will be profiled each week through Jan. 31, 2016, in The Register-Mail. They will be included in a special supplement in February 2016, in addition to being recognized at the chamber's annual dinner to be held in February 2016.

The 20 honorees are judged on their outstanding career achievements and community impact. A panel of judges evaluated each nomination on information provided in the following categories: Reason for nomination, career achievements/special awards and recognition, community involvement, volunteerism and community service leadership skills.