

Fall 2020



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# NOYF

# 2021 Awards Congress

National Outstanding Young Farmers

## 2021 NOYF Awards Congress Canceled

The officers of the Outstanding Farmers of America have announced that the 2021 NOYF Awards Congress, scheduled for February 4-7, 2021, in Appleton, Wisconsin, has been canceled due to COVID-19 concerns.

The candidates for the 2021 NOYF Awards will be recognized at the 2022 NOYF Awards Congress, which is planned for Hilton Head Island, South Carolina, in February of 2022. Both the candidates from 2021 and the new class of 2022 will be honored at the 2022 Awards Congress.

The 2023 NOYF Awards Congress will be in Appleton, Wisconsin. Following that Congress, NOYF will resume its scheduled rotation among the regions.

OFA appreciates the understanding of the members as this difficult decision is announced. We look forward to celebrating the resilience of agriculture with all of you in South Carolina in 2022.

*Please note that this decision was made as the Spirit was headed to press. As a result, you may find references to the 2021 NOYF Awards Congress in some articles within. While that information is no longer applicable to the 2021 NOYF Awards Congress, it gives you a sneak peak into what NOYF 2023 will hold when the Congress makes its return to Wisconsin.*



## NOYF COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Mary & Marlan Johnson (NE 1989)

noyfprogram@gmail.com

### Plan ahead to nominate candidates

Hello from Nebraska! We are Marlan and Mary Johnson (NE1989), and we will be transitioning into the NOYF New Candidate Coordinator position with help from Rich and Debbie Norz (NJ 2010). We have a corn/soybean/hay operation between Omaha and Lincoln, Nebraska, and raise seed soybeans for various seed companies. In addition to this, we have a land conservation business. Mary has worked for Syngenta and the Legacy companies for 38+ years; she is a Certified Crop Advisor and Certified Commercial applicator. We both have a "Passion" for Agriculture, and serve on various community organizations. Harvest is upon us, and yields are respectable. Considering we had no rain in August for the late soybeans, we are pleased. Now we pray we can get it all out of the fields!

We are EXCITED to be working with the new candidates!! At our past February Congress in Connecticut—we were both AMAZED at the quality of young leaders that came through. Their forward thinking, their progress in Agriculture—this is a group that is going places!! They all had a story, challenges, and we enjoyed hearing where they have been, and where they are going. We simply got a "taste" of the job requirements for us in the future, and we hope that we can fill the "big shoes" that Rich and Debbie are leaving. They have done a FANTASTIC job with the new candidates, connecting with them, and helping them through the whole process; from nomination to the final banquet. Be patient; we are learning as we go along!

Thank you to the NACAA, OFA, and other partners that have helped secure new nominees for the upcoming 2021 Congress in Appleton, Wisconsin. However; this is an ONGOING process. If you know of a young farmer who you respect, and would like to nominate—START THE PROCESS NOW!! 2020 Finalists,

do you have someone in mind? Reach out to those potential nominees, tell of your experience with the program. The friendships we have made, the networking we have done—the OFA program has made our farming operation better than before!! This nomination form can be found on the OFA website at [www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com). It is very simple!!

With Covid-19, we have all faced challenges. We are all doing business differ-

ently. Remember, the world needs farmers for an increasing population. The NOYF Program is a great way to recognize successful young farmers, and make life-long friendships and business partners. It is an investment in the future. Reach out to some of those young farmers today—and talk about this great program!! We look forward to our new role, and hope to pay back some of benefits the National Outstanding Young Farmer Program has given us over the years!

## OFA COORDINATOR'S REPORT

Sharon and Kevin Page (MI 1991)

pageeboy@yahoo.com

### COVID-19 affects 2021 NOYF Congress

The view from my window today is so majestic as Mother Nature bestows one of her glorious fall days of warm breezes and various foliage colors, which here in Michigan is one sign of the changing seasons.

It appears it is not the only change that is occurring these days. As we moved forward with plans for the 65th NOYF in Appleton, Wisc., February 4-7, 2021, we were met with the challenges of COVID-19 brings upon us. Although we were planning to follow all the CDC national, state, and local guidelines to assure that safety was number one, we were met with obstacles that we could not overcome and eventually decided to postpone the recognition of the Class of 2021 until our Congress in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina in 2022. We will honor two classes at that Congress and will then return to Appleton in 2023.

This decision was a difficult one since not only are we celebrating the 65th Anniversary of NOYF, but



2021 marks 55 years honoring Orion Samuelson as our Emcee and 45 years with our major sponsor, John Deere! Also, a shout out to our returning class of 2020 and all those anniversary years: 2016, 2011, 2006, 2001, 1996, 1991, 1986, 1981, 1976, 1971, 1966, 1961, and 1956.

An additional change this year is the transition of my role of OFA Coordinator. Rich and Debbie Norz will step into this position going forward. As I step back I can reflect on all the wonderful relationships and new friends I have made on my course of eight years which has been a lifelong fulfillment of great memories. Thank you everyone for being part of this journey.

Look for updates on NOYF 2022 on our website at [www.outstandingfarmers.com](http://www.outstandingfarmers.com) or our OFA Facebook page.



# OFA MEMBER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Sheila and Dan White (TX 1970)

In the winter of 1969, our local Jaycee President asked Dan if he would like to enter the Outstanding Farmer of Texas contest. We had never heard of the contest but thought it would be a good opportunity to expand our ideas and have a nice weekend in Lubbock, Texas, where the contest was held. We were surprised to win the state contest with an all-paid trip to Bellville, Illinois. All was great until our plane started to land in St. Louis; being my first plane ride, as that plane slowed down and felt like we were completely still, this farm girl got a little excited. I told Dan, "We are going to crash, just fall right out of the sky." The plane ride home was quite pleasant. I've learned a lot since then.

Upon arrival, we started to meet the contestants of 1970 which were from all over the U.S. That was only the beginning of years of fun and friendship that exists to this day. Baers, Shrivvers, Thompsons, Barricks,

Masons, Cortopassos, Maxwells (IN), Bishops, Barnes, Mathisons, Barnstools, Eaves, Kludts. . . if I left someone out, just forgive me.

We were raising our five children and Dan was managing the cotton gin, so sorry to say we didn't return until our 25th anniversary year. I can give a big thanks to Cleo Thompson and Jerry Barnes urging us to please come to Sacramento. We went and haven't missed too many since.



I didn't realize it at first, but we were making lifetime friends who lived similar lifestyles and loved the farming industry as we worked to feed the world. This OFA organization has opened up so many opportunities to tour other farmers' operations throughout the country along with John Deere plants where they build tractors, combines, and just about anything you need. Farm agriculture agents who care about our farmers and experiments help us make changes that bring more profit to our households. We can never thank our sponsors, John Deere and the National Association of Ag Agents, enough. You provide new insights and ideas to



help us stay on the farm. We thank you for your year of sponsorship.

If you are asked to enter this contest, please don't hesitate. You may not be one of the four outstanding winners, but in this group we are all winners. Just be careful on auction night at the Congress; a few members have lost a few bucks, but since it was for a great cause, no tears.

As Orion Samuelson, our master of ceremonies for our banquet and naming of four winning couples said, you never have to stay in a motel. Now you have friends all over. The Shrivvers had asked many of our class to spend the night with them since we were en route to a Congress. Hospitality was flowing, especially as we sat down to a bountiful breakfast, all kinds of homemade jellies, jams, toast, and biscuits. If Dan White ever embarrassed his wife, this was it. "Bernie, don't you have some peach jelly?" I just sank in my chair as Bernie went to the freezer and presented Dan with his favorite peach jelly. I guess it was okay; we still love each other. You might ask Bernie how feisty Dan can be.

In closing, our sympathy to those who have had loved ones pass this year. OFA is a group who loves and cares; you will be missed by this great organization.





## TREASURER'S REPORT

Don and Cheryl Hartman (NM 2006)  
6495hartman@gmail.com

# OFA Board makes a few financial account changes

Greetings from the Land of Enchantment (aka New Mexico). As I currently write this (late September) we have finished harvesting seedless watermelons and are still harvesting chile peppers.

We are happy to share with you all that we were blessed with a new baby granddaughter in March and she is growing like a weed.

It has been unusually hot and dry for us here and the irrigation hasn't stopped. I have been busy hauling watermelons (4 semi loads a day) while our son Matthew has been hauling the chile peppers, and we are now preparing and ready to plant fall onions. Cheryl and Megan have been busy keeping us fed and hydrated. Our daughter in-law is busy with our food safety program, also helping Cheryl with the record keeping all while herding the grandkids. It is awesome being grandparents and I love taking my grandson with me.

What a wild and crazy year! COVID-19 really affected the produce markets and had us all in a fizz. But thanks to God's grace and mercy we began har-

vest as restrictions were being eased and lifted and we were blessed with near normal demand and better than expected prices.

We would also like to mention that the OFA board of directors made some changes to the financial accounts. We closed the Huntington account due to their internal changes and poor customer service. The board decided to transfer the money to a managed account with Edward Jones, thus far this has proved to have been a good move as we have seen better returns for the OFA. This move enables us greater ac-

cess nationwide, while seeing growth and returns due to a better financial advisor who is more involved, with increased communication and is more in tune with the goals of OFA. The board also moved money from Wells Fargo that was in a low interest savings account into the foundation account that offers a better return and also has the flexibility to be accessed should the need arise. The foundation account was established with the hopes of someday allowing OFA to be self-sustaining, and we would encourage anyone who is able to support this effort to please donate.

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Greg and Carmen Bendixson (ND 2002)  
bendixsn@nccray.com



# Keep potential nominees in mind for 2022

Greetings from Northwest North Dakota. We were very lucky to avoid a severe drought this year. We started the growing season cool and on the dry side, received just enough very timely rain showers to grow an average crop, and we have been bone dry ever since. Hopefully as this is the end of September, and harvest has been over nearly a month, there is still time to catch some more precip before freeze up.

Covid 19 has been just kind of a nuisance here, as we are pretty remote, and it hit just as the farm was getting really busy, I know most all of you have been impacted much worse. The worst part is that time keeps marching on

and the situation never really seems to improve.

As always, as you go about running your farm business, always be thinking of a young farmer that you would like to see receive recognition for the leadership they are providing to your community, get them nominated before they age out. Our organization is nothing without continuing to attract great new candidates each year, we have groups that help with this, but our long term success is up to the OFA membership.

I hope everyone is staying safe, and healthy, and I hope to see many of you in February of 2022 in Hilton Head Island, South Carolina.

## In Remembrance

- Alton Mindemann (OK 1965) passed away on November 6, 2020.
- Byron Keating (IL 1980) passed away on October 28, 2020.
- Mike Hennenfent (IL 1981) passed away on August 2, 2020.
- David Duncan (IL 1976) passed away on June 16, 2020.



# NOYF WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Doug & Maria Bichler (ND 2020)

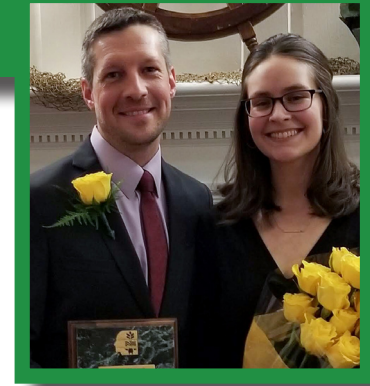
From our kitchen table in Linton, North Dakota, overlooking our farm yard, it is easy for one to lose sight of the vastness present in the agricultural industry. We all can plead guilty to thinking, at one point in time or another, of our own schedule, our own agenda, our own ideology. We become lost, perhaps, in the everyday duties our jobs in agriculture entail. And, in those familiar duties, producers in agriculture often forget their pivotal importance to our world. For us at least, we know this to be true. How do we, as a small seedstock cattle producer from southcentral North Dakota, fit into the greater picture?

Neither Doug nor I had ever heard of the Outstanding Farmers of America until the award application was sitting in our email inbox. Truthfully, we considered declining the nomination. We are too busy. We have too much going on. The trip will be too much for us and our 6-month-old. The doubt went on and on to the point of assuming there were far more deserving individuals than us who could be nominated instead. And, rightfully so. For if there is one thing we learned while in Connecticut at the National Outstanding Young Farmers Award Congress, it is this: We all deserve recognition for the work we carry out and the lifestyle we uphold.

While Doug was raised as the third generation to live and work on the Bichler family farm, I was raised not on a farm but rather on the outskirts of a rural

town home to 1,000 people on the other side of the state. Doug knew from a young age that agriculture, and animal agriculture in particular, was his calling. Through involvement with 4-H, Doug began his cowherd with the purchase of a few heifers. His career path that would follow is nothing short of a long story with a happy ending, raising two beautiful daughters on the farm he has always called home.

For a confusing plot twist, my grandfather and Doug's father were neighbors, having been raised on their respective farms not 5 miles from one another. My father was raised on and cultivated a love for that farm mere miles from where I now live. My mother was raised as a self-declared city girl in Linton. Both sets of my grandparents lived within 12 miles of one another. So, while life's circumstances pulled my dad away from the family farm to raise myself and my four older brothers elsewhere, you could say Linton has always felt like home to me. And, now with Linton truly being my zip code, I've come full circle in life. Doug and I consider ourselves blessed to expose our children to this way of life and all the opportunities they may encounter as they age. Amelia, 3, is tickled pink when she is able to contribute on the



farm, or when she is able to play in the sandy soil to her heart's content. There, 1, is just now taking her first steps and will surely soon follow in her sister's dirty footprints. While we often feel overwhelmed and find ourselves juggling too many tasks, we would never choose to dissolve our lifestyle and our place in the industry.

The individuals we came to know during our short time together at the Congress were nothing short of extraordinary. During both of our past experience with organizations, we have never encountered a culture quite like that of the OFA. Words fail us to describe the authenticity of the conversations and relationships from that February weekend. The diversity of such a group brings awareness to the many facets in agriculture we, as producers, even forget. Did I realize or ever consider what the life of an oyster farmer looks like? No. But, in Ned and Olga Gaine, our eyes were opened. Did I know the ins and outs of producing orchids? No. But, we were given a glimpse. If those of us who are familiar with a segment of agriculture are blown away and unaware of another, imagine what the uninformed consumer would feel walking away from such an event. We can only hope the ongoing coronavirus pandemic does not deter us from being able to meet again in Wisconsin.

As we all tackle our respective duties this fall, stay safe, work slow and be mindful. No amount of work is worth damage to or loss of a life.

But for now from North Dakota, Doug, in his attempt to mow and maintain road ditches, has had the unpleasant surprise of a rock catapulting through the windshield. It seems a trip to town is in order, and I'm the chauffeur.





# NOYF WINNER'S SPOTLIGHT

## Brandon & Ashley Bonk (DE 2020)

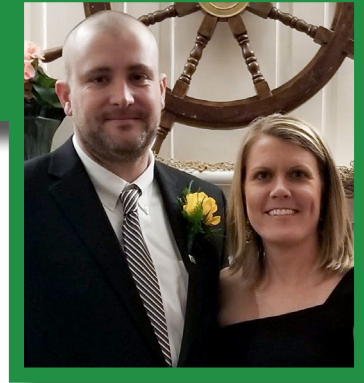
Prior to our nomination Brandon and I had not heard of the National Outstanding Young Farmer Program. Unlike many of the other nominees we did not know who nominated us, we did not know of any other winners in our state, and we went into the whole experience not really knowing what to expect. Now being part of the 2020 class and being one of the final four, it is an organization we will never forget. We walked away from the conference in Connecticut with a new set of friends, a motivation to continue our hard work, and a sense of excitement for next year's conference in Wisconsin. We know the hard work that went into planning the conference earlier this year in Connecticut and want to thank everyone that was involved including John Deere, the event was first class in so many ways. We left the conference not really wanting to leave, yes, we missed our kids but as soon as we both got into the car, we kind of looked at each other and just felt like it wasn't time to go, we are thankful to have been included in the class of 2020, we feel everyone nominated was worthy of the award.

Brandon and I both grew up in Delaware, and each of us had a background in farming. Brandon's family had a prominent farming operation and canning factory in Sussex County, and my Dad was a grain and vegetable farmer in Kent, County. I attended college to become an elementary teacher at the University of Delaware, and Brandon attended Iowa State where he studied Ag Systems Technol-

ogy. We both graduated in 2006, I began my short career in teaching and Brandon began working for his step-dad and part-time for some local farmers, as his family's operation had stopped farming around 2002. Around 2007 Brandon began having opportunities present themselves that would allow him to start farming on his own. In 2011 after the birth of our second daughter I left my teaching position to work part-time for the farm.

Jumping ahead to now Brandon and I both work full-time on the farm. My main duty is managing the office but I also do many other

jobs around the farm from cooking to running the packing shed. Brandon manages the day to day decision as well as jumping right in and working with our employees. Brandon's passion for farming, his work ethic, innovativeness, and drive to be a good steward of the land all attribute to our farm's success. We are now farming around 6,000 acres growing corn, soybeans, wheat, potatoes, and sweet potatoes around Magnolia, Delaware. We are extremely grateful for the opportunities we have had, that we get to work together every day, and most of all that our children can join us. We are blessed to have four wonder-



ful children Audrey (11 years old), Annabell (9-year-old), Coy (7 years old), and Ward (3 years old). We hope that at least one of our children will have the passion, drive, and desire to continue what we are building.

With all the excitement 2020 has brought into all of our lives one thing has fortunately stayed constant for us and that is our farming operation, we hope that is true for all of you. We are currently in the busiest part of our year, harvesting corn, soybeans, sweet

potatoes, and also planting wheat. So far, the best moment of our 2020 was being named one of the 2020 NOYF winners. We look forward to being a part of OFA for many years to come and look forward to seeing many of you at the 2021 conference in Wisconsin.



# OFA SPIRIT OF GIVING

## OFA DONOR FUND

Buck Teeter	1975
ONEOK	2017
Jack & Mary Lou Thomson Foundation	1955
John & Delores Brown	1965
Wisner H Buckbee	1965

## PLATINUM \$5000+

Joe Gambini & Lois Armstrong	1965
Gerald Barnes & Neoma Loehr	1970

## DIAMOND \$1000+

Kevin & Sharon Page	1991
Dana & Julie Stapleton	2002
Marlan & Mary Johnson	1989
Rod & Janelle Holth	Honary
Russ & Marilyn Rosenboom	1972
Dave & Jeanne Endres	2001
Ben & Kathryn Littlepage	1965
Rich and Debbie Norz	2010
TIM & Sara Sullivan	2005
Greg & Carmen Bendixson	2002
David & Bernie Shriver	1970
Joe & Ida DeFrancesco	2016
Ralph & Cleo Thompson	1970
John & Marge Walchli	1969
Andy & Hilde Burger	1966
Ken & Audrey Mason	1970
Robert & Roberta Call	1960
Ken & Marilyn Bush	1966
Robert Sakata	1956
Bob & Ella Mae Wade	1969
John & Gail Kautz	1966
Dan & Sheila White	1970
Kevin & Krissy Albert	2005
Don and Cheryl Hartman	2006



OFA is a 501(c) 3 Tax Deductible Non-Profit Organization.

## GOLD \$500+

TN	Joe Geremia	2011	CT
ND	Bill Richards	1967	OH
CA	Lloyd & Daphnie Holterman	1994	WI
FL	Rod & Mary Birchen	1993	IL
NY	Scott & Peggy Hildebrant	2002	MN
	Willard & Ruth Pederson	1967	ND
	Memory of Pat Barnes (Class of 07)	2007	
CA	Willard & Pat Hennings	1965	WA
OR	Eric & Marlene Haberer	1972	KS
	Max & Connie Peterson	1974	IL
MI	Bryce & Cheryl Chamberlain	1982	IL
SD	Richard & Juanalee Alder	1966	NE
NE	Sandy & Peggy Luderman	1982	MN
ND	Dale & Joanna Koester	1959	ID
IL	Mike & Sandy Hennenfent	1981	IL
WI	Steve & Janeen Moest	1994	IL
LA	Dennis & Doris Tubergen	1994	MI
NJ	Jay & Kristin Richardson	2004	WI
MN	Mary Ann Brown	1965	GA
ND	Steve & Dee Gordon	2012	OR
IL	Glen & Angie Walters	2002	GA
CT	Donald & Jeanette Reuvers	1967	MN
ND	Earl and Sue Stanley	1974	VT

## SILVER

SD	Leo Sebek Memorial	2002	SD
NY	Mark & Angie Ulness	2017	WI
IL	Ken & Donna Dickneite	1996	MO
CO	Rufus & Mary Sharard	1967	SC
KY	Ruth Pederson Memorial(Uglen)	2012	ND
CA	Mark & Trudy Peterson	2002	MO
TX	Anderson Farm llc		
NE	Deb & Bob Carpenter	1980	NY
NM	John & Mary Shawhan	1977	OH
	Karl Eby/Judy Erickson	1985	IA
	Danny & Danette McAlhaney	2002	SC
	George Maxey	1965	CO
	Elaine Thompson	1981	CA



# Dues and Donations

- ☐ Annual Dues: \$25
- ☐ Lifetime Dues: \$250
- ☐ \$100 Challenge: \$100
- ☐ Spirit of Giving: \$\_\_\_\_\_
- ☐ OFA Foundation: \$\_\_\_\_\_

Submit to: Don & Cheryl Hartman  
6495 HWY 418 SW  
Deming, NM 88030



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*Spirit*

The Newsletter  
of the Outstanding Farmers of America

**Send submissions or comments to:** Erin Slivka  
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