



Photos by Vanessa Wright

AG LEADERSHIP AWARDS RECOGNIZE OUTSTANDING LEADERS

BY LIZA TEIXEIRA ROBERTSON

Dennis Albiani (32) and Cannon Michael (39) were selected to receive the 2017 Profiles in Leadership Award by the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation (CALF) and the Ag Leadership Alumni Council. The awards were presented at the Class 48 Inauguration and Ag Leadership Award Reception and Dinner on Oct. 12 at the Clovis Veterans Memorial District.

The Profiles in Leadership Award recognizes alumni of the California Agricultural Leadership Program for their leadership actions resulting in the betterment of industry, community, business, government, education and/or the environment.

“The foundation and its board of directors are thrilled that the Alumni Council made the recommendation to recognize and honor Dennis and Cannon with this prestigious award,” said CALF President Barry Bedwell (13). “There are simply no better examples of alumni who work to benefit California agriculture than these two outstanding individuals—they are truly leaders who make a difference.”

Q: What is your advice to someone who is considering applying to the Ag Leadership Program?

Albiani: Ag Leadership is a great opportunity and one that is important to make the time in your life to make it a priority.

Michael: My advice? Do it! Understand that there will never be the right time exactly. To get the most out of the fellowship, I felt it was helpful to have had some real life and work experience before the program.



Dennis Albiani

Class 32

Vice President, California Advocates

Dennis Albiani, of Elk Grove, is vice president of California Advocates in Sacramento. He has been involved in CALF's Agricultural and Government Leaders Reception, class visits to Sacramento, and the Washington, D.C. Educational Fellowship Program. Albiani is chairman of the California FFA Foundation, a member of the Farm Bureau Scholarship Foundation and an advisory board member for the Elk Grove FFA Chapter. As a father of four, Albiani is also active in his children's 4-H, school and Science Olympiad activities.

"It's a real honor to be recognized by such a prestigious group as the California Ag Leadership Foundation," said Albiani. "It's a testament to the program that they continue to promote lifelong learning and to continue leadership growth after graduation."

Deanna van Klaveren, Albiani's nominator and classmate, said he is a servant leader who supports family, community, education and agriculture.

"After Class 32's commencement, Dennis didn't slow down," said van Klaveren. "Even with all of his commitments, Dennis finds time to serve others and is always willing to be present at CALF functions and activities."

Albiani has been very involved in the California FFA Foundation. He currently serves as chairman of the foundation's board. While serving as fundraising chair for a decade, the foundation's annual fundraising increased from \$80,000 to \$900,000.

"He's been really active in promoting and expanding the alumni activity with the California FFA Foundation," said van Klaveren. "It's been a big

project and he's created opportunities for alumni to be more engaged in FFA activities and to help with fundraising for the organization."

Van Klaveren notes that Albiani's service stretches across all aspects of his life.

"He supports our agricultural industry and our voice in California government, but he takes it beyond that and is very active in his community," said van Klaveren. "He's not just supporting us because it's part of his job, he's supporting us because it's a personal life commitment that he's made that reflects through his family, community, his activities and his support."

The Profiles in Leadership Award creates opportunities to showcase leaders who have succeeded in large part due to their Ag Leadership experience and training.

"It's important to recognize alumni like Cannon and Dennis because it's an opportunity to show people how they're implementing what they learned through the program and how they're making a positive change for agriculture, our communities and their families," said van Klaveren. "When we talk about our future vision of being a catalyst, that's what these Profiles in Leadership awards do—they spotlight individuals who have become catalysts in their communities, for agriculture and for California overall. Both of these gentlemen reflect that directly through their support."

Albiani said he relies on some of the tools he learned in Ag Leadership in his personal life.

"Ag Leadership quickly stretched me out of my comfort zone, forcing me to identify and prioritize my core values. I started to identify and rearrange the values I wanted to pass down to our children. By focusing on personal attributes, Ag Leadership provides customized tools for each to utilize."

As he continues his Ag Leadership journey as an alumnus, Albiani said staying involved and connected is an important part of his life.

"Ag Leadership helped me build relationships," said Albiani. "Post graduation involvement is a large part of maintaining those relationships that have endured since the time I graduated from Class 32. Continuing to stay engaged and involved is important for both personal growth and professional growth."

WE TAKE THESE OPPORTUNITIES TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS FELLOWSHIP AND FROM THAT WE TALK ABOUT THIS HUGE IMPACT OF CHANGE THAT WE ALL HAVE FROM GOING THROUGH THE PROGRAM. DENNIS IS A GREAT EXAMPLE OF HOW THAT IMPACT INFLUENCES OUR COMMUNITY.

-DEANNA VAN KLAVEREN



Cannon Michael

Class 39

President, Bowles Farming Company

Cannon Michael, of Los Banos, is president of Bowles Farming Company. Michael serves on the boards of the Water Education Foundation, the San Luis Canal Company, the Henry Miller Reclamation District, the San Luis Delta-Mendota Water Authority, the San Luis Resource Conservation District, Cotton Incorporated and the California Cotton Growers Association.

“I am incredibly honored and humbled to be receiving this award,” said Michael. “It is gratifying to be stopped momentarily and to be recognized by one’s peers. Having a chance to acknowledge and appreciate those who provide me great support—my wife, children, co-workers and others—is also a real gift. I am grateful for the opportunity to share some of what I have learned—successes and failures—with the hope that I can help others with their journeys and the industry as a whole.”

Michael said Ag Leadership impacted him profoundly, both personally and professionally.

“The program helped instill the ideas of continuous learning, personal growth and community and family responsibility,” said Michael.

“The experience helped me to realize that California agriculture is as important as I believe it to be. But without others understanding and appreciating our industry, the outlook for the future is extremely challenging.”

Michael’s nominator, Rachele Antinetti (42), says his commitment to California and U.S. agriculture, water and the environment is second to none.

“Cannon’s ability to relate, interact and accomplish goals with a variety of environmental groups and government agencies is miraculous,” said Antinetti. “Class 39 and Region 4 are very proud to have this alumnus joining the many recipients of the Profiles in Leadership Award.”

Antinetti noted during the nomination process that Michael is looked up to by many in the agriculture industry and his community.

“I nominated Cannon because of his empowering and selfless style of leadership in California agriculture,” said Antinetti. “He was one of the first people I called when considering the Ag Leadership Program. He has always been supportive and I appreciate all he has done to be a role model for me and others in the industry.”

Michael’s involvement in his community and the agriculture industry were also an important part of his nomination.

“Cannon and Bowles Farming are very influential with the Merced County Food Bank,” said Antinetti. “Cannon hosts dinners with influential leaders and decision makers across the state. He interacts with folks who do not understand where their food comes from and invites them to his farm.”

He is also very active in communicating about agricultural water issues with elected officials and by contributing content to educational seminars.

“I am most recently inspired by his partnership with the Environmental Defense Fund,” said Antinetti.

In 2012, Michael began the restoration of a 6-mile riparian corridor that runs through a portion of the farm. He worked with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Audubon Society, Nature Conservancy, Natural Resources Conservation Service, Center for Land-Based Learning, Point Blue Conservation Science and others to plan, survey, initiate and manage the project.

Michael is now working with a number of non-governmental organizations, including the Environmental Defense Fund, to create a comprehensive habitat plan for the entire farm. The goal is to further improve the nexus between the farm and the surrounding habitat.

“My initiatives of building coalitions with diverse groups with differing views to work on challenging issues, like water, stem from my experience with Ag Leadership,” said Michael.

When it comes to his Ag Leadership involvement, Antinetti said Michael has supported the foundation in countless ways—but the most impactful to her was when he gave her the courage to begin her own Ag Leadership journey.

“For me, it was taking my call and encouraging me to apply,” said Antinetti. “He is always willing to give his time and serve others.”

Michael feels his experience in the program was life-changing and advises others to apply.

“Throughout the two years, there are many highs, lows and challenges,” said Michael. “Facing them all together with your classmates is a unique experience that makes you grow together. Once you graduate, you realize that you are part of an incredible network of professionals that span the entire state.”