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Sam Bowles Receives SAF's Rising Star Award



ALEXANDRIA, VA – AUGUST 20, 2025 – If there's a floral industry all-star quietly guiding, mentoring, and energizing those around him, it's Sam Bowles, AAF. As director of operations at Allen's Flowers in San Diego, Bowles has spent years shaping a bold, inclusive, and collaborative future for floristry — while constantly pushing his own creative and professional boundaries.

For his devotion to his craft and openness with his peers, Bowles is a 2025 recipient of the Society of American Florists' Next Gen Rising Star Award.

About Sam:

Bowles didn't grow up in the floral industry. Instead, he discovered floristry through sheer curiosity and dove in headfirst, working at some of the country's standout shops, including Nanz & Kraft in Louisville, Kentucky, and Queen's Garden Floral in White Stone, NY, before taking on his current role at one of California's most respected retailers. Along the way, he built a reputation for being one of the industry's most insightful operators, with a sharp eye for HR solutions, marketing, and team culture. As a director of Floral Strategies with sales expert Tim Huckabee, he visited hundreds of businesses in U.S., discovering florists' best (and worst) habits and honing his customer service skills.

"Sam is the smartest person I know in our industry," said Nicole Palazzo, AAF, founder and chairperson of SAF's Next Gen Committee. "He's constantly moving the dial to keep his shop current while generously sharing his ideas with others. Our business, City Line Florist, is successful in large part thanks to Sam's mentorship and advice."

Bowles is a founding member of SAF's Next Gen Task Force and a driving force behind its programming. He has helped shape several years of the high-energy Next Gen Live event, delivering breakout sessions that leave rooms in awe and participants feeling inspired. He also pioneered the Next Gen Book Club—bringing industry peers together around shared professional development and everyday life lessons.

His openness extends beyond operations and education. Bowles has become a role model for authenticity and courage, sharing his personal experiences as a queer professional in floristry. “That meant so much to many of us,” said Palazzo. “Sam’s honesty and openness have helped others feel seen and supported.”

A member of the Next Level peer group and a frequent speaker at SAF events, including Profit Blast and other conventions, Bowles brings ideas, energy, and empathy to every role he plays.

“He’s not just a rising star,” said Palazzo. “He’s already illuminating the way forward.”

Event photos will be available here: [SAF Photo albums](#) | [Flickr](#)

About The Society of American Florists

The Society of American Florists is the association that connects and cultivates a thriving floral community through training, education, marketing resources and advocacy. Our vision: The power of flowers in every life. For more information, visit safnow.org.