

# Best of Kosh continues to boost business in around Koshkonong with Bowers' support

By Jack McLaughlin  
Special to the Reporter

Jim and Christa Bowers purchased the Island Bar and Grill only 18 months ago, but the couple has been a fixture in Lake Koshkonong area businesses for much longer.

For some time though, the pair was in an interesting spot, business-wise. Owners of the Newville Marine, a dock building and installing service located at 541 Lake Drive Rd. in Edgerton for years, the couple chose to retain primary ownership of the business during the first year and a half they owned the Island Bar and Grill, in order to create a smooth transitional period for the business's customer base and prospective new owner.

"We sold Newville Marine at the end of March, in order to help out the new owner and make sure all of the regular customers knew they were in good hands," said Jim Bowers, who noted that many of them chose to patronize the Island Bar as well. "It's been really nice seeing a lot of our Newville Marine Customers come through here."

So it's a good thing an organization exists to promote the area's many deserving waterfront establishments. Jim Bowers is a founding member of the Koshkonong Business Association (KBA), and its current president. After relocating to Fort Atkinson (Christa is from Edgerton and Jim is from Baraboo) in 2003, the couple began to notice many of the lakefront businesses they loved so much weren't getting their due, and so the KBA was created in 2009.

"We noticed that a lot of the businesses on the Lake weren't noticed in their towns' chambers of commerce; we wanted to draw more attention to all of them," said Christa Bowers.

More than spreading the word, the KBA operates a year series recognizing superlatives in a number of categories — the Island Bar and Grill was even tapped for two this year, Best Steak and Best Happy Hour.

The voting process is entirely democratic as well — anyone is able to vote for their favorite Best of Kosh categories, giving the platform power to put Koshkonong businesses in the spotlight, but also to operate on an even playing field.

"Anyone can vote — we have a lot of people come for the summer from Illinois, and they're able to vote just as easily," said Christa Bowers.



Pictured above: The Island Bar and Grill will be able to dock up to 50 boats this summer, an improvement over the 25 spaces they had last year. Pictured below: Jim and Christa Bowers, owners of the Island Bar and Grill for 18 months, pose in front of a sign for the eatery featuring a vintage aerial photo. Photos by Jack McLaughlin

