



It is unlikely that you will find a more accomplished nine-year-old businessman in Wisconsin than Alex Upendo. He is the CEO of an LLC, and has started two nonprofits. He has been recognized by Governor Scott Walker, honored as the 2017 Martin Luther King, Jr., humanitarian of the year, and received the Apollo award for new and innovative business.

Here is his story: Alex was bullied in school because he was a very smart, nerdy kid. His mother ran a consignment shop and also used her sewing talents to reinvent gently used clothing to give them new life. With his keen fashion sense and passion for philanthropy, Alex decided to start his own company, Build-A-Bow, LLC, turning old clothes into fashionable bow ties. His vision was to inspire children worldwide, and bring awareness to bullying and incurable diseases.

Forty percent of Build-A-Bow's profits go back into the community. That's because Alex created a nonprofit offshoot of his company, called Build-A-Bow For A Purpose. Alex and his mother host free workshops once a month where 30 to 40 people learn how to make a bow tie. Each workshop has a theme to raise awareness about a particular illness or condition. After the workshops, the bow ties are

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then sent to people with incurable diseases. The program gives people a platform to give back and to impact the lives of others.

Operation Upendo is a Christmas program that supplies underprivileged families with toys for the holidays. Funded solely by Alex's company, the program served more than 150 families last year. Alex and his family go to schools to inspire children to be themselves, and to bring awareness to bullying. They also frequent elderly living facilities and spend time creating bow ties for people in need.

Their business is growing. They've added two employees and plan to add another ten before year's end. The company's social network following is over seven hundred thousand. Build-A-Bow separates itself by being innovative, youthful, inspiring, honest and eco-friendly, while incorporating high quality service and products.

Alex's family business model is: "You make a living by what you get, but you make a life by what you give."

Build-a-Bow found out about the Wisconsin Family Business of the Year Award from Senator Tammy Baldwin. The sponsors reached out to our Senators, Baldwin and Johnson and they sent congratulatory notes we would like to present to Alex.

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