



INSIGHT

1ST QUARTER 2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Letter from President
2025 Scholarship Recipients
Stars for Heroes

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About the IHFA

IHFA was founded in 1997 to provide a unified voice for Hardee's® franchisees. While serving as a resource for franchisees of all sizes and locations, IHFA provides input and feedback to Hardee's® Foods Systems. Today the IHFA provides input into Hardee's® operational decision-making, including the successful launch of the Thickburger® in 2003.

Calendar of Events

2025 IHFA Convention & Tradeshow
October 27-29, 2025

WINTER 2025

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THE PRESIDENT'S INSIGHT

Greetings IHFA Membership,

As we move into 2025, I want to share some key takeaways from our January meetings with CKE Leadership. These conversations were candid, constructive, and revealing – though not always in ways we might have hoped.

Let's start with the sobering reality our Finance Department presented: **system-wide EBITDA is hovering between 7-8%, with the bottom 60% of our units producing either zero or negative cash flow.** These aren't just numbers on a spreadsheet – they represent real challenges that demand our immediate attention.

Our discussions with CKE covered familiar territory regarding hours of operation and remodel standards. Despite our continued push for volume-based flexibility, corporate leadership remains rigid in their approach. While frustrating, this reinforces something I've been saying for a while now: waiting for perfect conditions or external solutions isn't a viable strategy.

Your IHFA Board has been crystal clear with CKE about three critical needs: embracing regional differences within our system, perfecting our next burger iteration, and unlocking digital menu boards to showcase local favorites. These aren't just wish-list items – they're strategic imperatives that could help drive traffic and improve unit economics.

However, a growing consensus is emerging among board members, and it's one I believe we all need to embrace: despite maintaining good, open dialogue with CKE, **there's no cavalry coming over the horizon.** The path to improving our businesses isn't through hoping for perfect corporate alignment or waiting for the next big initiative.

The real opportunity – the only opportunity we can truly control – lies in **relentless operational** execution. We must

fight for every single customer, every single transaction. When we talk about “narrowing the range, widening the gain,” this is exactly what we mean. The gap between our best and worst performing units isn't just a performance metric – it's the difference between struggling at 2-3X valuations and thriving at 7-8X.

This isn't about waiting for perfect conditions. It's about creating our own momentum through superior execution, every day, in every store. While we'll continue pushing for system-wide improvements and better alignment with CKE, **our primary focus must remain on what we can control: delivering clean, hot, accurate, and fast service that brings customers back.**

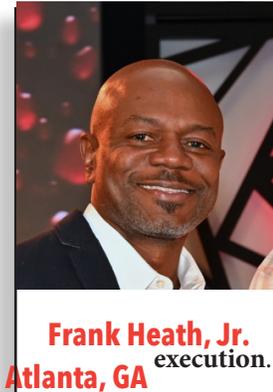
Remember, consistency isn't just about operations – it's about value creation. Every gap we close between our best and worst performing units, and every customer we win through superior execution, brings us closer to the business valuations we aspire to achieve.

The dialogue with CKE remains productive, but our success ultimately depends on our own ability to execute. Let's focus on winning one customer, one transaction at a time.

Sincerely,



Frank Heath, Jr.
IHFA President



COMMITTEE UPDATES

ADMINISTRATION, MEMBERSHIP AND CONVENTION UPDATE

Bill Boddie – Chair

Thanks to our committee members made up of Jon Munger, Tom McGinnis, Tim Haberkamp, Michel Shay, Rob Schmidt, Dana VanMeerhaeghe, Shelley Klien, and Katy Stuckey for their time and efforts in dealing with the administrative areas of the IHFA. The primary areas of our responsibility are:

1) Meetings: We have all of the IHFA Board meetings and locations set for 2025 as well as the January meeting for 2026 set.

- January, 2025 was held in Tampa, FL where the Board met with Interim CEO Sarah Spiegel.
- April, 2025 was scheduled for a zoom call. However, we planned a face-to-face meeting in Franklin, TN to meet the new CEO April 1-2, 2025.
- June, 2025 is scheduled for Franklin, TN to be held in conjunction with the Capstone Foundation's Golf tournament to raise money for USA Cares.
- October, 2025 will be at the annual IHFA Convention that will be in San Antonio, Texas.
- January, 2026 we are looking at Savannah, GA.

2) Conventions:

- October 27-29, 2025 - San Antonio, TX
- October 26-28, 2026 - Kansas City, MO
- 2027 - Phoenix, AZ

3) Scholarship Program: This committee oversees the IHFA scholarship program and we hope everyone keeps their people informed of this great opportunity.

4) Membership: Our committee is in charge of membership for both the franchisees as well as our associate (vendors) members

- Currently we have 93% of the franchisees as members of the IHFA. This has always been a very high percent and we are very proud of that!
- Currently we have 96 of vendor partners that are Associate members of the IHFA. We are very proud of this as well.

5) Bylaws: We have also been charged, from time-to-time, to take a look at the IHFA Bylaws to see if they are up-to-date and make recommendations to the full Board if changes are needed. We recently recommended to the Board changes that were made to the four regions pertaining to their boundaries, etc.

On behalf of the Administration, Meetings, and Convention Committee, we appreciate the opportunity to work with the IHFA Board in representing the entire franchisee membership when dealing with CKE to build this brand.



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HR UPDATE

Kathy Trusch – HR Co-chair

The HR committee continues to be involved in completing many training initiatives and Human Resource activities. In 2023 we created a training subcommittee to work closely with CKE to provide new programs for developing General Managers and District Managers for our restaurants and to improve Star University. Our training subcommittee members are very knowledgeable of Hardees operations and provided input to ensure that the training content is pertinent and relevant to what restaurant General Managers and District Managers need to be successful in their roles. Jackie Lassiter, the Vice President of Learning and Development with Boddie-Noell Enterprises and Lisa Holloway, CKE's Director of Learning and Development collaborated with their teams and our training subcommittee and HR committee members to develop and complete these excellent programs.

IN 2024 THE FOLLOWING PROGRAMS WERE COMPLETED:

- Restaurant General Manager in Training Program-training program for new Restaurant General Managers.
- Introduction of the Multiunit Leadership Training Program - this is a program devised to educate new leaders who will be supervising more than one Hardee's restaurant. This is a new program which provides excellent content for developing a District Managers. More material will be added in the future.
- Completed updates for the Station Training Guides.
- Finalized updates to the Star University Station Training guides.

Our committee will continue to work closely with CKE as material is updated for both leadership development and restaurant operations. If you are having issues with Star University, please contact Zack Donovan at zdonovan@ckr.com or contact the help desk that CKE provides specifically dedicated to Star University Staru@ckr.com. All Star University related questions can be directed to this link and a representative from the StarU support team will get back to the individual or the restaurant based on their inquiry. It is important to communicate through the help desk so that they can track the issues and determine if it is an individual restaurant issue or a systems issue. Overall, the help desk has been very resourceful in helping our restaurants. If you need additional information on the training programs, please contact Lisa Holloway at lholloway@ckr.com.

LEGAL UPDATE / SESCO

With the changes in Washington DC under the Trump administration, we want to encourage you to remain informed of many new issues and laws that may change soon which may affect your restaurant operations. **One of our benefits as members of the IHFA includes our membership with SESCO, which is a firm that specializes in labor and employment law while providing training and preventative measures in federal and state laws. SESCO is an excellent resource for assisting you with employee handbooks, policies, legal guidance on potential legal and Human Resource related issues, and webinars just to name a few. SESCO provides a newsletter which is published often, providing current information regarding legal issues that affect our business. If you need to be added to the newsletter, please contact Dana VanMeerhaeghe with the IHFA at dvanmeerhaeghe@dc-kansascity.com. If you need to contact SESCO for assistance, please contact Bill Ford at Bill@sescomgt.com or you may reach Bill at 423-764-4127.**



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COMMITTEE UPDATES

Below is an article from SESCO involving current issues we need to be aware of under the new administration in Washington, DC.

TRUMP'S EXECUTIVE ORDERS SIGNIFICANTLY IMPACTS EMPLOYERS

As of preparation of this important newsletter, President Trump and his administration have released a number of Executive Orders impacting employers to include immigration, labor, workplace safety, reshaping federal regulatory and enforcement policies and unlawful employment discrimination and harassment (DEI).

IMMIGRATION

President Trump pledged to remove undocumented migrants from the U.S. As part of this pledge, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) officials are active across the country.

This activity obviously concerns employers as to potential ICE raids within the workplace as well as auditing and verifying whether or not employees are authorized to work in the U.S. and that employers are complying with immigration documentation requirements (I-9's). Important facts:

- ICE has the authority to arrest and detain undocumented migrants. This includes conducting workplace raids.
- You, as the employer, should designate points of contact who would then interact with ICE agents. This individual(s) should be versed in the organization's policies as well as the legal rights of employees.
- Designated points of contact should politely request to see and review any warrants presented by ICE agents.
- Ensure that your I-9 forms/E-Verify practices are compliant. We strongly recommend that you conduct a self-audit or if you prefer, you can contact SESCO to conduct the audit on your behalf.

Some recent questions from a client in Chicago, Illinois included the following which may be of assistance.

1. **If agents arrive with a warrant, will they allow us any opportunity to take the warrant to another location or to our attorney or even take pictures before responding?** No, a warrant will be clear in what is required of the employer at that time and there is little an employer can do other than cooperate.
2. **Can we record or video (probably via a cell phone) our interaction with the agents?** Yes.
3. **Is it common for agents to show up after normal business hours as we operate three (3) shifts?** It all depends on the warrant, but an employer should be prepared to address agents on all three (3) shifts.
4. **Can agents walk into our building if an outside door is unlocked?** Yes
5. **Can we request that agents be escorted to the front entrance foyer to have our initial meeting?** Yes
6. **If the warrant is legitimate, are they the ones to detain the employee, or should we be involved in bringing the employee to the agents?** Typically, the agents will be the ones to detain the employee.
7. **If the agents detain the employee, can we accompany them to ensure they aren't talking with other employees who aren't on the warrant?** Yes



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8. **At the time of detention, are we able to remind the employee verbally that they have the right to remain silent and also to request an attorney? Yes**

As you have questions concerning raids and/or immigration (I-9) compliance, we are, of course, as close as your telephone.

Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity

This Executive Order directs federal agencies (which includes the EEOC) to “enforce our long-standing civil-rights laws and to combat illegal private section DEI preferences, mandates, policies, programs and activities.” It further directs government agencies, with the assistance of the Attorney General, to make changes and strategic enforcement proposals designed to “encourage the private sector to end” what the order describes as “illegal discrimination and preferences, including DEI.”

As to employers and Affirmative Action Programs, know that if an employer has or may have a contract with specific states, counties and/or localities, there may be a requirement to continue to comply. Currently, there are in excess of 25 states that require such affirmative action compliance. Remember that this Executive Order removes the Affirmative Action Plan compliance for those who contract with the federal government (EO 11246).

Defending Women from Gender Ideology Extremism and Restoring Biological Truth to the Federal Government

This Executive Order establishes a federal policy of recognizing two (2) unalterable sexes (male or female) and instructs agencies to enforce laws in a manner consistent.

It also contains directives that impact the private sector to include:

1. Directs the Attorney General to issue guidance to ensure the freedom to express the binary nature of sex and the right to single-sex spaces in workplaces.
2. Directs agencies with enforcement responsibilities under the Civil Rights Act (which includes the EEOC) to “prioritize investigations and litigations to enforce the rights and freedoms identified.”
3. Seeks to limit the application of the U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Bostock v. Clayton County*, which extended protections against sex discrimination under Title VII the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to **discrimination based on gender identity and sexual orientation.**
4. Orders agencies to rescind guidance documents inconsistent with the order, including the EEOC’s April 2024 enforcement guidance on harassment in the workplace.

As these are directives and have not changed specific laws, SESCO recommends complying with Title VII protections including on the basis of gender identity, transgender status, and sexual orientation. We will monitor Congress to see if they amend the Civil Rights Act and/or the Supreme Court reconsiders *Bostock*.

IN SUMMARY

We expect continued, rapid movement from the Trump administration on issuing Executive Orders and other actions that will affect our public and private sector clients. As such, continue to monitor our updates, client alerts and newsletters. Those who are SESCO retainer clients should take advantage of our telephone and research services as provided to ensure compliance within the workplace to include compliance, policies, and practices.

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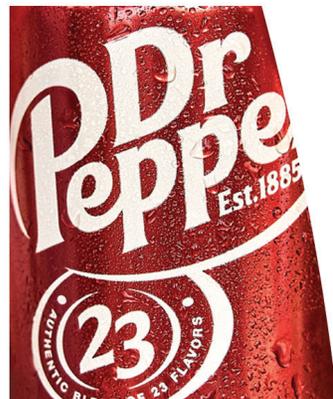
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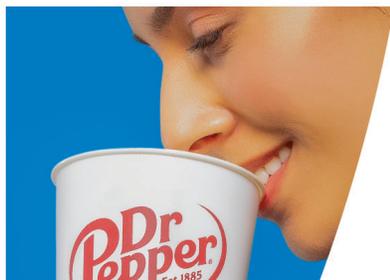
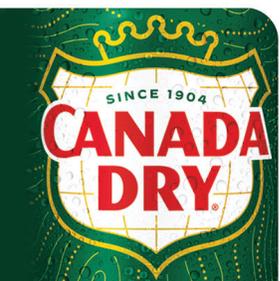
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2025 SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENTS



ROBERT BEACH
HAMPTON, VA



MAYTE BELTRAN-DONATO
INDIANAPOLIS, IN



CONNOR GRENIER
RICHMOND, KY



LUIS OTERO
HARRISBURG, KY



MADISON FASCHINGBAUER
BLOOMER, WI



FAITH PARKER
GLEN BURNIE, MD



CHEVON TROTTER
AXTON, VA



MELANIE VEITH
AUSTIN, MN



AMY WAITS
NEW HOPE, AL



SHANDELL YOUNG
RAEFORD, NC

MESSAGES FROM RECIPIENTS:

I am writing this letter to express my sincere appreciation for allowing me to receive the Independent Hardee's Franchise Association award. I find this to be amazing that companies can support employee's that are going to school. Your generosity and thoughtfulness will truly make a difference in my life, and I deeply appreciate it. Your Award has not only provided me with a scholarship but has reminded me of the importance of kindness and compassion in our world.

Please know that your generosity has touch my heart forever and I will always remember this act of kindness and feel more appreciated at work. Some days I feel overlooked for all my hard work and dedication but now I can feel more seen from my employer. I'm so excited for this opportunity.

Once again, I would like to thank you again for helping to support my dreams of finishing school and not having to worry about the expenses the come along with school. This means so much to me and my family.

personally thank you for allowing me to get the Independent Hardees Franchisee association Scholarship. You may not know me, but I am someone who always tries my best on everything I do. Yet I rarely succeed, I have applied to a variety of Scholarships, but this is the first time in years I actually won something. This money will go 100% toward my college funds! My family is lower income so I am paying for college myself so I can get the education I desire. This money has truly impacted my life and I am extremely thankful!

nursing, now I am currently persuing an Early childhood education degree. I have a love for caring and helping animals and people. It's funny, because I was undecided of what to choose at first but I had a supportive mother whom encouraged me to follow my heart.

I would really like to thank all those involved for selecting me for the Independent Hardee's Franchisee Association Scholarship Program. To know there are people who show a care just as I do really gives me hope to push forward in my studies to persue my dreams. I am very grateful to Ms. [redacted] and those involved. I'm dedicated to my college and eager to learn. Thank you for not only considering me, but selecting me to help my future.



COMMITTEE UPDATES

OPERATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

Dave Bowar – Operations Co-Chair; Bill Boddie Jr. – Operations Co-chair

It was great seeing everyone in Las Vegas for the convention. As the year unfolds, the IHFA Operations Committee is collaborating with CKE Operations REx teams to establish a more cohesive and efficient operational strategy aimed at supporting brand growth and improving restaurant performance. Recognizing the pivotal role of our restaurant operators, our committee emphasizes the importance of enhanced collaboration and communication between Operations, Marketing, and other departments.

One of the key initiatives our team is currently collaborating on with CKE Operations and REx is the development of a Testing Charter. This charter will provide a comprehensive framework for testing initiatives and will include essential elements such as the objectives of the tests and the involvement of testing partners. In this process, it is critical to ensure that all relevant departments—Operations, Marketing, Culinary, Supply Chain, and others—are actively involved. This collaboration aims to prevent misalignment and to ensure that operational perspectives are considered in the decision-making process.

Another key driver and focal point that the Ops Committee will be heavily involved in this year is digital execution. As a committee, our goal is to increase digital sales to 10 – 12% of total sales, by leveraging the existing digital platforms effectively. Training and communication will be crucial – restaurant teams need to be savvy to digital tools and the Hardee's app itself, and we intend to integrate digital education into the T-minus calls and providing ongoing support to ensure staff are equipped to assist customers effectively. The team is working on an integrated calendar for marketing and operations to ensure that digital promotions are aligned with restaurant capabilities. Overall, we want to create a cohesive digital strategy that not only drives sales but also ensures that restaurant operations can effectively support these digital initiatives.

We are currently in the final stages of discussions with CKE regarding the potential release of a digital platform across the franchisee community, which, if approved, will benefit all of us. While I do not wish to provide too many specifics at this time, I am optimistic that this will be approved, and this tool will help drive operational consistency across all 1,600 restaurants. More information will be forthcoming soon.

Our IHFA Operations Committee includes members from the Southeast and Midwest, bringing diverse experiences and generational perspectives from first to third generation franchisee families. This diversity enriches our discussions and significantly contributes to our brand's uniqueness and overall success.

While we may not consistently agree or align on every issue, due to the specific business needs that can vary by region, staffing requirements, financial considerations, and other relevant factors, I want to assure you that every member genuinely values the input of everyone on the committee. Our discussions are rooted in a collective commitment to identifying the best alternative approaches to advancing our brand.

At the core of our strategy is the principle of **“Keep it Simple.”** We believe that by simplifying operations for our restaurant operators, we can achieve more favorable outcomes. By maintaining simplicity in our processes, we anticipate greater consistency across the brand, which will lead to increases in sales and transactions, faster Speed of Service, reduced complexity on our backlines, and overall improvements on QSC. **Most importantly, this approach enables us to take care of our People on both sides of the counter—our employees and our guests. If we set our Operators up for Success, they can achieve remarkable results.**

On behalf of the entire Operations Committee, we express our sincere gratitude for the opportunity to represent the franchise community. We look forward to a successful and profitable year ahead. Should you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please do not hesitate to reach out to Dave Bowar or Bill Boddie Jr. It would be our honor to serve and assist you in any way that we can.

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COMMITTEE UPDATES

MARKETING UPDATE

Jack Kemp – Marketing Co-Chair; Pam Spivey – Marketing Co-chair

With the start of a new calendar year, the IHFA Marketing committee has defined our priorities for this year, all of which support the overarching goal of driving profitable transactions at all dayparts. Those of you who attended the conference in Las Vegas will recall the CKE “Big Bets”, outlining the brand’s areas of focus. The Marketing Committee has aligned our priorities underneath the Big Bets, in order to facilitate collaboration and partnership with CKE in determining how these Big Bets translate into products and promotions that result in sales and transactions growth and stronger brand health. The 2025 Marketing Committee priorities are as follows.

BURGER IMPROVEMENT

Optimization of the burger line is a key initiative that supports the overarching goal of driving lunch/dinner transactions. Optimizing our burger offerings must include a balance of innovation, broad appeal, operational feasibility, and desirable margins. Balancing the menu with an appealing mix of Core Burgers, supplemented periodically with interesting new limited-time burger offerings, will position Hardee’s to reclaim our burger credentials and strengthen our lunch/dinner sales. The early phases of Burger Optimization began late last year; work will continue throughout 2025. The marketing committee will work closely with CKE Marketing, Culinary, and Consumer Insights to guide development and provide feedback throughout the process.

BREAKFAST SUPPORT:

Maintaining support for our Best in Class Breakfast remains a priority for the coming year. Made From Scratch Biscuits are the foundation of Hardee’s breakfast and a source of valuable brand equity. We must play to our strengths, with messaging focused on quality and the made from scratch process. The 2025 calendar promises to bring compelling menu items to our guests, with limited-time offerings like the Frisco Breakfast Burger and the return of Smoked Sausage to the Southeast. The rotating sweet biscuit promotions and the upcoming introduction of Homestyle Burritos bring additional variety to the breakfast menu, giving guests even more reasons to choose Hardee’s for their breakfast visits.

LUNCH/DINNER VALUE PLATFORM

The value wars began in earnest in mid-2024, leading to the introduction of the \$5.99 Original Bag, the reincarnation of the successful Big Bag promotion. Competitive pressure around value was intense throughout the last

half of 2024 and Original Bag was successful in boosting lunch/dinner transactions and allowing Hardee’s to compete in the value arena. However, high food cost on the Original Bag surfaced as a major concern, ultimately resulting in some markets moving to \$6.99, while others remained at \$5.99. As we move into 2025, balancing a compelling value offering with acceptable margins remains a challenge and the marketing committee is committed to identifying the best solution for the system value platform. As of this communication, plans are to go off-media with the existing Original Bag for a period of time, then reintroduce a re-vamped \$5.99 Original Bag as a system LTO. Hopefully, the industry focus on value promotions will lessen later in the year.

Increasing app sales and My Rewards membership also contributes to our value positioning. App sales represent a great opportunity for increased frequency, simpler transactions, and higher average check. The number of My Rewards members has increased steadily as a result of offer programming, improved rewards, and media support for app promotions. Hardee’s app and delivery sales have much room to grow and are well below our competitors, but the Digital Team at CKE and the Marketing/IT subcommittee are committed to driving these critically important sales channels. To fully realize the benefit of app sales and fully engage our digital customers, Operations must be focused on delivering a well-executed app experience that fully meets guest expectations. To support growth in digital sales, media plans for 2025 include dollars allocated to app and delivery promotions.

HAND-BREADED CHICKEN:

Hardee’s signature Hand-Breaded Chicken Tenders and Hand-Breaded Chicken Sandwiches provide the opportunity to promote a strong quality message at lunch/dinner. The message can also be extended to include the Hand-Breaded Chicken Biscuit at breakfast for a cross-daypart promotion. With the rollout of the optimized burger line postponed to allow full due diligence and testing, the Hand-Breaded Chicken category becomes even more important to the marketing calendar in 2025. The Marketing committee supports innovation in the category, including new Hand-Breaded Chicken Sandwiches, expansion of the sauce options for Hand-Breaded Chicken Tenders to meet consumer demand for new and interesting flavors, and operationally-friendly LTO line extensions for Chicken Tenders.

BEVERAGES

Expanding our beverage platform represents one of our most profitable sales building opportunities across all dayparts. Work is underway to partner with a recognized coffee brand for our brewed coffee. A strong co-brand will bring both credibility and quality to our coffee program. As part of the coffee effort, Cold Brew and Iced Coffee options are also being evaluated.

Additionally, there are some exciting developments in the cold beverage arena, as many of you saw at the conference. Our first LTO beverage promotions will focus on flavor platforms that are applicable to tea, lemonade, and shakes, with Peach on the calendar for Window 3, beginning in late April. Beyond this more mainstream approach to beverage promotion, CKE Culinary and Marketing are exploring the potential for cold beverages that feature flavor mix-ins and cold foam topping to elevate our standard carbonated beverage offers and bring news to the beverage category.

BRAND BUILDING AND STORY TELLING

Priorities under this Big Bet encompass all facets of our business that relate to communicating with our customers and potential customers to establish Hardee's as a go-to destination in their consideration set. Hardee's "Goodness in the Making" positioning is a quality-focused message supported by processes like making biscuits from scratch and hand-breading chicken. A continuous priority for the marketing committee is to collaborate with CKE to bring food-focused, brand-building creative to market and to maximize the restaurants' investment in marketing funds through efficient and effective media planning. The committee meets regularly with CKE's Consumer Insights, Media team, and PMG to review ROI for various media tactics and other key indicators of media effectiveness.

Recognizing that there are both regional differences and individual business needs within the Hardee's system, one of the marketing committee's objectives for the coming year is to influence CKE to accommodate these differences through allowing franchisees to customize their messaging to some degree. This could be accomplished through having choices of media tags for each promotional window's advertising and providing a process by which franchisees could make digital menu board changes within approved content. We believe that initiatives like these will give franchisees more flexibility in reacting to business needs and leverage the agility that is one of the most beneficial advantages of digital menu boards.

Those of you who attended the conference will remember that Hardee's was in the process of securing country music artist Thomas Rhett as an influencer. It's now official! This partnership fits well with our brand, not only because country music indexes very high among Hardee's customers, but because Thomas embodies many of the lifestyle qualities of our customers – family-oriented, hard-working, appreciative of the American way of life, and passionate about the outdoors. The partnership with Thomas will connect us with the millions who follow him on Instagram, Tik Tok, and Twitter, and instantly increase our brand recognition. Stay tuned for more information on how the 360-degree plan to maximize the impact of this partnership will be activated. And follow Thomas on your favorite social media platforms today!

On behalf of the entire marketing committee, we appreciate the opportunity to represent the franchise community and look forward to a successful and profitable year.

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- 6. **Versatile.** Works with all types of oil including Zero Trans Fat Oil!

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IT COMMITTEE UPDATE

Bob Larimer – IT Co-Chair; Cameron Miller – IT Co-Chair

With a new year in front of us, the Star IT Committee has worked with CKE IT leadership to come up with the technology related priorities for 2025. We met several times to ensure there was alignment between the franchisees and CKE on what were the most important technology goals for the upcoming year.

The CTO role within IT at CKE still remains open, but the interim (Andy Giacone) is doing a good job in managing the IT area and communicating to our committee the work that his department is performing. His involvement is keeping IT initiatives moving forward when there are several gaps in leadership within CKE.

Below are the list of 2025 Star IT Committee priorities. Most of these priorities came from the consulting work that was completed late in 2024. We went through the list of IT initiatives as a group and picked what we felt were the most impactful goals that need attention this year. Here is the list of 2025 Star IT Committee Priorities with the description and bullet points of the initiatives:



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BIG TECHNOLOGY DECISION ALIGNMENT

- Ensure there is alignment with the Star IT Committee and ultimately the IHFA Board on capital intensive technology decisions before those decisions are made.
- We want to be very cognizant of the current financial burdens that exist today in the brand while looking at technologies that can drive efficiencies, sales, and profits.

DMB CONTENT MANAGEMENT

- We have discussed this again with the interim CIO (Andy Giacone). He agrees that the franchisees should be able to use CKE approved content to manage parts of the menu boards to drive sales, manage LTO placement, and address stock level management. He will be researching where the previously approved request to manage content keeps getting stalled.
- We also want to push CKE and Xenial to look for ways to drive sales and guest behaviors with the DMBs (suggestive sell, menu board take overs, etc.) to maximize the ROI of this costly but valuable technology.

Zenput- Zenput is an application that can run on any computer device (phone, tablet, laptop) that allows you to easily fill out forms and workflows with robust reporting features on the backend. You can develop pathing charts, data entry forms, sign off sheets, etc. that are easy for restaurant personnel to use and access while allowing above store management to monitor tasks remotely. This is a technology that CKE has proposed for the entire brand, and they are offering to pay for the monthly fees. Below are the items we will be evaluating as the project progresses.

- Get confirmation that CKE will be playing for this platform and how.
- Ensure that we will have the ability to create, manage, and share our own forms and communications with our restaurants and other franchisees.
- Have adequate training for our restaurants and support personnel.
- Develop an easy way to onboard our employees and restaurants to the platform.

COMMITTEE UPDATES

DIGITAL AND LOYALTY

- Digital sales will continue to be a necessary and valuable part of our business. Below are the items that we will be working on in 2025 to help drive and increase digital sales.
- Work with IT, Marketing, and Ops to ensure we have a solid platform and a consistent guest experience that is in parity with our competitors.
- Continue to enhance the technology to improve ease of use for the guest.
- Continue to develop payment strategies that align with our guests' expectations.
- Reduce the number of orders that are placed at the wrong location via technology and messaging to the guest.
- Streamline menu management to ensure all available configurations and condiments are available to all POS platforms.
- Understand how the data located in the CDP (Customer Data Portal) can be utilized to increase guest digital transactions. We also want to understand if we can have access to our specific customer data.
- Develop a kiosk strategy for locations where it makes sense.
- Continue to prove out ROI and have transparency around the current tech fees.
- Discuss and make decision on royalty charges on fees and markups around 3PD transactions.

PAYMENTS

- Continue to build and evolve payment strategies that will drive transactions and guest utilization without drastically increasing cost.
- Research the ability to utilize guest payment history to enhance marketing capabilities and understand guest behaviors.
- Look at payment strategies that will decrease credit card fees as a percentage of sales.

POS

We understand that new POS is a very polarizing subject, but it is a technology that needs to be addressed for long term success of the brand. Andy Giacone was very

transparent on the challenges the multiple POS platforms and service partners we have in the brand create for his team. There is also going to be an “end of life” date forthcoming from Xenial around the IRIS product. The EOL date is not imminent, but we need to be proactive in looking at next generation POS and where we can go as a brand.

Mr. Giacone has committed to creating a team with franchisees included to review and identify the next generation POS system. We plan to start the search in the new year and have committed to a decision on the vendor by early 2nd quarter. It takes an enormous amount of time to build a POS system correctly, so I believe it will be 2026 before we are testing a new POS system in a Corporate and/or franchisee location. We see this as a 24 month or longer project before it would be ready for any type of deployment, unless there are early adopters or there is an acceleration of the end of life for Xenial IRIS (which is doubtful).

CKE is very committed to ensuring the previous investments in POS technologies can either be redeployed in the new environment or that the capital investment is very low to move to new POS. The terminals that were bought in the last five years should easily run the web enabled POS systems we will be reviewing. The physical network investments that were made with the Meraki platform and cabling will also work with the new POS system. Kitchen video is the one area that may need some attention, but we will determine a way to make these upgrades with the least amount of capital necessary.

Again, we understand that POS can be a very “touchy” subject, but we will work with CKE to create a very functional POS system that will serve our brand well for many years. Also, we will choose a POS system that will allow us to quickly pivot as the industry changes, reduce and/or maximize tech spend (example: replacing Olo with the cloud POS providers digital aggregation product), while also implementing a POS system that improves efficiencies and facilitates growth in transactions.

These are the top priorities for 2025 as we continue to move our brand forward into the digital age. If we are diligent and make good decisions on technology, we can move the needle on both transactions and profitability. If you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me at boblarimer@boddienoell.com.

STARS FOR HEROES

I wanted to provide an update on what USA Cares accomplished last year. The organization has grown stronger and has been able to assist many more families in need. The demand for support remains high, so we need to rally together for 2025 to make it the best year yet. For those who attended the conference, please remember the videos. We need to make a clear request—if we ask, our guests are likely to give. Thank you all for your contributions last year, and here are the results..

2024 USA CARES ASSISTANCE

- 1142 Families
- Includes 1592 Children
- Requests in 2024 increased by 14% over 2023.
- Assistance offered by USA Cares was up 24% over the previous year (924 families).

- Examples of states with increases in requests in 2024 over the previous year:

- Texas = 53% increase
- Arizona = 29% increase
- Florida = 16% increase
- Georgia = 13% increase
- Virginia = 13% increase
- Kentucky = 9% increase
- California = 7% increase

Thank you for your efforts, and it is evident that the need is significant.

Trace Chesser
Former President/CEO
USA Cares Inc.



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9TH ANNUAL

HARDEE'S CHIP-IN FOR VETERAN'S GOLF TOURNAMENT

WHEN: Tuesday, June 10 | Shotgun start @ 9:00am

WHERE: Franklin Bridge Golf Course | Franklin, TN

IHFA ASSOCIATE MEMBER MEETING & RECEPTION TO FOLLOW.

Vendors: if you have not renewed your membership, please contact Shelley to make sure you can attend the meeting and the golf event!

sklein@dci-kansascity.com



2025



CONVENTION & TRADESHOW

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FRANCHISEE UPDATES

Flooding in Iowa

On Saturday, June 21st, devastating flooding hit the town of Spencer, Iowa. Store 1502674 was one of the many businesses that were impacted by the floods that day. The store took on over 4 feet of water inside the lobby alone and left the store's basement completely flooded. As a result, everything in the store was ruined and unsalvageable. We are thankful no crew members were hurt during this tragic event, but we are incredibly lucky to have General Manager, Paul Swancutt, and Regional Vice President, Keri Hollinrake on our team to help rebuild the store and the community.

The remarkable heroism that Paul showed by rescuing 8 locals from their home's roof behind the store, leaves us speechless. Now, the biggest challenge Team Spencer faces is getting the store back to what it was before. With Keri's leadership and compassion towards her team and community, we know store 1502674 will be restored and be better than ever! Thank you, Paul, Keri, and all of Team Spencer for all of your efforts towards reopening our doors for the town of Spencer to enjoy another hot and fresh meal! Thank you for ALL you do!

Unfortunately, Spencer wasn't the only town affected by the flooding. Estherville, IA was also affected by the floods. Regional Vice President, Keri Hollinrake and Shift Leader Toria Manwarren from store 1503857 delivered Blueberry Biscuits to 65 volunteers who were sandbagging to help prevent flood damage in town. Toria also delivered donations of paper towels and toilet paper from store 1503857 to the flood relief center in Spencer, IA.



Superior Star's First CKE Certified Training Store

At Starcorp LLC, we want to especially thank Huge Congratulations to our team in Hillsboro, IL (store 1506008) for becoming Superior Star's FIRST CKE Certified Training Store! We are so proud of Nora (General Manager) and her team for stepping up and representing Superior Star! We would also like to thank our Regional Vice President, Suzy McCormick for her leadership throughout the process. and we wish to do our best to give back.



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Celebrating 52 Years of Excellence at Hardee's!

Since 1972, Dennis Hayes has been the heart and soul of Hardee's in Jacksonville, Illinois. As the General Manager, Dennis has dedicated 52 incredible years to serving not only delicious food but also creating a welcoming and positive experience for every guest who walks through the doors. His unwavering commitment to quality, customer care, and the community has made him a true legend in Jacksonville.

Dennis' leadership and passion go far beyond running a successful restaurant. Over the years, he has built strong connections with the people of Jacksonville, mentoring team members, supporting local initiatives, and always going the extra mile for his guests. His work ethic and loyalty are an inspiration to everyone who knows him.

Please join us in celebrating Dennis's 52nd Anniversary and his extraordinary contributions to Hardee's and the community. Dennis, thank you for your remarkable dedication, kindness, and leadership. Here's to 52 incredible years of service!



Reopening of Spencer, IA!

On Tuesday, October 8th our team in Spencer, Iowa (Store 1502674) re-opened their doors after being closed due to devastating flooding back in June. We are so happy to see locals in the community back in our restaurant enjoying a hot and fresh meal together.

Thank you, Paul, Keri, Leslie, Marsha, and all of Team Spencer for all of your efforts in reopening our doors for the town of Spencer! We cannot wait to see your restaurant and crew members blossom and succeed! Thank you for ALL you do!





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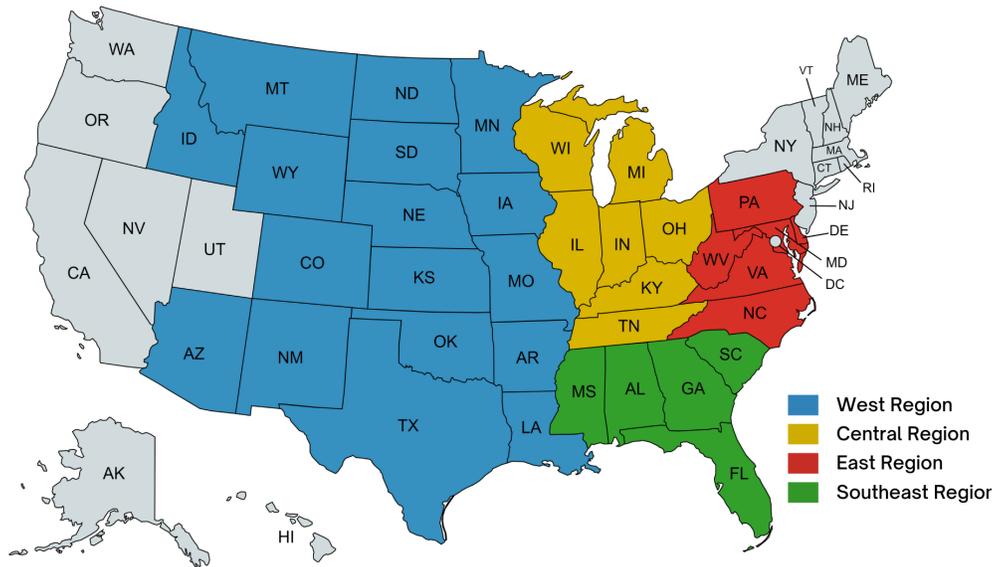


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BOARD OF DIRECTORS FOR 2025 & BYLAWS CHANGE

The IHFA Board of Directors amended its Bylaws in the Fall of 2024 to allow for the realignment of regions and succession planning. Some of the board members, many founding members, now have second generations involved in the business. It's important understand and keep the history of the IHFA as well as be nimble and plan for it's future. Therefore, each largest franchisee of each region can have two board representatives, but only one collective vote.



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