



INSIGHT

1ST QUARTER 2026

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Capstone Golf Tournament



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WINTER 2026

IHFA INSIGHT - A Publication for IHFA Franchisees & Associates

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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

2026 IHFA Convention & Tradeshow
October 26-28, 2026
Kansas City Marriott Downtown

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THE PRESIDENT'S INSIGHT

Greetings IHFA Membership,

“Off to the races” feels like an appropriate theme for my inaugural President’s letter to you all. For starters, kudos to Frank Heath for prioritizing a smooth transition as his Presidency came to a close and my term began. Frank was laser focused on keeping me up to speed on all the dialogue, progress and even the frustrations that were happening over the final 6-9 months of 2025. I am very appreciative of Frank bringing me along because it allowed me to hit the ground running as the calendar turned to 2026, which kicked off with our January board meeting in Savannah, GA.

I want to highlight a few bright spots from that meeting as well as identify a number of opportunities that the IHFA remains concerned about, which will also help illustrate our priorities and our roadmap to tackling those priorities for the balance of this year.

For those of you that were able to join the last Town Hall call, you heard the CKE Marketing team highlight the new partnership with NASCAR, Bubba Wallace and the 23XI team. It is an exciting time for our brand as we make our return to NASCAR, after almost 3 decades out of the sport. It’s exciting to be part of the 23XI team, not only because Bubba’s teammate at 23XI, Tyler Reddick, secured a Daytona 500 victory, only weeks after our deal was announced but we replaced our Golden Arches competitor as the official QSR of NASCAR and a prominent position on the 23XI race team.

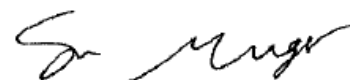
As I reflect on the last few years, the most common opportunity that the IHFA has stressed in our discussions with CKE, has been a Better Burger. During our January meeting, the Better Burger work through Project Sizzle was one of the main points of discussion. There has been a tremendous amount of collaborative work between CKE and the IHFA, but still a tremendous amount of work needs to be done. The top two priorities remain; a robust, effective and objective testing process paired with a tactical and holistic execution plan. While sense of urgency around this work, remains a priority; we do not believe that speed should jeopardize an effective rollout. Our brand is starving for profitable lunch and dinner transaction growth, so executing this burger platform through effective messaging, operational execution and team member enthusiasm is paramount to our success.

The NASCAR partnership and Better Burger work are both exciting as we look to revitalize our brand relevancy but we have a tremendous amount of work to do when it comes to system EBITDA and Franchisee profitability. CKE has embarked on a supply chain initiative that has brought a number of significant changes to our menu. The IHFA Board has been very clear with CKE that the Supply Chain project cannot be solely a cost-saving initiative. We unfortunately haven’t been as successful as we’d like but we will continue to push that narrative as those discussions are on-going.

Another tactic you have probably heard from CKE, is their menu architecture project and using price pointed advertising to drive traffic. While we are all supportive of driving profitable traffic, using discounting as the primary tactic doesn’t sit well with the Franchise community, particularly when the discount involves our core, premium or unique products. The Board remains focused on improving our position as a quality first brand in QSR, but in order to establish ourselves as a leader in the category, we cannot undermine our premium menu through discounts. We need value engineered innovation to support our value platforms while elevating our core and premium products.

I hope everyone can see there are a lot of projects in flight and each of them are at various stages in the process but regardless, the dialogue between CKE and the IHFA is continuing and it’s happening fast and furious. The Board remains laser focused on building a culture of winning through accountability and the relentless pursuit of strong execution.

Sincerely,



Sam Munger
IHFA President



Sam Munger
Eau Claire, WI



SAVE THE DATE

Mark your calendars and get ready to join us in the heart of America for one of the most exciting events of the year!

2026 IHFA Convention & Tradeshow
October 26 – 28

Kansas City Marriott Downtown

We’re bringing together our members for two days of networking, system updates, and celebration. Join us to hear updates from CKE, meet with new and existing associate members, and connect with fellow franchisees and CKE - This is the event you won’t want to miss.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Welcome Reception on Monday night
- Exhibits & industry partners
- Special Offsite Event
- Celebration Dinner on Wednesday evening

More details — including registration, hotel information, and the full schedule — are coming soon! For now, save the date, start making plans, and get ready to join us in Kansas City for an unforgettable convention experience.

VENUE INFORMATION:

Kansas City Marriott Downtown
200 W 12th St. Kansas City, MO 64105
P: 816-421-6800

Room Rate: \$249++
Registration & Hotel room block is set to open in Summer of 2026.



MARKETING UPDATE

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

As the calendar turned to 2026, the environment in the restaurant industry remains challenging, with competitors in the QSR, Fast Casual, and Casual Dining segments still competing for share of visits. As competitors continue to message value and hot price points, consumers remain cautious and economic indicators predict very modest growth in industry sales for 2026.

Those who attended the conference last fall in San Antonio had the opportunity to see a preview of the brand positioning work that was underway at that time. Now that it is complete, CKE Marketing is working with a new agency partner to modernize our brand communications and advertising with a contemporary and differentiated approach that promotes our superiority over the competition, delivered through a multi-channel plan that reaches our target customers with the right messages in the right channel. Watch for brand executions that are updated and relevant, with a more disruptive tone of voice.

A key element of this year's marketing presence is Hardee's partnership with NASCAR and Team 23Xi. The partnership was announced recently, just ahead of the Daytona 500, the inaugural race of the season, and earned an exciting number of impressions. Hardee's return to NASCAR is garnering attention and a 360° plan to make the most of this partnership is being finalized. In addition to advertising, social media opportunities, NASCAR home page takeovers on race day, and track activations, be on the lookout for engaging sweepstakes through the app, a special Bubba Wallace meal, store activations, and crew engagement initiatives. Use the links below to access some of the articles generated by the partnership announcements.

Hardee's, NASCAR, 23xi joint press release: <https://www.hardees.com/hardee%E2%80%99s-returns-to-nascar-as-an-official-partner;-joins-23xi-racing-as-primary-partner-of-bubba-wal>

Hardee's/NASCAR through the years: <https://www.nascar.com/gallery/hardees-in-nascar-through-the-years/>

Forbes placement: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/gregengle/2026/01/21/nascar-finds-comfort-food-in-a-familiar-name-as-hardees-returns/>

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Burger improvement continues to be a top priority and a significant amount of work to inform decisions moving forward has been completed. Multiple workstreams to finalize media-supported market tests are in flight and some preliminary testing has begun in the Nashville market. Upcoming tests in additional markets will include not only the new burgers, but also new premium sides and the addition of a smaller shake. Tests are scheduled for early May, with plans to launch the new menu architecture in October.

The 2026 calendar includes several previously tested LTO products, as well as continued innovation in the beverage category through the promotion of platforms that include flavored lemonades and teas, sparklers, and LTO shakes. Additionally, fried pies return to the menu later this year, with unique, craveable flavors that have excellent potential to increase attachment sales. Windows 2, 3, and 4 feature cross-daypart LTOs, providing the opportunity to combine breakfast and lunch/dinner advertising messages for total day marketing support and greater media efficiency.

Meanwhile, market tests to provide learning and build the pipeline for future calendar events are underway and consumer research to determine the most appealing value constructs is being fielded.

The purpose of the marketing committee is to represent the franchise owners' voice and to influence key marketing, advertising, and media decisions to enhance the Hardee's brand and support the common goals of increased sales, transactions, and profits. Comments and questions from the franchise community are always welcome.

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IT COMMITTEE UPDATE

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

Well POSitioned

The decision on unified POS has been made by CKE, and one of our current vendors “Genius” has been selected as the next generation system for both the Hardee’s and Carl’s brands. There were many demos and meetings completed by the POS Steering Committee over the past year that led to the decision.

If you recall, the multiple POS vendors were narrowed down to two vendors “Genius” and “Qu”. Both Genius and Qu can run our businesses, but the franchisee’s financial health was a large determining factor that led to choosing Genius.

In this article I will discuss the Genius platform, the costs associated with this web-based POS platform, what you can do to prepare for the transition, and the timelines for moving forward with Genius. It will be presented in a Frequently Asked Questions format.

1. WHAT IS THE GENIUS POS PLATFORM

Genius is a full web-based POS system that is highly configurable and much easier to manage than the current ParBrink and IRIS systems. It includes front of the house POS, receipt printing, kitchen display systems, and payments. The new system does not have a traditional back-office system included. Genius is a rebrand of our current vendor Xenial. So, when you hear the name Genius, know that we are still working with our current POS vendor. It was this current relationship that helped us secure very favorable monthly SaaS pricing, free hardware, and one of the least expensive credit card transaction fees we have seen in the restaurant industry.

2. WHY ARE WE MOVING TO A UNIFIED POS SYSTEM?

There are many issues we have experienced as a brand due to the many different POS systems and databases that make up our ecosystem. We currently have ParBrink in about 30% of the brand and Xenial IRIS and its many versions in the remaining restaurants. These many iterations of POS systems have created some significant issues in our digital platforms. Menu mapping issues and menu variations hamper the ability to allow for more guest customizations on the My Rewards app and 3PD platforms. Consistent data collection by CKE has also been a challenge. Having consistent, actionable data will assist CKE in making better data driven decisions. New POS also enables a foundation for consistent innovation and new technologies across the entire system. Web-based POS systems enable easier integrations with other technologies that can enhance our businesses and drive profitability and efficiencies.



Our ability to be nimble with technology is paramount in an ever changing landscape within the QSR industry. Web-based POS systems can assist with reducing the “time to market” for new enhancements.

3. WHAT IS INCLUDED IN GENIUS?

With the Genius platform, the following hardware is included:

- (4) state of the art POS terminals running Android
- (3) cash drawers
- (3) Epson receipt printers
- (4) kitchen display systems with bump bars and 27-inch-wide monitors

The above equates to about \$8,850 in free hardware for each location.

This configuration may not fit all franchisee needs, but there are options for additional hardware that I will explain in the costs portion of the article. The goal is to allow for little or no capital outlay by the franchisees for hardware or installation services.



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 National Account Manager
 Royal Cup Coffee and Tea
 Miranda.Carter@royalcupcoffee.com

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4. WHAT ARE THE COSTS?

Below is an explanation of the costs associated with the Genius platform:

Implementation Costs

Professional Installation	Up Front Cost
Project Management Fee	\$395
Device Staging Fee	\$350
Professional Installation	\$2,695
Installation Kit	TBD*
Professional Installation Total:	\$3,440

Certified Self-Installation	Up Front Cost
Project Management Fee	\$395
Device Staging Fee	\$350
Certified Self-Installation	\$0
Installation Kit	TBD*
Certified Self-Installation Total:	\$745

The \$3,440 is the cost of a professional installation by location. The \$745 is for franchisees that have their own in-house installation teams that have been certified. There are options for a \$0 cash up front installation that can be worked out with Genius. You can decide which option best works for your organization.

The monthly SaaS cost for the Genius platform will be \$160 per month, and this include support and help desk for the POS platform. Each location will also receive a \$295 per year discount in content and support services with the OMDB/IMDB displays.

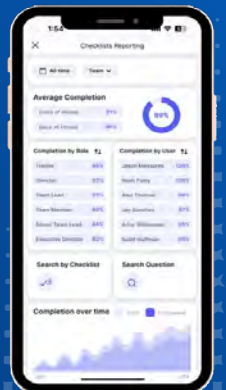
Payment transaction fees will be \$.006 per transaction with Global Payment Systems which is the owner of Genius. This is a reduction over our current Elavon and Heartland fees which average about \$.0087 per transaction. There will be the requirement to purchase new payment terminals which can be done as a \$0 cash up front option like the installation fees.

There also is a \$0 cash up front option to purchase any additional hardware you may need for your individual install needs (additional terminals, printers, or kitchen video systems).

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5. WHAT IS THE TIMELINE?

Below is a graph of the proposed timeline for the POS project. Some special notes:

- Xenial IRIS is “end of life” on 12/31/2027. This means you cannot receive technical support or make changes to the IRIS platform.
- Pricing for ParBrink increases from \$65 per period to \$250 per period on 8/1/2027.
- Free Genius hardware is only offered to those franchisees that sign an agreement by 12/31/2027.

All franchisees would need to be transitioned to Genius POS by early 2028. There are several franchisees that plan to be early adopters that should help with creating a sense of ease within the franchise community on the transition process.

6. WHAT CAN I DO TO GET READY FOR THE TRANSITION?

CKE will be sending a communication regarding the new POS decision and how you can sign up for the program. It will give specific instructions on what is required to transition to the new platform.

If you are on ParBrink, you are in a good position as you are already on a back-office solution that will be integrated with Genius. Transitioning to the POS portion of the platform should be relatively easy and will be simple for your cashiers and cooks to adopt. There could be some work to be completed if you have an above store reporting solution that is not managed by CKE. A scoping session will identify any discrepancies, and you should be able to plan accordingly to get your data synced up with the Genius data. This same process would work for any payroll platforms you are utilizing.

If you are on Xenial IRIS and are utilizing a back-office system such as Crunchtime, Sabretooth, RTI, or Restaurant365, you should be in fairly good shape with the transition. These back-office systems will be integrated with Genius, and it should be a seamless change to your restaurant personnel.

If you are utilizing the IRIS back-office for food costing and labor, then you may want to look at moving to one of the above back-office solutions. RTI is owned by Genius, and they are offering a year of free service and then \$59 per month after the first year. This is to help you easily and affordably move to an above store back-office solution.

It is not a requirement to move to a new back-office system prior to installing the new Genius POS system, but it will make it easier on your restaurant management to have the back-office solution complete before the POS deployment.

There are many moving parts around the transition to the Genius POS platform, but hopefully this article gave you some insights on what the deployment make look like for your organization. In the very near future, CKE will be communicating the specifics on how to transition and the contacts needed to start making a business plan. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please feel free to reach out to me. boblarimer@boddienoell.com 252.266.9242.

HR COMMITTEE UPDATE

Kathy Trusch – HR Co-Chair; Michel Shay – HR Co-Chair

In 2026 the HR Committee will continue to focus on two key areas:

1. Star University - Our HR training subcommittee will continue to work closely with our CKE Star University Team. Providing ongoing feedback and suggestions on how to improve the system, and ensure that updated changes are user friendly from an operations perspective. The first half of our monthly calls are designated specifically to Star University. Please remember to contact CKE’s helpdesk when specific issues surface in your restaurants regarding Star University: staru@ckr.com. The Star University Help desk will respond timely and assist you.
 - a. It is also important to record these issues through the Help Desk, this helps determine if there are system issues on a larger scale, which needs another level of attention in correcting the solution. We also want to thank Zack Donovan (CKE) for his ongoing support and assistance with the help desk.
2. Development of Restaurant General Managers and our multilevel supervisors through Webinars. Many of our franchisees have new General Managers and Multi Level Supervisors. The IHFA will continue to provide webinars throughout the year on basic information such as:
 - a. Hospitality and Customer Service : Dayna Pagano with Capstone Restaurants will host the discussion on Hospitality and Customer Service. This is an excellent program; Dayna has partnered with her operations leadership team to focus on getting back to the basics on improving guest service. The program is intended for Restaurant General Managers and multilevel supervisors. It is scheduled for March 5, 2026, at 1:30pm - 4:00pm CST.
 - b. A review of Go Happy: This is a tool for employee engagement which Rachel Proue with Doro will be presenting. If you have an interest in this, please contact me directly to sign up: kathytrusch@boddienoell.com.
 - a. Recruitment and Retention Workshop: Scheduled for April 22, at 2:00pm EST. Gwen Nicholson with Boddie-Noell Enterprises will be conducting this workshop.

Don’t forget about the upcoming SESCO HR Webinars. These are offered at a very reasonable price of \$65.00 p/ person, including the PowerPoint presentation and a live recording.

2026 IHFA HR Committee Goals

- Utilization of Committee Resources for education and training of our Restaurant General Managers.
- Collaborate with CKE HR and Training teams to obtain resources for the IHFA.
- Update recruitment material on the IHFA recruiting website at <https://selfopportunity.com/>. Providing ongoing input for the development of Star University.

2026 SESCO WEBINAR SERIES

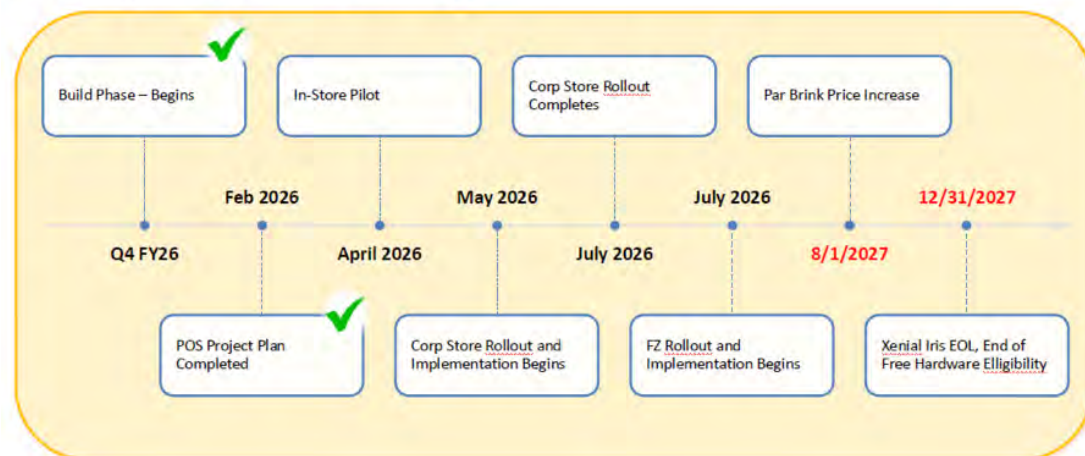
- March 10: Supervisor Core Competencies: Back to Basics
- March 24: The Basics of HR Systems: Master your Personnel Files and Compliance
- April 7: Navigating Wage & Hour Compliance: Avoid Risk and Stay Ahead
- April 21: Background Checks & Ban-the-Box Compliance: Hire Smart, Stay Compliant
- May 5: Recruitment & Retention: HR Best Practices for the 2026 Workforce
- May 19: Eliminating the Confusion on FMLA: Administer with Confidence
- June 2: ADA Compliance and Reasonable Accommodations: Protect Your Workforce and Your Organization
- June 16: Employee Experience & Engagement: Thriving in a Changing Workplace
- June 30: Building Smarter Compensation Systems: Total Rewards Strategies for Retention & Growth

SCHEDULE:

These webinars are offered every other Tuesday, beginning March 10th through June 30th. They are scheduled for 1:00pm-2:30pm EST

If you have suggestions or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at kathytrusch@boddienoell.com. It is a privilege to support and serve each of you.

POS Implementation Roadmap



OPERATIONS COMMITTEE UPDATE

Bill Boddie, Jr. – Co-Chair; Mick Cato – Co-Chair

IHFA Operations Committee Update: Key Focus Areas for 2026

The IHFA Operations Committee enters 2026 with a strategic vision — one built on structured accountability, bold innovation, and a relentless commitment to restaurant-level excellence. This update outlines the three pillars driving committee momentum: a refined sub-committee structure designed to keep every operational priority under clear ownership, the transformative Project Sizzle initiative launching the Better Burger and new menu platforms, and the groundbreaking Hardee's All-Star Coca-Cola Crew Program poised to elevate guest satisfaction system-wide.

Together, these initiatives represent a coordinated push to improve execution at every level of the Hardee's system — from crew engagement and digital integration to equipment readiness and inventory control.

Sub-Committee Structure

5 focused teams driving operational clarity and accountability across IHFA and CKE.

Project Sizzle

A transformative launch of the Better Burger and new menu platforms across Hardee's restaurants.

All-Star Crew Program

A Coca-Cola-sponsored crew engagement initiative targeting system-wide performance excellence.

2026 IHFA Sub-Committee Structure

 <p>Digital Growth / Execution IHFA: Tim Haberkamp CKE: Jessica Stem, Kisha Cardoza, Adrian Duran Focuses on in-restaurant digital execution, drive-thru optimization, loyalty awareness, and operator education. Initiatives include enhanced digital pickup stations and guest awareness campaigns.</p>	<p>To sharpen focus and drive accountability across recurring operational priorities, the IHFA Operations Committee has introduced a refined five sub-committee structure for 2026. Each sub-committee is co-led by IHFA and CKE representatives, ensuring alignment between franchise and company perspectives at every level. Sub-committee supervisors are directly responsible for planning agenda items, tracking progress against milestones, and maintaining alignment with the committee's overall mandate. This architecture is designed to eliminate uncertainty, distribute leadership, and accelerate results across the Hardee's system.</p> <p>The five sub-committees reflect the most critical operational domains for the year ahead. From digital execution and menu platform readiness to training pipelines, inventory controls, and facilities support, each team has a clearly defined scope and a roster of experienced leaders committed to measurable outcomes. Together, they form a comprehensive operational governance framework built for speed, precision, and impact.</p>
 <p>Project Sizzle IHFA: Kevin Hanusa, Mick Cato, Bill Boddie Jr. CKE: Lee Brown, Joe Kohorst, Doug Smith Dedicated to operational readiness for the Better Burger and new menu platforms — covering training, equipment prep, merchandising, and crew engagement.</p>	
 <p>Training / Development: DM and Below IHFA: Dave Deiss, Kathy Trusch CKE: Jasmine Stepp, J. Fore, Joe Walsh Develops high-potential GMs and DMs through certification programs and leadership readiness initiatives, ensuring a strong pipeline of talent across the system.</p>	
 <p>Inventory Management IHFA: Jack Duckett CKE: Sara Rodwell Addresses inventory controls, forecasting, packaging, and product portability to ensure operational efficiency and reduce waste across all restaurant locations.</p>	
 <p>Equipment / Facilities IHFA: Billy Clark CKE: REX & Development Provides targeted support for equipment and facilities needs, with particular emphasis on readiness requirements tied to Project Sizzle execution timelines.</p>	

Project Sizzle: Launching the Better Burger Platform



Project Sizzle is the most transformative operational initiative on the committee's 2026 agenda — a comprehensive, system-wide effort to operationalize the Better Burger and new menu platforms across Hardee's restaurants. This is not simply a product launch; it is a holistic readiness program that touches every dimension of restaurant operations, from how crews are trained and engaged to how guests first encounter the new menu through in-restaurant merchandising and digital channels. The stakes are high, and the committee is currently working on the framework to ensure every restaurant is prepared to deliver a consistent, high-quality guest experience from day one.

Launch Timeline

Initial testing will kick off in company and franchisee units during **Window 3**, with broader system expansion planned for later in 2026. Equipment calibration and staff training are gated prerequisites before any restaurant goes live.

Hardee's All-Star Coca-Cola Crew Program

The Hardee's All-Star Coca-Cola Crew Program is a groundbreaking, sponsor-backed crew engagement initiative purpose-built to elevate operational excellence across the Hardee's system. Co-developed with Coca-Cola and activated through Springz, the program creates a structured, performance-driven environment that recognizes and rewards crew members and restaurant teams across five critical business dimensions. This is not a one-time contest — it is a sustained engagement framework designed to shift culture, raise the performance floor, and create lasting accountability at the restaurant level.

The program will test-launch in approximately **25 restaurants** during late Window 2, with a targeted system-wide rollout planned for Window 3. Coca-Cola and Springz will provide kickoff communication support, field activation resources, and ongoing engagement tools to maximize participation and visibility. Restaurant leaders should begin preparing their teams now — the All-Star Program rewards consistent execution, not just peak performance moments.



Marketing

Rewarding in-store marketing execution for maximum window performance. Crews are recognized for accurate, timely, and complete execution of promotional materials and LTO displays.



Operations / Training

Leveraging **STAR U** and **Zenput** platforms to deliver consistent, high-quality crew training. Certification completion rates are a key performance indicator driving team scores.



Sales

Setting profitable sales targets to increase average checks and deliver measurable ROI. Teams are scored on performance against benchmarks, driving healthy competition across restaurants.



Digital

Driving app engagement, digital transactions, and new app acquisitions at the restaurant level. Digital performance is a scored category, keeping crews focused on the loyalty ecosystem.



Guest Satisfaction

Utilizing **Black Box Data** to measure and enhance customer satisfaction and visit frequency. Guest scores are a cornerstone metric, anchoring the program in the experience that matters most.

The IHFA Operations Committee is committed to driving operational excellence through structured sub-committee leadership, the transformative Project Sizzle platform launch, and the All-Star Coca-Cola Crew Program. By maintaining clear objectives, cross-functional alignment, and a culture of accountability, the committee is positioned to deliver measurable, lasting impact for the Hardee's system in 2026 and beyond.



HOW DID YOU FIRST GET INVOLVED WITH THE IHFA?

My first interaction with the IHFA was in 2012, through the Next Generation group. I am very grateful to Paul Cato, Bill Boddie and my Dad for supporting the Next Gen initiative because not only has it allowed me to grow as a leader but I have developed strong, long-term relationships that have helped me both personally and professionally.

HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS?

I started as a cook in 2010 shortly after my college graduation. The first LTO I built as a cook was the Grilled Cheese Bacon Thick-burger, which ironically was the same LTO when I took over as President of the IHFA. Talk about a full circle moment.

WHAT IS SOMETHING OUR MEMBERS MIGHT BE SURPRISED TO LEARN ABOUT YOU?

I love to water and snow ski but don't do it as much as I'd like but one thing that's pretty unique, is I was fortunate enough to see live both Brett Favre and Aaron Rodgers' last passes as Green Bay Packers, the problem is, both were interceptions and then each of them got traded to the Jets.



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WHAT EXCITES YOU THE MOST FOR THE YEAR AHEAD?

The Better Burger work gives me a lot of optimism. When Hardee's was at its best, we had a superior Burger platform. We have struggled to grow lunch/dinner traffic for too long so with a better product and a more effective message, I remain bullish on finishing 2026 on a high note.

WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO MEMBERS WHO WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED?

Even though we sell Biscuits, Burgers and Chicken, we are in the people business and the IHFA has allowed me to build relationships that will last a lifetime. The IHFA's greatest strength is our unity and our strong bond as business leaders in the brand. The more we can strengthen our relationships with each other and the more we can learn from one another, the stronger we will make this brand.

WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE WAY TO SPEND A FREE WEEKEND?

We have a family cabin in Northern Wisconsin that I have been blessed to spend time at since I was a kid. Now that I have kids of my own and to watch them enjoy God's country, the way I was able to, alongside their cousins, there's nothing better. We're able to enjoy all 4 seasons (yes including the dead of Wisconsin winter) with endless activities but it's also the best place to unwind, clear your head and spend time with the ones that mean the most.

WHAT IS ONE ITEM YOU CANNOT TRAVEL WITHOUT?

I usually pack pretty light so I don't really have anything that I would categorize as unique, so I'll just say coffee, I drink coffee all day so if I'm driving, I always have my mug and if I'm flying, I'll be sure to grab a cup at the airport.

WHAT IS YOUR GO-TO COMFORT FOOD?

Pizza and a cold Beer.

IF YOU WEREN'T IN THIS INDUSTRY, WHAT WOULD YOU BE DOING?

I've always dreamed of coaching hockey at the higher levels. I've been coaching hockey since I was 19 years old and now, I'm fortunate to be able to coach both of my kids. I love the sport and if I wasn't doing this, I've always thought it would be fun to put all my energy toward that and see where it goes.

IF YOU HAD A THEME SONG, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

I'd have to say Dream on by Aerosmith, for two reasons. First, my favorite movie is Miracle on Ice and I would always watch that movie the night before my Hockey games growing up but I'd usually fall asleep. I'd then wake up during the credits with Dream On playing. Hockey was such a big part of my childhood and it was a dream come true to play as long as I did. Second, my dad and my wife have always encouraged me to Dream and so when I hear that song, it truly makes me thankful for what I have but also motivates me to keep pushing because the opportunities are endless, if you just keep Dreaming.

BACKGROUND ON SAM'S FAMILY:

Elizabeth and I have been married for 12 years but have been together since High School.

Luke is 9 and loves playing Hockey and Baseball.

Meredith is 5 and is just getting started in Gymnastics, Hockey and she can't wait for T-Ball to start this spring.

We have a dog Mack who is named after Luke's favorite hockey player.



CAPSTONE GOLF TOURNAMENT

Mark your calendars for June 3rd and join us for the IHFA Vendor Appreciation Dinner, at the Hilton Franklin Cool Springs, TN.



Plan to stay the following day to attend the annual Capstone Chip in For Veterans Golf Tournament on June 4, 2026. Registration for the tournament is set to open in early spring. The tournament will be held at the Franklin Bridge Golf Course.

For more information on the golf tournament, please contact Todd Pahl: todd@capstonerestaurants.com





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UPDATE FROM PA VETERAN FARMING NETWORK

Just an update on how your donation is impacting veterans in Pennsylvania who farm and feed their communities.

At our annual conference yesterday, we awarded three mini-grants to veterans whose farm operations will benefit from your generous donation. Your gift also supported this annual educational conference, which this year hosted about 115 guests for a full day of workshops, farmer panels, networking, and one-on-one consultations with service providers.




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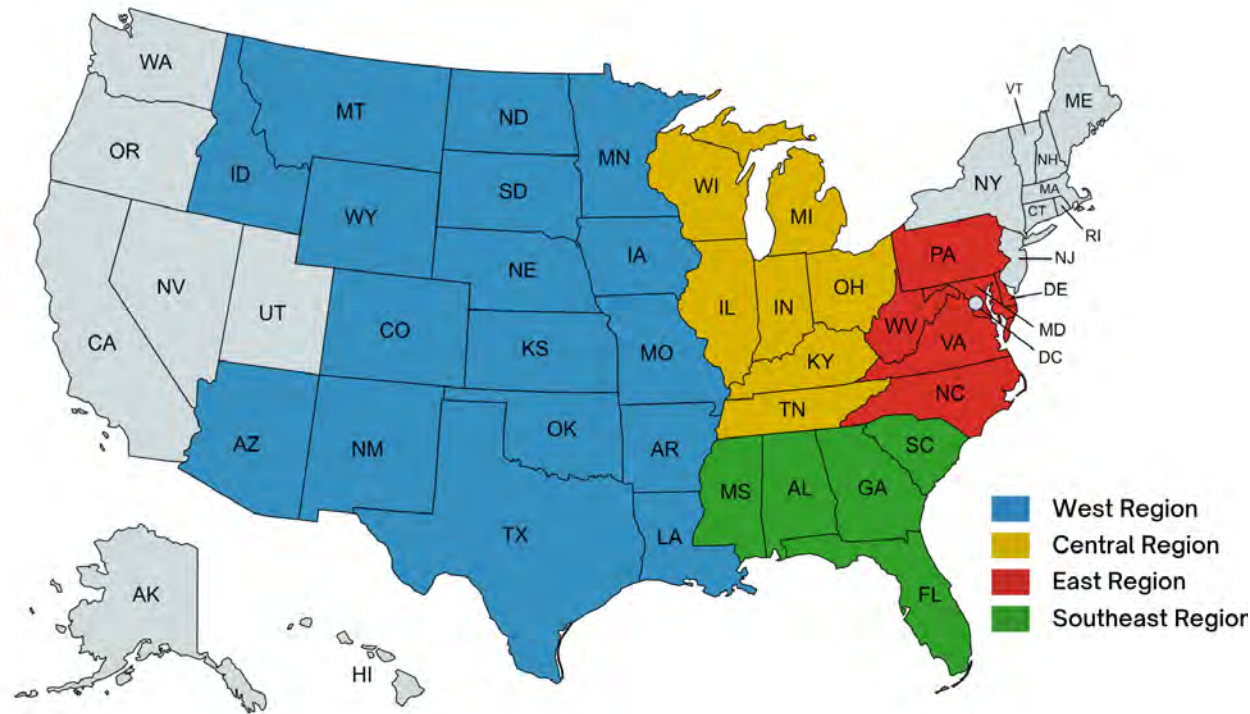


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