



2025

# YEAR IN REVIEW





# A Message From the President

Dear ICPF partners & supporters,

As we close out 2025, ICPF proudly celebrates **40 years of promoting education and careers in the corrugated packaging industry**. That's four decades of collaboration, innovation, and shared commitment to developing the next generation of leaders. What began as a collective vision to build a stronger workforce has grown into a powerful partnership between industry and education that continues to adapt and thrive, especially over the past three years.

Throughout this anniversary year, ICPF has remained focused on advancing the priorities outlined in our Strategic Road Map — **strengthening existing programs, expanding our outreach efforts, increasing awareness of the industry, and evaluating new opportunities for impact**. These guiding pillars continue to shape our direction and ensure that every initiative we launch moves the industry forward.

In 2025, we deepened our partnerships with universities and corporate allies through the **University Awards Program and sponsorships**, providing new equipment, software, and funding to enhance research, strengthen coursework, and connect students with industry professionals. We also proudly joined Harris Packaging to celebrate the opening of the **Harris Packaging Design and Innovation Hub** and the **Joe Harris Packaging Production Lab** at the University of Texas–Arlington — a shining example of collaboration in action.

ICPF introduced several new resources this year to support the recruitment and development of a talented labor force, including the **Workforce Development Report**, a quarterly publication designed to share actionable insights and best practices for attracting and retaining talent. Additionally, through our new partnership with **The Packaging School**, we launched a scholarship program enabling students outside of traditional packaging majors to complete the Certificate of Mastery in Packaging Management program — broadening the reach and diversity of the industry's talent pipeline in the Midwest, Northeast, and Southeast regions of the U.S.

Our outreach initiatives also expanded significantly. In partnership with **Project Learning Tree**, we released Thinking Outside the Box: Exploring Careers in Corrugated Packaging, a new activity collection for K–12 educators that brings our industry's innovation and emphasis on sustainability to classrooms nationwide. In 2025, we introduced this customized resource to environmental educators across multiple states and grade levels. We also continued our collaborative efforts with **SkillsUSA** and **the Manufacturing Institute**, reaching new students and educators through interactive lessons, communications, conferences, and events. ICPF is eager to build on these efforts in 2026 through an expanded partnership with SkillsUSA.

This year, we also honored the late **Jeffrey Schwarz** as the 29th inductee into ICPF's **Circle of Distinguished Leaders**. The outpouring of generosity from across the industry, totaling more than \$320,000 in contributions, reflects the unity and spirit that continue to define our community.

As we celebrate this milestone year, I'm pleased to share that the ICPF Board of Directors has **approved a new three-year strategic plan**, building upon our foundation's past success while setting an ambitious course for the future. The plan focuses on deepening workforce development efforts, expanding educational partnerships, and continuing to position ICPF as a leader in connecting industry knowledge with opportunity.

Forty years in, our mission has never been clearer and our impact never stronger. Together, we will continue to inspire, educate, and empower the next generation to drive the corrugated packaging industry forward.

Sincerely,



Caitlin Salaverria

President, The International Corrugated Packaging Foundation



# SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES 2024-2025

ICPF will use these objectives to monitor progress as the foundation **develops and implements ongoing strategies** to grow the workforce of the corrugated packaging industry now and into the future.

## STRENGTHEN EXISTING PROGRAMS



- Continue to develop relationships with schools through communications, outreach and ICPF's **University Awards Program/Sponsorship opportunities**.
- Manage and evolve programs that support the **operating expenses of ICPF**.
- Fund programs for packaging/graphic majors and expand **outreach to non-packaging majors** (i.e. supply chain, business, marketing, etc.)
- **Facilitate and inform ICPF partners** on relevant and timely recruitment and retention news and resources through developed reports and other communication channels.

## INITIATE OUTREACH EFFORTS



- Continue to build relationships with **trade/vocational schools and high schools** to fill plant floor positions.
- Release Phase 2 **Corrugated Industry Curricula** for use at colleges, universities, and trade schools.
- Develop and establish **industry-specific Workforce Degree(s)** at Ivy Tech Community College designed to prepare students for plant floor positions.
- Increase **student exposure** at industry-related events.
- **Build and develop ICPF contact database and CRM** for educational partner outreach in identified communities near ICPF industry partners.

## INCREASE INDUSTRY AWARENESS



- Continue to build ICPF's **social media presence** through organic and paid promotion programs across appropriate platforms.
- Continue to **improve connectivity, increase ICPF activity awareness, and collect input from stakeholders** through monthly newsletters, communications, surveys, and outreach.
- Continue to build **resources and toolkits** for ICPF partners to aid in recruitment efforts and to promote industry awareness.
- Successfully complete Year 1 of ICPF's **SFI/Project Learning Tree Partnership** to increase youth awareness of corrugated industry careers.

## EVALUATE PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



- Continue to build upon and examine opportunities to leverage existing **workforce recruitment programs** like MFG Day, FAME, MEP, SkillsUSA, etc.
- Participate in relevant **workforce organization conferences, trade shows, state and national meetings**.
- Continue the work of the **Talent Acquisition Committee**, made up of Corporate Partner HR executives, to leverage ICPF resources in order to support industry recruitment and retention efforts.



# Strengthen Existing Programs



## University Awards Program & Sponsorships

Over the course of the year, ICPF continued to strengthen and support its relationships with university partners and packaging faculty across the United States. The foundation furnished the 2024 University Awards Program awardees with new digital cutting tables, a universal tensile testing machine, and funding to support career development programming. In addition to the University Awards, ICPF funded many additional testing equipment and software donations through our sponsorship program.

In September 2025, five universities submitted seven proposals requesting funding to further packaging-related research and testing, strengthen packaging coursework, and create opportunities for connection between industry representatives, students and academia. The Board approved four proposals that will receive funding in 2026. ICPF also visited the University of Texas-Arlington to attend a ribbon cutting ceremony unveiling the Harris Packaging Design and Innovation Hub and the Joe Harris Packaging Production Lab.



*Representatives from the University of Texas-Arlington and Harris Packaging mark the opening of brand new packaging design and production labs.*



# \$819,871

total funds requested  
in University Awards  
Program proposals  
received from five  
universities across  
the U.S. in 2025

In 2025, equipment and software funded by ICPF was installed at **Indiana State University**, **Pittsburg State University**, **RIT**, **San Jose State University**, and **Virginia Tech**. Indiana State also received funding to further its inaugural Career Immersion Series to connect high school students in Indiana with free learning experiences to support enrollment in the Packaging Engineering Technology program.





# Strengthen Existing Programs



## Quarterly Workforce Development Reports Released in 2025

In 2025, ICPF released a newly developed recruitment and retention resource, the Workforce Development Report. Distributed to ICPF partners on a quarterly basis, the report is designed to provide relevant case studies, articles, and best practices to help industry companies attract, retain, and develop a talented workforce in today's competitive environment. The report is organized into two sections: finding talent and retaining talent. Under finding talent, recruitment and talent acquisition teams can find information on building talent pipelines, optimizing the hiring process, and leveraging onboarding strategies for candidate success. The retaining talent section focuses on continuous learning opportunities, supervisory training and leadership development, and company culture. On average, the report achieved a 47% open rate each quarter. The most current editions of the report are also made available to stakeholders on ICPF's website.



## ICPF Celebrates Jeff Schwarz's Induction to Circle of Distinguished Leaders



This year, ICPF was honored to celebrate the posthumous induction of the 29th member of the Circle of Distinguished Leaders: Jeffrey Schwarz of Schwarz Partners. On October 7, members of the industry, Jeff's colleagues, and the Schwarz family joined ICPF to commemorate Jeff's legacy with a dinner and reception in Chicago, IL. Industry contributions on behalf of Jeff led to the most successful Circle of Distinguished Leaders nomination in ICPF history. The Corrugated Partners Group (CPG) donated \$150,000 in honor of Jeff, while several other corrugated packaging companies and industry leaders provided generous donations in his name. ICPF is excited to celebrate the next Circle of Distinguished Leaders nominee, Bryan Hollenbach, in 2026.

CORRUGATED PACKAGING INDUSTRY DONATES OVER **\$320,000!**

## ICPF Teams Up with The Packaging School to Offer Scholarships & Empower the Next Generation of Packaging Professionals

As part of a brand-new partnership with The Packaging School (TPS), ICPF announced a new scholarship opportunity to increase student awareness of the corrugated packaging industry through expert-led online education and customized instruction. Through this collaboration, ICPF provided funding to students (ages 18-25) pursuing non-packaging degrees such as supply chain management, graphic communications, business, graphic design, and more, to complete the PhD-led Certificate of Mastery in Packaging Management (CMPM) program.

In October 2025, **nine students were selected to receive ICPF's \$7,000 scholarship** and begin online learning as part of the 12-week CMPM program. ICPF's first cohort is made up of students from the University of Northern Iowa, Carlow, Clemson, Rutgers, and Wake Forest Universities. Through completion of this program, students will gain industry-focused knowledge, highly relevant experience, and a project portfolio they can immediately apply to real-world opportunities.



**30** applicants from  
**14** schools internationally

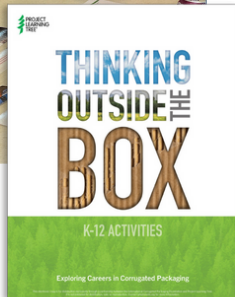
# Increase Industry Awareness



## ICPF Releases New Resources & Progresses Partnership with Project Learning Tree

### Customized Activity Collection “Thinking Outside the Box” Released in May 2025

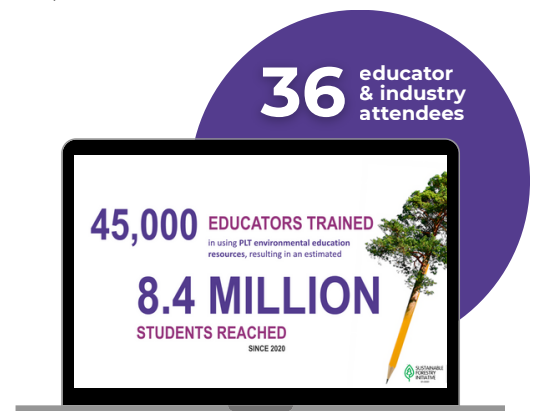
On March 8, 2025, ICPF joined forces with Project Learning Tree (PLT) team members to host an exclusive, free professional development opportunity for educators in South Carolina to learn more about how to leverage PLT & ICPF-sponsored resources in the classroom. During the workshop, we were thrilled to share the very first copies of our new activity collection, *Thinking Outside the Box: Exploring Careers in Corrugated Packaging*, developed in partnership between ICPF and PLT and designed for educators working with youth in grades K-12. The collection includes six hands-on environmental education lessons aligned with academic standards. To date, 83 education professionals have received training on how to bring the resource and implementation toolkit into their classrooms. Through ICPF’s engagement with PLT coordinators and environmental educators, as well as a panel and presentation at the Sustainable Forestry Initiative Conference (SFI) annual conference, PLT estimates the collaboration has reached an audience of 7,000 students.



ICPF Attends Annual Project Learning Tree Conference in Clemson, South Carolina



Caitlin Salaverria Shares Partnership Update at Annual SFI Conference in Minnesota



Project Learning Tree Offers Webinar Opportunity for ICPF Partners

## ICPF & PLT Create Corrugated Career Fact Sheets

In addition to hands-on, customizable activities for K-12 classrooms, “Thinking Outside the Box” also includes various “Career Corners” designed to introduce students to a diverse range of careers in the corrugated packaging industry. With input from industry professionals, ICPF and PLT have also developed nine distinct “Career Fact Sheets” that outline necessary qualifications, future hiring demand, salary ranges, and more information about careers in corrugated. These resources complement ICPF’s activity collection, are integrated into PLT’s national career exploration platform, and have also been published on ICPF’s website.



Environmental Health & Safety Manager

[Learn More](#)





# Increase Industry Awareness



## ICPF Hosts Student Webinar Opportunity

### *Packaging Your Potential from First Interview to First Year: Insider Tips to Finding Success in a Career in Packaging*

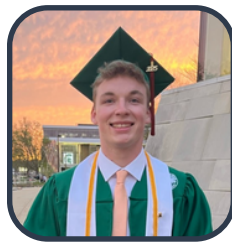
On November 6, 2025, ICPF offered its latest webinar opportunity designed for current undergraduate students, enrolled in packaging programs or pursuing a related degree. The webinar, moderated by ICPF staff, showcased a panel of young career professionals in the corrugated packaging industry and was attended by students and faculty from eight universities: Cal Poly, Clemson University, Indiana State University, Michigan State University, North Carolina State University, Pittsburg State University, Rochester Institute of Technology, and Virginia Tech. The panelists, **Nick Fields from Pratt Industries, Gabby Marino from Peachtree Packaging & Display, and Grant Weber from Onyx Packaging**, discussed their tips for landing a job in the corrugated packaging industry and finding success in your first year. They offered insight on the value of internships, the most important soft skills and technical skills to bring to work on day one, how to take advantage of growth opportunities, and the elements of our industry's culture that resonate with them the most. Attendees were also able ask questions of the panelists during a live Q&A session and ICPF shared a recording of the webinar with its partners to use in packaging curriculum or recruitment efforts.



**Nick Fields**  
Pratt Industries



**Gabby Marino**  
Peachtree Packaging



**Grant Weber**  
Onyx Packaging



**50**  
student  
registrants

## Career Pages Go Live on [www.careersincorrugated.com](http://www.careersincorrugated.com)

Over the course of the year, ICPF promoted its newly developed Career Pages, available for free on the foundation's website and designed to elevate existing career opportunities across the industry. The new landing page, **Find a Career in Corrugated**, advertises hundreds of open jobs from ICPF's pledging Corporate Partners in four distinct U.S. regions via dynamic LinkedIn or Indeed profile listings. Job seekers can now begin an application directly on ICPF's website.



## ICPF Releases New Employer Toolkits

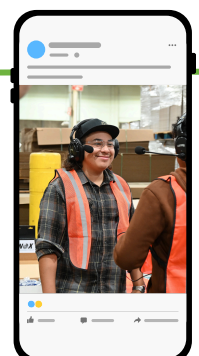
At the start of the year, ICPF added to its collection of Employer Toolkits with two new additions: **Attend a Local Career Fair** and **Visit a Local Middle/High School**. Both resources include step-by-step activity instructions, industry-wide promotional materials, and sample communications to jump start connections with schools in your community.



## Continued Connectivity with ICPF Partners

ICPF continued to improve connectivity with the foundation's partners, raise awareness, and collect input from stakeholders through monthly newsletters, communications, and annual value surveys.

“We love the relationship that we have with ICPF. We value what ICPF does for all programs very much and appreciate your effort to keep us connected to the corrugated industry.”



# Initiate Outreach Efforts



## Project Learning Tree Hosts Professional Development Workshops for Educators in Arkansas and Pennsylvania

As part of ICPF's two year partnership agreement with Project Learning Tree (PLT), ICPF and PLT spent time in 2025 curating professional development experiences for educators and career counselors who work directly with students in all stages of the career development and planning process. Education professionals in Arkansas and Pennsylvania took part in the first two workshops in a series of events that will take place across four states, including Georgia and Ohio, in 2026. In total, **50** educators received training on how to implement *Thinking Outside the Box* and other corrugated packaging career resources into their classroom lessons and a variety of learning environments. Overall, **86%** of participants gained confidence in leading green career exploration across all grade levels. Both workshops were hosted at International Paper corrugated plants where attendees were able to tour the facility.

**50**  
educators trained 



Over 20 local educators gather for a PLT professional development workshop at an International Paper facility in Arkansas.

“ This could very well be the most important issue to teach future generations.

**100%**  
of participants  
reported improved  
knowledge of green  
careers in the industry

**82%**  
of participants said they  
plan to use PLT resources  
with young people in the  
next 6 months

## ICPF Serves as Diamond Sponsor at Pack Jam

This April, ICPF was honored to attend the annual student-led "Packaging Jamboree" hosted at the Rochester Institute of Technology as this year's Diamond Sponsor. In this role, the ICPF team was able to connect with approximately 150 students from packaging programs across the U.S. and Canada. As the nation's only student-led packaging conference, Pack Jam presents a valuable opportunity to educate and forge connections with our future workforce. ICPF shared key components of the industry's culture through a keynote presentation addressing the benefits of choosing a sustainable career in the corrugated packaging industry. The ICPF team also served as judges in the annual student design competition and awarded prizes to 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place teams. During the career fair, students were introduced

to key ICPF resources, such as the newly developed Career Pages on ICPF's website, as well as career pathway information for undergraduate and graduate students. ICPF also sponsored student travel to the event through grants to both Clemson University and Virginia Tech.

**RIT**  
Rochester  
Institute of  
Technology





# Initiate Outreach Efforts



## ICPF & Pratt Industries Sponsor Corrugated Student Gift at Clemson's FRESH Food, Packaging & Sustainability Summit

ICPF was honored to attend the 2025 Clemson FRESH Food, Packaging & Sustainability Summit in March 2025 alongside thought leaders from across packaging and academia. ICPF and Pratt Industries co-sponsored the conference's student project, which highlighted the creativity, innovation, and dedication of Clemson's packaging students — all with a touch of school spirit. The theme of this year's summit was "Creating Value While Advancing Sustainability" and featured presentations from organizational leaders at Charter Next Generation, BMW, Target, and more about how to drive sustainability alongside best practices in business.



## ICPF Sponsors Student Engagement Opportunities

### "Thinking Outside the Box" Featured at Youth Summer Camp in SC



In June, ICPF's newly released PLT activity collection made waves at the Watershed Ecology Center's "Camp Discover Your Future" in Spartanburg, South Carolina. Through ICPF's sponsorship, student campers in grades 4-6 learned how the boxes they see every day are related to the environment and were also exposed to future careers in the corrugated packaging industry.

### ICPF Supports Flexographic Printing Competition for High School/College Students



ICPF continued its partnership with the Phoenix Challenge Foundation in 2025 as a sponsor of the annual flexographic printing competition for high school and college students. In addition to attending the competition, ICPF also connected with high school printing teachers to share the value of careers in corrugated, as well as ICPF resources and partnership opportunities designed for educators.

CA

*Cal Poly's PolyPack Club Visits Corrugated Packaging Facilities in California*



International Paper



GOLDENWEST  
PACKAGING GROUP



CAL POLY

## UNIVERSITY PARTNERS



*ICPF Sponsors STEAM Youth Camp at University of Wisconsin-Stout to Fund Visit to Great Northern Corporation*



University of  
Wisconsin-Stout  
Wisconsin's Polytechnic University

# Evaluate Partnership Opportunities



## ICPF Partners with SkillsUSA to Reach High School Students & Educators

In 2025, ICPF made significant progress in building its partnership with SkillsUSA, a nationwide career and technical student organization that serves more than 442,000 middle school, high school and college students in trade, technical, and career preparation programs across the United States. In addition to attending both regional and national events to connect with students and other industry associations, ICPF became a SkillsUSA Silver Sponsor. This agreement highlights annual targeted communications plans and a talent pipeline development proposal set to begin in 2026. Through direct email campaigns to career technical education professionals and fostering engagement opportunities between industry partners and SkillsUSA chapters, this partnership is a low-barrier, high-impact approach that leverages existing networks to engage students early and build sustainable pipelines of skilled talent.



# 4,017

***SkillsUSA Illinois State  
Championships in Peoria, IL***

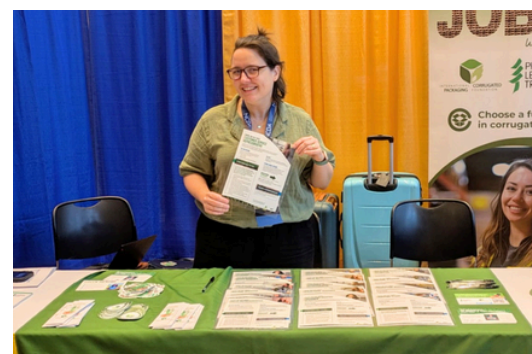
***National SkillsUSA  
Conference in Atlanta, GA***

CTE teachers reached  
through ICPF's Fall 2025  
Communications Campaign

## ICPF Exhibits and Presents at National Career Development Association (NCDA) Conference with Project Learning Tree to Promote Green Jobs

SFI and ICPF co-presented at the 2025 National Career Development Association (NCDA) Conference in June of this year. The joint session showcased Project Learning Tree's (PLT) green career pathways resources, including the newly released *Thinking Outside the Box* activity collection and accompanying career factsheets. In addition, SFI and ICPF co-hosted a well-attended exhibit booth that featured both print and digital materials, driving strong engagement from attendees.

With approximately 1,000 career development professionals in attendance—including school and college counselors, counselor educators, workforce specialists, and state-level leaders—the conference offered a high-impact opportunity to elevate awareness of forest and packaging-related career pathways. This collaboration advanced key outreach goals under the ICPF agreement, strengthened visibility for both organizations, and generated presentation content that can be repurposed for future engagement opportunities.





# Evaluate Partnership Opportunities



## ICPF Collaborates with Corporate Partners to Create New Box Plant Feature Videos

In 2025, ICPF grew its library of box plant feature videos to include Hood Container in Atlanta, GA and Chicago, IL and Vanguard Packaging in Kansas City, MO. Each video offers a look inside corrugated packaging facilities across the U.S., shares important aspects of company culture, and showcases current employee testimonials.

If your company is interested in working with ICPF to create a feature video to expand your recruitment toolbox, get in touch with ICPF's Outreach and Marketing Manager Alex LeMoine at [alemoine@icpfbox.org](mailto:alemoine@icpfbox.org).



Welcome to Hood Container



ICPF's **Take a Plant Tour** video series has gained **7,400+ views** since 2024!



Welcome to Vanguard Packaging

## ICPF and the Manufacturing Institute Join Forces for #MFGDay25



On October 3, 2025, ICPF joined the Manufacturing Institute, the workforce development and education affiliate of the National Association of Manufacturers, to celebrate Manufacturing Day 2025 as a Bronze Sponsor. This was ICPF's second consecutive year supporting MFG Day and its efforts to invite students, parents, educators, and community leaders to learn more about modern manufacturing careers while engaging with employers in their community.

## ICPF's Talent Acquisition Committee Develops Industry-Wide Workforce Index Survey to be Released in 2026

ICPF's Talent Acquisition Committee, a group made up of 16 hiring and human resources leaders in the corrugated packaging industry, helped with the development of a new industry-wide Workforce Index Survey. This survey, set to be distributed in early 2026, is intended to collect valuable feedback about industry trends in hiring, recruitment, and retention. The results will be de-identified and shared with ICPF partners in order to better benchmark our efforts and monitor hiring successes and weakness throughout the industry at large.

