

2024-2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**CONSTRUCTION ADVANCEMENT
FOUNDATION OF
NORTHWEST INDIANA**



The Construction Advancement Foundation (CAF) is dedicated to advancing the Northwest Indiana construction industry by fostering excellence in safety, professional development, and workforce development. Through strategic collaboration and advocacy, we work to strengthen the economic environment and influence public policies to benefit our contributors and the broader community.

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR MESSAGE



As we reflect on 2024, I am proud to say that the Construction Advancement Foundation (CAF) remains at the forefront of addressing the most pressing challenges facing our industry. One of the biggest trends we continue to see is the need to attract and retain a skilled workforce. As a result, we have honed our focus on initiatives aimed at workforce development, professional growth, and safety, ensuring that the construction industry in Northwest Indiana is well-prepared for the future.

Over the past year, CAF has worked tirelessly to develop programs that directly address these challenges. From launching hands-on events like the Skilled Trades Days to updating the We Build Northwest Indiana website, we are actively working to raise awareness of career opportunities in the construction industry. The website, which launched in November 2024, will serve as a key resource for young folks exploring careers in both the skilled trades and management roles.

We have also expanded our efforts to promote diversity through the Women in Construction initiative, which seeks to raise the visibility of women's contributions to the industry and develop recruitment strategies to bring more women into the field.

In alignment with our mission to strengthen and enhance the construction workforce, we've been able to provide impactful programs such as the Construction Management Certificate (CMC) Program and the Construction Site Safety Certificate (CSSC) Program, both of which help elevate safety and construction leadership standards across our region.

In addition, CAF's partnerships with organizations such as NWIBRT have allowed us to collaborate on significant events like the annual Charity Golf Outing, which raised \$40,000 for local charities, and the CAF/NWIBRT Awards Banquet, where we celebrated excellence in safety and construction performance. These events not only foster a sense of community but also reinforce our commitment to the continuous improvement of our industry. Looking ahead, we are excited about our plans for 2025, including the renovation of the CAF training facility, which will incorporate new technology to enhance our professional development programs and ensure our facilities meet the growing demands of our contributors.

At CAF, we understand the importance of working together with our partners to advance the construction industry. By continuing to invest in workforce development, safety, and collaboration, we are helping to build a brighter future for Northwest Indiana's construction industry.

Thank you for your continued support as we work to meet these goals and grow our influence in the region.

Sincerely,
Dewey Pearman
Executive Director
Construction Advancement Foundation

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

2023/2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The CAF Board of Directors is comprised of seasoned professionals representing a diverse range of construction firms, spanning the commercial, industrial, institutional, heavy civil, and public works sectors. These dedicated individuals bring a wealth of experience and insights to the table, ensuring that CAF's initiatives align with the evolving needs and challenges of the construction industry.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

CHAIR

Jim Faroh
Barton Malow Company

SECRETARY/TREASURER

Joseph Coar
Tonn & Blank Const.

VICE CHAIR

Nicholas Larson
Larson-Danielson Const. Co., Inc.

PAST CHAIR

Jeffrey L. Swan

MEMBERS

Michael Keneson
BMW Constructors, Inc.

Douglas Robinson
JenStar Asphalt, LLC

Alex Lulinski
Berglund Construction

Anthony Pangere
Pangere Corporation

Ed Kocsis
Central Rent-A-Crane

Claude Powers
Powers & Sons Construction Co., Inc.

Sam Tipton
Chicago Steel Construction, LLC

Daniel Sopczak
Superior Construction Co., Inc.

Kurt Schmiegel
DLZ Industrial, LLC

John Wysocky
Thatcher Foundations Inc.

Matthew Gariup
Gariup Construction Co., Inc.

A. Scott Vidimos
Vidimos Inc.

Mark Grimmer
Grimmer Construction. Inc.

William Hasse III
Hasse Construction Co., Inc.

TRUSTEE EMERITUS

Mark J. Stern
Gary Kebert

MEET OUR TEAM



Dewey Pearman Executive Director

Dewey Pearman has served as the Executive Director of the Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana since 1995. In his role at the CAF, Dewey oversees the operations of the Foundation and advocates to impact policies that affect the professional construction and maintenance industry in Northwest Indiana.



James J. Arendas, PhD Health & Safety Director

Doctor James J. Arendas has served as the Environmental Safety and Health Director for the Construction Advancement Foundation (CAF) since 1998. In his role at the CAF he oversees safety education for the industry. He is a successful grant writer and has brought millions of dollars of outside funding to advance safety education for contractors. Mr. Arendas developed partnerships with the OSHA Training Institute through the Rocky Mountain Education Center to provide OSHA Outreach Training. He also acts as an occupational safety resource to contributing contractors of the CAF. Dr. Arendas also sits Purdue's Construction Management and Engineering Technologies Industrial Advisory Committee and the Advisory Committee of Occupational Safety.



Kevin Comerford Professional Development Director

Kevin Comerford is responsible for developing the professional development curriculum for CAF contractors, including the highly regarded Construction Management Certificate (CMC) program. He is actively involved in workforce development initiatives, working closely with local high schools and universities to promote career pathways in the Northwest Indiana construction industry. Kevin also spearheaded the creation of the We Build Northwest Indiana website (www.webuildnwi.com), a valuable resource for individuals interested in pursuing careers in construction."



Kim Coulter
Industry Fund Manager/
Accounts Receivable



Melody Weisberg
Office Manager



Tabitha Refbord
Executive Administrative
Assistant

WHO WE ARE

Advancing the Professional Construction Industry of Northwest Indiana

Founded in 1967, the Construction Advancement Foundation of Northwest Indiana, Inc (CAF) is a regional construction industry trade association with over 500 affiliated contractor companies. The CAF serves professional contractors working in Lake, Porter, La Porte, Newton, Starke, and Jasper Counties in Indiana. Contractors affiliated with the CAF work primarily in the industrial, commercial, public works, and institutional markets of the construction industry. The mission of the CAF is to serve the professional construction industry of Northwest Indiana by enhancing quality through safety, professional development, cooperation, and by advancing the economic environment and public policies which affect CAF contributors. To fulfill this mission, the CAF works on a broad range of objectives which are as follows:

OBJECTIVES

1. Professional Development – Leadership Development and Education
2. Workforce Development
3. Environmental Health & Safety
4. Member Communications and Development
5. Community Engagement
6. Scholarship Program
7. Legislative Advocacy
8. Labor-Management Relations

CAF Campus and Facilities

CAF Facilities, located in Portage, Indiana, are designed to support training, collaboration, and community initiatives in the construction industry. The premises feature two buildings. The original building, opened in 2000, includes offices for CAF staff, meeting rooms, and training classrooms, with a portion leased to the Building Construction Resource Center (BCRC). The Safety Training Institute, opened in 2013, offers a flexible space tailored for hands-on training and demonstrations. Its unique design includes features that accommodate specialized training needs, enabling real-world applications. Additionally, the building provides a large classroom, kitchen, and meeting room. CAF proudly offers contractors, labor organizations, community partners, and local not-for-profits the use of these facilities at no cost, fostering opportunities for education, skill development, and collaboration.

OBJECTIVE 1

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

LEADERSHIP, DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION

The CAF provides a diverse range of construction-focused professional development programs tailored to improve individual performance and drive business growth. Our construction courses offer individuals access to cutting-edge training and education while maintaining affordability.



CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT CERTIFICATE (CMC) PROGRAM

The CMC Program is flexible professional development program designed to prepare construction management professionals to address the evolving challenges in the industry. It helps participants achieve personal growth, improve team interaction, enhance production efficiency, and deepen client engagement.



CMC Course offerings include:

- Planning and Scheduling for Construction Teams
- Construction Leadership
- Estimating and Bidding Strategies
- Building a Successful Team for a Complicated Project
- Construction Mentoring
- Controlling Costs on Construction Projects
- Crucial Conversations & Negotiating Strategies for Contractors
- Scope Control & Change Order Management
- Best Practices in Schedule Risk Management
- Personal Success & Time Management
- Navigating Construction Law for Project Leaders

IN 2024, 240 ATTENDEES PARTICIPATED IN CMC TRAINING COURSES



ADVANCING CONSTRUCTION SKILLS WITH READI FUNDING

CAF, in partnership with the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI), **secured a \$9,280.40 Regional Economic Acceleration and Development Initiative (READI) upskill grant**. The funds were used to provide training for 75 construction employees from 21 organizations, focusing on construction management, site safety, and first aid/CPR.

2024 BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

Held on November 1st, 2024, this program was jointly sponsored by the CAF and the Northwest Indiana Business Roundtable (NWIBRT). **The event had 273 registrants and provided insights into business and economic trends in the construction industry.**

OBJECTIVE 2

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

HANDS-ON CONSTRUCTION AND SKILLED TRADES DAYS

CAF partnered with the Center of Workforce Innovations (CWI) to sponsor two "Hands-on Construction and Skilled Trades Days." These events were aimed at high school students interested in careers in the skilled trades. Attendees had the opportunity to engage in hands-on activities with apprentices and training instructors from various Joint Apprenticeship Training Centers (JATCs).

- The Porter County event took place on September 4th, 2024, at the Porter County Expo Center, with **626 participants from 16 different high schools participating.**
- The Lake County event occurred on November 19, 2024, during National Apprenticeship Week, at the Lake County Fairgrounds' Industrial Building, drawing **1,532 students from 31 different high schools. Additionally, there were 97 out-of-school youth who attended**



INDUSTRY TOUR FOR HIGH SCHOOL ADVISORS

On April 4, 2024, the CAF partnered with CWI and organized a tour for high school educators and career advisors, who learned about construction career opportunities, including college and skilled trade pathways. The tour included visits to the Carpenters and Ironworkers JATCs, where advisors gained insight into apprenticeship programs. The event, supported by the Teamsters Local 142 who provided transportation, concluded with a visit to the SR 249 bridge project near the Port of Indiana, led by Superior Construction.



HIGH SCHOOL OUTREACH

Throughout 2024, CAF reached out to dozens of high schools, providing construction career presentations, jobsite visits, and JATC tours, with a focus on building trade programs. Schools engaged include: Valparaiso, Chesterton, Michigan City, La Porte, Lowell, Hammond, Portage, Crown Point, Kankakee Valley, Merrillville, Hobart, Griffith, Hammond Area Career Center, and the Porter County Career Center. CAF also provided career presentations for groups such as the Indiana Plan, the Indiana Department of Corrections Work Release Program in South Bend, and the Next Gen Youth Expo.

OBJECTIVE 2 – CONTINUED

WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

WeBuild NORTHWEST INDIANA WEBSITE

The CAF updated the "We Build Northwest Indiana" website, which provides essential information about construction careers and how to apply for apprenticeship programs. The revamped website launched in November 2024. www.webuildnwi.com



WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION (WIC) INITIATIVE

As part of CAF's strategic planning efforts, a new initiative, Women in Construction, was launched to attract more women to careers in the construction industry. Led by female leaders, this group will organize periodic educational and networking events to support and promote women in the field.



CIVIL CONSTRUCTION PROGRAM

In the fall 2024, CAF played an instrumental role in helping to launch Northwest Indiana's first Civil Construction program, a Career and Technical Education (CTE) initiative through a partnership between Porter County Career Center and the Duneland School Corporation. The program focuses on teaching road and bridge construction techniques, including formwork, trenching, concrete work, heavy equipment operation, and material testing. The classroom for the program is located at a designated 'sandbox' in Sunset Hill County Park, where students learn hands-on skills such as operating skid steers, mini-excavators, and dozers.

PURDUE NORTHWEST (PNW) BACHELOR'S DEGREE PATHWAY



CAF played a key role in developing the Purdue Northwest (PNW) Bachelor's Degree Pathway, designed specifically for skilled tradespeople seeking to advance into leadership roles within the construction industry. This program provides a pathway for men and women who have earned their associate degree from Ivy Tech Community College by completing a qualified apprenticeship program, granting them 48 credit hours toward the bachelor's degree in Construction Project Leadership.

CONSORTIUM AMERICA GRANT

CAF was awarded a \$15,000 grant from Consortium America. In collaboration with the Indiana Plan, CAF used the funds to provide pre-apprenticeship training for minority and disadvantaged populations, further diversifying and strengthening the construction workforce pipeline.

MENTORING PROGRAM

CAF partnered with seniors at Morgan Township High School on a mentoring initiative designed to assist students with their senior project. The goal of the project was to raise awareness of construction careers and provide students with clear pathways to explore opportunities in the skilled trades. Through this program, students interested in construction learned how to access resources, apprenticeship programs, and educational options that could help them pursue a career in the industry.

OBJECTIVE 3

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

CAF remains committed to advancing health and safety standards in the Northwest Indiana construction industry through comprehensive training programs. In partnership with industry organizations and under the guidance of OSHA, CAF provides essential safety education to help construction professionals navigate the complexities of compliance and risk management on job sites. These programs ensure workers are equipped to maintain the highest standards of safety across a variety of industries, including petrochemical, steel, power generation, commercial, and heavy civil construction.

**2024
TRAINING BY
THE NUMBERS**



CAF CONSTRUCTION SITE SAFETY CERTIFICATE (CSSC) PROGRAM

The CSSC program, developed in cooperation with the Northwest Indiana Business Roundtable (NWIBRT) and with the support of OSHA’s Susan Harwood grant, provides 64 hours of comprehensive safety training over 8 courses. This program is designed to qualify men and women in the construction industry for safety roles across a variety of job environments, including petrochemical, steel production facilities, power generation, commercial, and heavy civil construction sites. Offered quarterly, the CSSC program has completed over 50 cycles and trained thousands of individuals, equipping them with the skills needed to enhance safety standards on job sites throughout the region.



SUSAN HARWOOD GRANT PROGRAM

CAF was awarded another Susan Harwood grant to develop a specialized training program in cooperation with the Northwest Indiana Business Roundtable (NWIBRT). The program focuses on two critical components: mental health and suicide prevention in the construction industry, and a "train the trainer" model to equip workers to teach others about these topics. With a suicide rate five times higher than the OSHA fatality rate, this training addresses a significant challenge in the industry. CAF has exceeded its goal of training 350 individuals during the grant period, demonstrating the program's effectiveness and reach.

OBJECTIVE 3 – CONTINUED

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH & SAFETY

OSHA COMPLIANCE ASSISTANCE

The CAF Health and Safety Committee regularly provides updates to the Northwest Indiana Contractors Association, CAF contributors, and NWIBRT on OSHA compliance, including new and proposed standard changes. This ensures the local construction industry stays informed about the latest regulatory requirements. In addition, the CAF Director of Health and Safety offers direct support to contractors, helping them navigate site safety compliance, OSHA regulations, and citation issues.



SPECIALIZED SAFETY TRAINING PROGRAMS

CAF also offers specialized safety training at the request of contractors or NWIBRT. These sessions cover a wide range of topics, such as new OSHA standards, Hazardous Waste Operations, First Aid and CPR, Asbestos Awareness, Lead in Construction, Fire Safety, and more. On average, CAF holds approximately 60 safety courses per calendar year, training roughly 800 registrants. This targeted safety education helps contractors meet specific training needs and stay compliant with evolving safety standards.



This structure highlights the broad scope of CAF's Environmental Health and Safety efforts, from foundational certification programs to mental health initiatives and specialized contractor support. Let me know if you need any adjustments!

OBJECTIVE 4

MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS AND DEVELOPMENT

Throughout 2024, the CAF organized several key events to promote networking, celebrate achievements, and support charitable causes in the construction industry.

CAF/NWIBRT Awards Banquet (May 2024):

In partnership with NWIBRT, the CAF/NWIBRT Awards Banquet recognized excellence in regional construction, celebrating top company performances in safety and project execution. The banquet, attended by over six hundred area construction industry leaders, honored outstanding achievements with awards in several categories, including Contractor of the Year, Project of the Year, and Excellence in Professional Development.



Chicago River Cruise (September 2024):

This event brought together contractors, construction users, labor leaders, and industry partners for a day of recreation and networking. The river cruise provided a relaxed atmosphere for building professional relationships while enjoying the scenic views of downtown Chicago.

NWIBRT Hard Hat Charity Golf Outing (September 2024):

In collaboration with NWIBRT and the Northwest Indiana Building Trades, CAF hosted the annual Hard Hat Golf Outing, raising \$40,000 for charity. The proceeds were distributed to four organizations: Tradewinds Services, Goodwill Industries, Meals on Wheels, and the Pink Ribbon Society. This event was a successful blend of recreational fun and charitable giving.

CAF Annual Holiday Gathering (December 2024):

CAF's holiday gathering, attended by over 200 contractors, construction users, labor leaders, industry partners, and local elected officials, provided a festive environment for attendees to network and celebrate the year's achievements. The event highlighted CAF's role in fostering collaboration within the construction community.

OBJECTIVE 5

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Organizations CAF Staff Serve:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Northwest Indiana Business Roundtable (NWIBRT)• Northwest Indiana Forum• Regional Development Authority (RDA)• Northwest Indiana Workforce Board• Indiana Plan• Indiana Building Contractors Alliance• Urban League of Northwest Indiana• Challenger Learning Center• Portage Economic Development Corporation (EDC)• American Heart Association | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purdue Northwest (PNW) Dean's Executive Council• Purdue Northwest (PNW) Construction Science Advisory Board• Ivy Tech Building Construction Management Advisory Committee• Duneland High School Building Trades Advisory Committee• Porter County Career Center Civil Construction Advisory Committee• A.K. Smith Career Center Building Trades Advisory Committee• Crown Point High School Building Trades Advisory Committee• Merrillville High School Building Trades Advisory Committee• Michigan City Chamber of Commerce Education Committee |
|---|--|

10 These partnerships reflect CAF's ongoing commitment to the broader Northwest Indiana community and its dedication to supporting education, workforce development, and industry growth through collaboration.

OBJECTIVE 6

SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM



CAF is dedicated to supporting the education and career advancement of individuals pursuing careers in the construction industry. Through a range of scholarships, CAF provides financial assistance to high school seniors, skilled tradespeople, and top-performing students in construction trades programs. These scholarships aim to reduce the financial burden of education and help recipients take the next steps toward successful careers in construction.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

CAF regularly awards scholarships to high school seniors pursuing degrees in construction-related fields such as construction management, civil engineering, mechanical engineering, electrical engineering, and architectural engineering. In 2024, **CAF awarded three scholarships totaling \$15,000 to deserving students.**

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR SKILLED TRADESPEOPLE

CAF is proud to support skilled tradespeople advancing their careers through the Purdue Northwest (PNW) bachelor's degree pathway in Project Leadership by offering dedicated scholarship opportunities. Each year, **CAF allocates \$10,000 in scholarship funding to assist tradespeople pursuing leadership roles** in the construction industry, helping them achieve their professional development goals.

SCHOLARSHIPS FOR HIGH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION TRADES PROGRAMS

CAF also recognizes top-performing students in high school construction trades programs who are pursuing careers in the skilled trades. In 2024, **CAF awarded \$4,000 in scholarships, distributed as 8 individual \$500 gift cards** for Blue Collar Supply Company. One recipient from each of the following high schools received the award: Chesterton High School, Porter County Career Center, AK Smith Career Center, Crown Point High School, Merrillville High School, Lowell High School, Kankakee Valley High School, and Hammond Area Career Center. With an additional \$100 contribution from Blue Collar Supply Company, these gift cards help students purchase essential tools, work boots, gloves, and construction apparel as they prepare to enter the workforce.

NWICA CONTRIBUTION



CAF's scholarship programs received an important contribution from the **Northwest Indiana Contractors Association (NWICA), which donated \$10,000 to further support students pursuing education in the construction industry.** This contribution allows CAF to provide more assistance to students, helping them offset the costs of college and career preparation.

OBJECTIVE 7

LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY

LEADING THE INDUSTRY



Recognizing that contractor operations and profitability are significantly influenced by public policy decisions at every level of government, the CAF maintains a robust advocacy program to ensure the voice of Northwest Indiana contractors is represented during the decision-making process. By working closely with elected and appointed officials at the state, local, and federal levels, the CAF provides valuable information and perspectives to help policymakers understand the impact of legislative and regulatory changes on contractors and their employees. Key areas of focus include labor law, environmental and safety regulations, taxation, infrastructure funding, economic and community development, energy policy, and workforce development.

OBJECTIVE 8

LABOR-MANAGEMENT RELATIONS



PARTNERSHIP

The Construction Advancement Foundation (CAF) fosters positive labor/management relations in Northwest Indiana by serving as a neutral platform for collaboration and dialogue, supporting collective bargaining through administrative assistance, and providing education on labor-related topics such as employment law, grievance procedures, and negotiations. CAF advocates for industry stability through engagement with policymakers and promotes workforce development to address labor shortages and align skills with industry needs. By organizing joint events and networking opportunities, CAF builds rapport between stakeholders, creating a spirit of partnership. Through these initiatives, CAF enhances cooperation, reduces conflict, and strengthens the construction industry's overall success.

KEY INITIATIVES

LOOKING BACK: KEY INITIATIVES OF 2024

STRATEGIC PLANNING FOR THE FUTURE

In January 2024, the CAF and its Board of Directors held a strategic planning session to chart the organization's path forward. The purpose of this session was to align on long-term goals and develop initiatives to strengthen our impact. Key outcomes from this session included the development of a 'Women in Construction' program aimed at attracting and retaining women in the construction industry, the launch of a Future Leaders program to cultivate the next generation of industry leaders, plans to revamp the We Build Northwest Indiana website, and the creation of an organizational succession plan to ensure continuity and growth.

FACILITY ENHANCEMENTS

Recognizing the growing needs of the Building Construction Resource Center (BCRC), the CAF completed a 1,325-square-foot addition to its facility in 2024 to accommodate its expanding staff. Alongside this addition, the CAF undertook critical facility and infrastructure improvements, including roof replacement and parking lot repaving.

LOOKING AHEAD: KEY INITIATIVES FOR EARLY 2025

MODERNIZING OUR FACILITIES

Early 2025 will mark the beginning of a complete remodel of the original CAF facility, which was constructed in 1999. This initiative is designed to modernize our space, enhance technological capabilities, and create flexible meeting spaces. These improvements will enable us to deliver cutting-edge training programs, provide exceptional service to our contributors and construction users, and offer state-of-the-art facilities for the surrounding community to conduct meetings and training sessions. This effort reinforces our commitment to being a leader in workforce development and construction professional development programming.





LET'S BUILD TOGETHER

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