



# Pilot Project

## SMC PACKAGING



**S**MC Packaging is a full-service provider of corrugated packaging, point-of-purchase displays, protective shipping cartons and ancillary packaging supplies—and a generous corporate Good Dads supporter for several years.

Human Resources estimates just under half of its male employees are fathers, and it became clear that committing to these father employees was crucial, said Sherrie Stine, HR manager at SMC.

In spring 2023, Good Dads hosted a pilot *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* course as an employee benefit at SMC. The result was an empowering, inspiring experience that men won't soon forget.

**SPRINGFIELD, MO** | Employees spanning departments and seniority at SMC Packaging gathered over lunch to attend the first of two *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* courses in Spring 2023. With Good Dads facilitators at the helm, the group built relationships and shared their experiences.

Bringing in trained facilitators from outside the company to lead the class was a “perfect dynamic,” said Steve Jett, designer and scheduling supervisor at SMC, who attended the class. “It allowed for a lot more comfort ... There were moments (in the class) when you are sharing, learning and growing. Without having the pressure of a supervisor in the room, (it) made it a lot more comfortable.”

Stine agreed. She said the company knew it was important to make preparations for class to be successful—but then to take a back seat so the team members have opportunities to share honestly in the moment.

“We try to really make it a situation where our team members can go in there and just put it all out,” Stine said.

SMC used a combination of flyers, an in-house texting system and promotional slideshows on TV screens to encourage sign-ups.

The class was chiefly impactful because Jett and many of his colleagues have very little exposure to how to be a good dad, Jett said.

He shared stories of his fraught relationship with his own father, who died when Jett was young. Other class participants opened a door to healing when they, too, shared their experiences of challenging relationships with their fathers. Class attendees included dads, fathers-to-be and father-figures.

“There’s a benefit to the Good Dads class, not just in how to be a good dad, but how to rectify some of the damage done by being in the presence of a father who wasn’t (a good dad),” Jett said. “And that was a huge deal for me.”

SMC provided lunch for each class, and attendees ate while they engaged in the course.

Hosting the class at lunchtime was a deliberate decision, Stine said. By paying dads to be there, providing food and engaging them, it sends a message that the company is investing in its employees.

“It says, *You value me outside of my*

*ability to do my job’ ... We’re showing them that they matter,”* Stine said.

The way Jett sees it, investment is a two-way street. For his employer to offer this opportunity, it shows employees that that they are valued. “Immediately I feel like I care about the company,” Jett said.

Jett says the course has direct applications to leadership, too. Not only are you better equipped to be a leader at home as a father, you can also apply what you learned to be a better leader in the workplace.

“We are investing in what that employee is going to become,” Stine said. “People matter.”

The course helped Jett realize discrepancies in his behavior at work and at home. It felt like he was two different people, he said, and he needed to confront the disconnect and bring those two people together.

“My co-workers think that I work really hard ... that I’m a good leader. And I’m not the same

person at home.” Jett said he needed to ask himself, *Why?* In the months after class concluded, Jett has since tried to redirect and adjust course.

“That’s been huge for me,” he said. “Every day I come to work, I put my best foot forward—and I need to do the same thing at home.”

When Jett took his workbooks from *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* home, he reviewed the material with his wife. He says the experience has strengthened their relationship as they work together to raise their now 2-year-old son.

He points to an exercise in the course’s second module being particularly impactful. The lesson asks its participants to evaluate and rank their stance on a series of values—like personal appearance, financial security, attaining higher education, etc.

Being able to identify one’s values, put words to it and compare the difference in values with his



**ABOVE |** Fathers discuss course questions and record answers in their participant guides. *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* is designed to forge a connection with any father, including step-dads, grandfathers and father figures, as they work to become the best role model and coach for their children in their lives.

## FUNDAMENTALS OF FATHERHOOD SESSIONS AT SMC PACKAGING

### FIRST SESSION SPRING 2023

60 minutes for class time

Meet weekly for 7 weeks

Combined 2 lessons in 1 class to cover all 8 modules

### SECOND SESSION FALL 2023

75 minutes for class time. Organizers also requested participants arrive 15 minutes early to grab lunch, find a seat and be ready to learn

Met for 4 weeks, followed by a 1-week break, then meet weekly for 4 remaining weeks

Covered 1 module per session

partner made a large impact, Jett says. It invited the couple to explore values they had not previously discussed, and to see them in a new way. Asking, “*What do we want for ourselves?*” and “*What do we want for our kids?*” was so rewarding.

“I think that it resonated with her, and she was always very happy to spend that time with me to go through (the workbooks) ... That was a big deal,” he said.

You need well-defined goals in order to meet them, Jett said.

After the spring session ended, SMC leaders sat down with course participants and asked for their honest feedback. The company shared those experiences with Good Dads and asked for input for how to move forward with the next session.

The pilot project was overwhelmingly successful, but

both SMC and Good Dads were learning along the way. After receiving thoughtful feedback, SMC leaders decided the next *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* class was a prime opportunity to make some changes for the better.

The second session at SMC packaging concluded in early November. The business plans to host a third *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* class, eyeing a start date in spring 2024.

One of the most important things an organization can do is to look beyond an employee as “just a worker,” Stine said. Each employee brings a lot to the table; they’re team members, they contribute to something larger than themselves.

To Jett, investing in employees results in a ripple effect that helps individuals, businesses and entire communities in the long run.

“If you’re dealing with family struggles at home, that’s going to follow you into work,” he said.

His advice for companies considering using *Fundamentals of Fatherhood* as a corporate benefit?

“If you want good workers, invest in them personally,” he said. “If you have a man at work who is struggling in his life at home, he is not going to be the worker he could be ... If you want to better your company, better the individuals.”

Discover how you can foster a workplace culture that encourages dads to be positively involved in the lives of their children:

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