



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 14th, 2026

Florida's Young Innovators Gather at USF for Statewide Invention Convention

K–12 students showcase original solutions, compete for national advancement, and help build Florida's future innovation pipeline

TAMPA, Fla. – The University of South Florida (USF) hosted the second annual Invention Convention Florida at the University of South Florida (ICF@USF) on April 11, 2026, bringing together 180 K–12 student inventors from across the state to showcase original solutions to real-world challenges.



Pictured here: Olivia Arreola, a kindergarten student from Gateway Charter Elementary School and 1st place winner for her project, Hairband Bumper, represents the youngest generation of innovators presenting at ICF@USF.

As the official state affiliate of the Henry Ford Museum's Invention Convention Worldwide, this year's ICF@USF featured student invention presentations, prototype demonstrations, judging, and an awards ceremony recognizing excellence across grade levels and categories. Participating

students earned their spot in ICF@USF by competing in school-, district-, or community-based invention competitions and STEM Fairs, or through nomination by an educator or mentor.

Students presented their inventions and prototypes to panels of judges composed of industry professionals, educators, and innovators, as they competed for recognition and the opportunity to advance to the Invention Convention U.S. Nationals in June at the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, MI.

“At the University of South Florida, we are deeply committed to strengthening Florida’s innovation ecosystem, and Invention Convention Florida is a powerful extension of that mission,” said Dr. Prasant Mohapatra, Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs at USF. “By engaging K–12 students in hands-on invention and problem-solving, we are building an early pipeline of talent that will drive our state’s future workforce, research, and economic growth. It is inspiring to see these students take their first steps as innovators on our campus.”

The student inventors tackled a wide range of challenges, from environmental sustainability to everyday usability, demonstrating the power of creativity and applied problem-solving at an early age.

“When students see that their ideas can solve real problems, everything changes,” said Elizabeth Dougherty, Eastern Regional Outreach Director at the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office (USPTO). “ICF@USF creates that moment, where students begin to think like inventors and recognize their ability to shape the world around them.”

Top honors were awarded across grade-level categories, with standout student inventors recognized for their creativity, impact, and problem-solving.

Top Honors

Best in Show – Elementary:

Hadley Gilcrest (Grade 3), *Porta Popper*



Pictured here: Best in Show winner Hadley Gilchrist with keynote speaker Elizabeth Dougherty, Regional Outreach Director, USPTO.

Best in Show – Secondary:

Yashika Garg, Sarayu Karedla, and Navita Mishra (Grade 10), NeuroPath: Machine Learning for Early Detection of Cognitive



Pictured here: Yashika Garg and Sarayu Karedla, two of three standout inventors honored with Best in Show at Invention Convention Florida for their project, NeuroPath: Machine Learning for Early Detection of Cognitive. The third team member, Navita Mishra, is not pictured.

[A full list of winners is available here.](#)

[About ICF@USF](#)

Building on the success of its inaugural year in 2025, ICF@USF continues to grow as a cornerstone statewide program supporting invention education, entrepreneurship, and workforce development in Florida, by providing more students across Florida with the opportunity to develop ideas, build prototypes, and engage in the innovation process from concept to presentation.

Invention Convention Florida at USF is the official Florida State Affiliate of [Invention Convention Worldwide](#), a program of The Henry Ford, and is part of a national network dedicated to fostering invention education and empowering the next generation of innovators.

ICF@USF is also a key outreach program of the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame, headquartered at USF.

For more information about Invention Convention Florida @ USF, visit <https://floridainvents.org/> or follow the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame on social media.

About the University of South Florida

The University of South Florida is a high-impact research university dedicated to student success and committed to community engagement, generating an annual economic impact of more than \$6 billion. With campuses in Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Sarasota-Manatee, USF serves approximately 50,000 students from nearly 150 countries. *U.S. News & World Report* has ranked USF among the nation's top 50 public universities for five consecutive years. In 2023, USF became the first public university in Florida in nearly 40 years to be invited to join the Association of American Universities, a prestigious group of leading research institutions. Through hundreds of millions of dollars in annual research activity and as one of the top universities in the world for securing new patents, USF is a leader in solving global problems and improving lives. USF is a member of the American Athletic Conference. Learn more at www.usf.edu.

About the Florida Inventors Hall of Fame

The Florida Inventors Hall of Fame (FIHF) recognizes and celebrates Florida inventors whose achievements have advanced the quality of life for Floridians, the state, and the nation. Founded in 2013 and housed in the USF Research Park in Tampa, FIHF was formally recognized by Florida Senate Resolution 1756 in 2014. FIHF catalyzes discovery and innovation across the state by honoring pioneering inventors, empowering future problem-solvers and change-makers, and advancing the legacy of American innovation through storytelling and educational outreach. Learn more at www.floridainvents.org.

About The Henry Ford

Located in Dearborn, Michigan, The Henry Ford is a globally recognized cultural destination that inspires people to learn from hands-on encounters with artifacts representing America's history of innovation and resourcefulness. Its venues include the Henry Ford Museum of American Innovation, Greenfield Village, Ford Rouge Factory Tour, Benson Ford Research Center, and Henry Ford Academy, a public charter high school. The institution also reaches national audiences through its television series *The Henry Ford's Innovation Nation* and Invention Convention Worldwide, a growing network that fosters invention education in K–12 students. Learn more at www.thehenryford.org.

Media Contacts

Jamie Spurrier

Florida Inventors Hall of Fame at USF
jspurrie@usf.edu

Lauren Parker

Florida Inventors Hall of Fame at USF

mcperson1@usf.edu