



The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

May, 2021

Plenty of fun still in store for PSRW



PUBLIC SERVICE
RECOGNITION WEEK

MAY 2-8, 2021

Public Service Recognition Week (PSRW) is underway!

PSRW kicked off with an insightful wellness webinar – and we’re just getting started!

This annual week is an opportunity to celebrate the work of public servants across the entirety of the Hoosier State. What better way to do that than by taking part in fun activities? There are certainly plenty of those to look forward to this week, so check out the list below. Don’t forget to highlight on social media how you’re marking the occasion. Just use #PSRW and #INAppreciation to share, and tag us (@soiemployees) on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Wednesday, May 5 – Professional Development Day

Take advantage of the state’s free professional development opportunities from LinkedIn Learning. With more than 10,000 on-demand courses, there are

ample opportunities for state workers to expand their knowledge – and advance their careers in the process. www.in.gov/spd/TrainingOpportunities.

Wednesday also features a **free virtual yoga class** from noon to 1 p.m. Watch at <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/82073193556>

Thursday, May 6 – Years of State Service Day/Plein Air Paint-Along

Wear the following colors that correspond with how long you’ve been serving Indiana:

Zero to two years – wear green

Three to five years – wear blue

Six to 10 years – wear purple

11 to 15 years – wear red

16 or more years – wear orange

RESCHEDULED: Plein Air Paint-Along

Monday rains moved the first-ever Public Service Recognition Week

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The Torch is published monthly by the Indiana State Personnel Department and is available online at <https://www.in.gov/spd/employee-resources/the-torch/>

Got a story?

Submit your story ideas to: spdcommunications@spd.in.gov

Social media



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Like [@SOIEmployees](https://www.facebook.com/SOIEmployees)



Follow [State of Indiana Employees](https://www.youtube.com/StateofIndianaEmployees)

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Plenty of fun still in store for PSRW

Plein Air Paint-Along to Thursday, May 6!

Join IOT's Jeffrey Lahr, artist extraordinaire, from noon to 1 p.m. on Robert D. Orr Plaza for an in-person painting event like no other! Bring along your own materials – paints, brushes, crayons, pencils, etc. – to be part of the fun, or stop by just to watch as Jeff paints an original scene of the government center and Statehouse surroundings.

This event will be live-streamed via [Microsoft Teams](#).

Questions? Email spdcommunications@spd.in.gov. You can read more about Jeff's artistic endeavors [here](#), and check out his [Facebook page, Art by Lahr](#).

Friday, May 7 – Hoosier Pride Day

From your favorite Hoosier sports team to your alma mater, your wardrobe probably includes

something that's distinctly Indiana. Wear it with pride this Thursday!

Saturday, May 8 – Visit a state park for free

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources is offering free admission to state employees at all state parks May 8. Just let the gate attendant know you are a state employee for free admission!

For up-to-date PSRW event info – and so much more – click [here](#).

How does the AOS Payroll Modernization Project impact you?

Did you know?

Payroll is a top priority for any business – state government is no exception – and our employees expect their paychecks to be right and on time, every time.

The new system launching early this fall upgrades the current, 30-plus-year-old system to provide easy, hassle-free service to all state employees and their managers. How does this impact you?

Did you know... how you complete your timesheet will drastically improve?

All time off or leave requests from employees will auto populate in their timesheet once approved by their manager using the new Absent Management system – no need for separate emails or paperwork to managers to approve time off requests.



Did you know... employees will be able to securely submit documents themselves to update their personal information?

The new system allows employees to self-submit direct deposit and tax forms, for example, to reduce unnecessary paper trails and wait time.

Did you know... you will be able to easily access your information on any mobile device?

No more frustrations when you need to submit your timesheet and you're nowhere near a computer! The new system scales your mobile device screen to allow you to easily access and update your personal information and timesheet.

Did you know training launches this summer? Until then we need all employees and managers to do their part to prepare!



Don't wait! Get started on health coaching today to earn your 2022 Premium Discount!

The last day to start your health coaching program to qualify for your 2022 Premium Discount is July 1.

Don't wait! This is an amazing opportunity to work with a qualified professional (such as certified health coach, register dietician, exercise physiologist, certified diabetes instructor, and more) to reach your wellness goals.

The health coach can help with any area of your health that you want to focus on like figuring out how to start or increase exercise, improve your diet, get more sleep, stay mindful, balance work and life, stop using tobacco, and meet your weight loss goals.

Call ActiveHealth at 855-202-4219 to get started. Completing four in-person or telephonic health coaching sessions by Sept. 30, 2021 is one way to earn a Premium Discount for 2022.

That translates to saving money on your health plan premium. It's a discount you can earn simply by

working with a health coach on wellness topics you choose!

And you don't have to stop there! You can choose to continue these sessions to keep moving forward on your wellness goals! You choose the aspect of your health you want to focus on, and your coach will help guide you. Your coach can help you stay motivated and on-track!

Fast, fun, and convenient, health coaches are available from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. ET Monday through Friday, and from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

ET each Saturday.

The July 1 deadline to start is fast approaching, so get started today! The deadline to complete this activity is Sept. 30.

Note: If your spouse is carried on your health plan, they will also have to complete one of the Premium Discount activities by the deadline in order for you to qualify for the 2022 Premium Discount.

Learn more at www.investinyourhealthindiana.com/activehealth

Start your journey to better health & earn a **2022 PREMIUM DISCOUNT**

Get started by July 1



Complete four health coaching sessions (in person or by phone).
You must complete all four sessions by Sept. 30.

Call (855) 202-4219 to schedule a session today!






ActiveHealth: The many benefits of physical activity

There are many types of physical activity, such as swimming, running, yoga, walking, dancing, and more!

When starting to become more active, it's important to make sure you pick an activity you enjoy. After all, it's easier to stick to doing something you love!

Did you know that the American Heart Association recommends 150 minutes or two and a half hours of moderate intensity physical activity per week for general health and disease prevention? Here are some of the many benefits of physical activity:

1. Physical activity makes you feel happy! Regular physical activity

can improve your mood.

2. Physical activity helps you manage your weight by supporting your metabolism and maintains muscle mass.
3. Being active helps strengthens muscles and bones.

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ActiveHealth: The many benefits of physical activity

- 4. An increased level of energy comes from physical activity.
- 5. You can reduce your risk of chronic diseases by being active.
- 6. Physical activity improves skin health. Moderate exercise can provide antioxidant protection and promote blood flow which can protect your skin and delay signs of aging.
- 7. Enhance memory and improved brain health can occur for those with active lifestyles because regular activity improves blood flow to the brain.
- 8. A physical activity routine can lead to better sleep, helping you feel more energized during the day.
- 9. Physical activity has been shown to improve pain associated with various conditions.

Remember: always consult with your doctor before starting any new physical activity and be sure to stop if you experience faintness,



dizziness, pain, or shortness of breath at any time while being physically active.

If you are looking for more information to help you on your health journey, be sure to visit MyActiveHealth. There is a wealth of information on this website regarding many different health and wellness topics. Other resources:

Health Coaching

- Call to schedule: 855-202-4219

Login to MyActiveHealth Engagement Platform

- www.myactivehealth.com/StateofIndiana

Download the ActiveHealth Mobile App

- Located in the app store and google play

Next ActiveHealth webinar focuses on mental health

Mental health. Emotional health. Behavioral health.

The names have changed over time. Whatever you call it, it's an important part of your overall well-being. In this month's ActiveHealth webinar, you can learn about what it is and how you can improve it.

'[Make your emotional health a priority](#)' takes place at 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., and 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, May 18.

Click [here](#) to see future monthly wellness webinar topics and register anytime.





Upcoming Webinar

INSPD hosting pre-retirement seminar May 11

Due to an overwhelmingly positive response, the Indiana State Personnel Department will host an additional pre-retirement seminar this month.

State employees are invited to attend the virtual seminar, which takes place from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tuesday, May 11.

This seminar is designed specifically to help state employees who may be planning their

retirement within the calendar year understand their options and benefits so they can navigate a successful transition into retirement. Community partners from INPRS, Secretary of State, Social Security, and more will be available to answer questions during the seminar.

Note: This seminar will be conducted virtually via Zoom and will not be recorded.



Indiana State
Personnel Department

Pre-registration is required, as space is limited.

You may register for the pre-retirement seminar by visiting <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/152607313583>. If you are unable to attend or if you have questions or concerns, contact Christie Hochstetler at nhochstetler@spd.in.gov.

Are your dependents eligible to be on your health insurance?

The state of Indiana has instituted a process to verify the eligibility of dependents enrolled or previously enrolled in the state's medical, dental, and vision plan(s).



This process helps keep plan costs down. During May, a selected group of employees will be contacted by email and mail to verify their dependent's eligibility. If you receive a letter regarding the audit, you will be expected to respond by the deadline.

Make sure that dependents enrolled on your plan(s) are eligible per the guidelines in the [Benefits Handbook](#).

Notify the Benefits Hotline if you know a dependent is no longer eligible for coverage, due to

divorce for example. Remember that it is your responsibility to remove ineligible dependents within a timely manner even if it is beyond the 30-day qualifying event period. Doing so will minimize recovery of claims.

Any questions concerning dependent verification audit should be directed to the SPD Benefits Hotline at 317-232-1167 (within 317 area code) or 877-248-0007 (toll free). Visit the [INSPD benefits website](#) for more information.

Workplace sexual harassment course opens this week

The Indiana State Personnel Department launches its 2021 Workplace Sexual Harassment Refresher course this week.

State of Indiana employees and contractors required to complete the training will be automatically enrolled via the Indiana Learning

SAP SuccessFactors 



Portal powered by SuccessFactors on May 4 and will have until May 24, 2021, to complete the training.

Visit the [Indiana Learning Portal](#) for more information.

Abe Martin Lodge's renovated east wing now open

The Indiana Department of Administration and Indiana State Parks have completed the renovation of the 54-room east wing of Abe Martin Lodge.

Rooms can now be reserved to serve as a base for great hiking, mountain biking and other outdoor activities in Brown County State Park, the lodge's location, and for exploring and shopping in nearby Nashville and surrounding Brown County communities.

The \$4.5 million project was funded as part of an appropriation of more than \$29 million in deferred maintenance dollars from the Indiana General Assembly.

"Under Governor Holcomb's leadership we are helping Hoosiers and our guests make memories for generations to come," said DNR Director Dan Bortner.

The Abe Martin project included the following renovations:

- All rooms were upgraded to include new flooring, sound-absorbing insulation, moisture-resistant drywall, paint, windows and window siding, light switches, and fixtures.
- New HVAC components were installed, and a new dedicated outdoor air system is now in place to bring fresh air into the rooms.
- Carpet was replaced with luxury vinyl plank flooring.

- All bathrooms were gutted and new tubs, toilets, vanities, exhaust fans, mirrors, fixtures, and wall/floor tile were installed. Water lines, supply lines, and mixing valves were also replaced.
- All rooms have new furnishings and large smart-screen televisions.
- Hallway lighting, emergency lighting, wallpaper, and carpet were replaced, walls were repainted, and new lighting and emergency lighting were installed in the stairwells.

The nearly 16,000-acre state park was established in 1929. The original lodge opened in 1932 and was named after Abe Martin, the fictional backwoods Brown County cartoon character created by humorist Kin Hubbard in the early 1900s. Since the lodge's initial construction, lodge rooms, family cabins, and cabin suites have been added to increase capacity. The east wing, formerly called the annex, opened in 1987. An indoor aquatic center, which provides a year-round attraction for families, opened in 2009.

The Abe Martin renovations join improvements made to the sleeping cabins and several guest rooms at Turkey Run Inn in 2020.

Rooms can be reserved at Abe Martin Lodge, Turkey Run Inn, or at any of the other six Indiana State Park Inns at IndianalInns.com or by calling 1-877-LODGES1.

Learn more about Brown County State Park at on.IN.gov/BrownCountySP.



Stay up to date with COVID-19 news

- [2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Indiana Department of Health](#)
- [Governor Eric J. Holcomb](#)

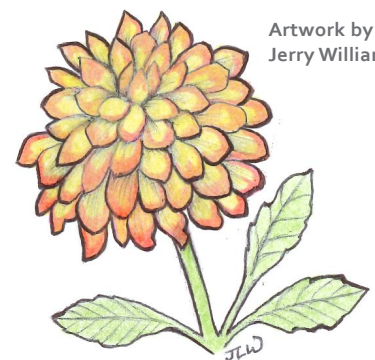
Helpful resources

Anthem Resources

- [Anthem Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- [Anthem NurseLine](#)
- [LiveHealth Online](#)
- [211.org](#)

General Resources

- IDOH COVID-19 Call Center— 877-826-0011
- Contact the INSPD Benefits Hotline – 317-232-1167 (Indianapolis area), 1-877-248-0007 (toll- free outside Indianapolis)
- Disaster Distress Helpline – 800-985-5990, or text "TalkWithUs" or "Hablanos" to/al 66746.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline – 800-662-HELP
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 800-273-TALK or 888-628-9454 (español)



Artwork by
Jerry Williams

INDOT 'Roadeo' gets back in the saddle this September

Many may ask what is a "Roadeo?"

Are there horses or bulls at this Roadeo? Nope, no horses or bulls here. This Roadeo is an annual skills competition held for the dedicated operators of the public transportation systems providing service throughout the state of Indiana. These transit systems receive federal, state, and local funding to provide this essential public service to our state. These operators are the backbone of the public transit industry and this event provides a special venue to honor and celebrate the value of these dedicated rural and community transit operators. Unable to hold the Roadeo last year due to the pandemic, the Indiana Department of Transportation (INDOT) is excited to have the ability once more to host its 29th Annual Community Transportation Roadeo!

The 2021 Roadeo takes place Sept. 25 at the Cummins Hangar; Columbus Airport in Columbus, Indiana, and registration begins at 8:30 a.m.

As with any special event, organizers are responsible for raising donations and sponsorships



to allow such events to occur. The Indiana Rural Transit Assistance Program (RTAP) contracted through RLS and Associates, along with the Indiana Council on Specialized Transportation (INCOST) are the two entities primarily responsible for raising and hosting the annual Roadeo for Indiana. This year the RTAP office was contacted by Doug Sloan, General Manager with the New Castle Community Public Transit System, to be notified that New Castle Transit would like to sponsor the event with a generous \$3,100 donation.

"I think it's a great time to honor our drivers for what they go out and do every single day for our transit systems," said Sloan. "It is also a great time for all drivers to show how much hard work they have put into their job."

INDOT 5311 Program Manager Todd Jennings expressed gratitude.

"INDOT Office of Transit is very thankful for the generosity of New Castle Transit," Jennings said. "Mr. Sloan has always been a strong advocate for the rural transit industry and he does a tremendous job working with those within his community who depend on such a vital service. He and his team of dedicated staff is just one example of why INDOT is so proud to be part of such a great program."

In 2017 New Castle Community Transit System represented Indiana by sending two drivers to the national event, which is quite an achievement for one system. Sloan stands very proud of his drivers and is always quick to mention



their professionalism, interactions with riders, and attention to detail to their training. Through INDOT's Master Driver Program, Sloan currently has the following operators (including himself) who have met Master Driver Status:

- William Muterspaugh- Grand Master Driver
- Timothy Waller- Grand Master Driver
- Jennifer Donoghue- Grand Master Driver
- Amber Taylor- Grand Master Driver
- Christopher Poindexter- Master Driver
- Douglas Sloan- Grand Master Driver.

New Castle Transit's generous donation, along with other statewide rural transit agencies and various other corporate sponsorships will allow organizers to provide gifts and other giveaways to the competing drivers and judges. Some of these items include t-shirts, trophies, promotional items, driver bags, as well as lunch for all who attend. Corporate sponsorship representative(s) are also encouraged to take part as Roadeo judges or just observe

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INDOT 'Rodeo' gets back in the saddle this September

and experience a fun and exciting day as this is a great opportunity to meet the many specialized transportation providers.

Annually the Rodeo brings in roughly 30 to 40 drivers throughout the state of Indiana along with an additional 100 judges. The top five drivers receive a prize and monetary award. Operators placing in the top two positions are also provided the opportunity to represent Indiana and compete against the best operators from each of the 50 states in the national event.

This year this event will take place at the 31st Annual Community Transportation Association Rodeo in Richmond, Virginia in November. Vicky Warner, RTAP Senior Associate, and Megan Gatterdam, RTAP Coordinator, pointedly described the event this way: "This is the only event dedicated to recognizing transportation operators and their service they provide to their communities every day. It is a training, competition, and recognition of some of our communities' unsung heroes they provide quality of life to those who are transit-dependent."

Organizers of this event welcome anyone who would like to be a sponsor and donate giveaways or goodies, be a spectator, or be a part of the event either as a judge or a volunteer. INDOT encourages transportation drivers throughout the state to be part of this competition.

If you have any questions or would like to know more, contact Megan Gatterdam at mgatterdam@rlsandassoc.com.

Build, Learn, Grow initiative to help working families connect to early care and education



working in essential industries with qualifying incomes can receive scholarships for each child age 12 and younger toward their early care and education, summer learning or out-of-school care.

guidelines as outlined [here](#). Families will qualify for The *Build, Learn, Grow* scholarship with incomes of up to 250 percent of the federal poverty level. For a family of four, that equates to an annual income of about \$66,000.

Indiana Family and Social Services Administration recently announced the Build, Learn, Grow initiative, which made 50,000 scholarships available to help connect Hoosier children from working families to high-quality early education and out-of-school-time programs.

The scholarships will be funded by more than \$101 million provided to Indiana by the federal Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, or CRRSA.

Through the Build, Learn, Grow Scholarship Fund, Hoosier families

Scholarships run from May through October 2021 and will cover 80 percent of the early care and education program's tuition. Information is available at www.BuildLearnGrow.org.

For families to qualify for *Build, Learn, Grow* scholarships, an adult in the household must work in an essential business (examples include health care, human services, retail, restaurant and food service, essential infrastructure, media, manufacturing and logistics, religious and charitable organizations and many others) and meet income eligibility

Qualifying families should complete the Build, Learn, Grow Scholarship Fund application and submit it to their early care and education provider. Families not currently connected to an early care and education program will be able to find a list of participating programs on the Build, Learn, Grow website as they enroll and become qualified. All providers who currently accept federal child care assistance are encouraged to enroll.

Early care and education and out-of-school-time programs interested in receiving children with *Build, Learn, Grow* scholarships can learn more at www.BuildLearnGrow.org.

Hoosier Lottery monies benefiting state retirees

The month of May in Indiana has many wonderful moments and memories.

For the Hoosier Lottery, it's the month in which beneficiaries are recognized. Hoosier Lottery monies have supported local police and firefighters' pensions, the Teachers' Retirement Fund, and the Lottery Surplus Fund (previously Build Indiana Fund) since day one.

Annually, the Hoosier Lottery now gives \$30 million to local police and firefighters' pensions and \$30 million to the Teachers' Retirement Fund. To date, that's more than \$917 million to retired teachers and nearly \$730 million to retired police and firefighters.

Don Metzger is one of the many retirees who appreciates Hoosier Lottery players and the state of Indiana for choosing to use Lottery monies to help teachers. The 76-year-old chose to be a teacher many years ago because he wanted to make a difference in children's lives.

"I didn't think about the pension I'd have down the road when I chose education as a career," said Metzger. "I just knew I wanted to help kids learn."

Today, it's his grandkids keeping him young with their sports and activities he enjoys attending.

Summer bowling league returns to the lanes May 7

Current and retired state employees, their families, and friends are invited to be part of the State Employees Summer Bowling League.

The league returns to the lanes May 7. Participants will play

He also serves on the Board of Directors of the Indiana Retired Teachers Association and sees all the great things former teachers now do with their time.

"Teachers silently serve and volunteer," he said. "They don't always talk or brag about it; they do it because they enjoy it. Their ability to retire and serve communities is due in part to the pensions earned and legislative stipends offered to retired teachers."

Don lives in Greenwood in Johnson County. In Fiscal Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020), Johnson County retired teachers saw \$725,017 contributed to the Teachers' Retirement Fund.

Visit <https://hoosierlottery.com/giving-back> to see a county-by-county breakdown of all Lottery monies given back to the state. Each county is represented.

Clark County saw \$446,314 contributed to police and firefighters' pensions in Fiscal Year 2020. Kevin Lindsey, 64, a retired firefighter, is one of the many retirees living in Clark County thankful for the \$30 million annual contribution to the local police and firefighter's pensions.

"I am thankful for a stable pension," said Lindsey. "This kind of funding with pensions is rare

three games each Friday throughout the season. Each game begins at 6:30 p.m. at The Royal Pin Western Bowl in Indianapolis.

Teams of two (with one alternate) will participate in a 12-week season. If all requirements are

PROUD TO SUPPORT INDIANA SINCE 1989

GIVING BACK

MORE THAN \$6 BILLION GIVEN BACK TO GOOD CAUSES

- \$917 Million** to the Teachers' Retirement Fund
- \$730 Million** to local police and firefighters' pensions
- \$4.6 Billion** to the Lottery Surplus Fund, used in part to lower vehicle excise taxes paid by Hoosier vehicle owners

Learn more about how the Hoosier Lottery gives back in your county by visiting hoosierlottery.com/givingback

HOOSIER LOTTERY

and doesn't exist anymore for a lot of jobs."

Kevin retired in 2019 and kept a part-time job. Then the pandemic hit.

"Seeing people losing jobs was tough," he said. "Having a layer of security and a steady flow of income was certainly a relief."

In Fiscal Year 2020, the Hoosier Lottery proudly announced continued financial success, fulfilling its mission to return maximum net revenue to the state, in a socially responsible manner. Thanks to Lottery players, the Hoosier Lottery surpassed \$1 billion in scratch-off sales in Fiscal Year 2020, contributing to total sales of more than \$1.38 billion. In turn, this allowed the Lottery to transfer its second highest total of more than \$304 million to support good causes in the state.

otherwise met, teams may have one member who is not a current or former state of Indiana employee. The cost to join the fun is \$16 per person.

For more information, email Leah Baire at lbair@dwd.in.gov

Collaboration, care guiding Commission on Improving the Status of Children

The mission of Indiana's [Commission on Improving the Status of Children](#) (CISC) has remained steadfast since its inception in 2013.

Eight years on, CISC remains as committed as ever to helping children grow up in safe environments, allowing them to lead healthy, productive lives. That vision coupled with a desire to forge collaborative relationships among Indiana governmental agencies, stakeholders, and Hoosier community members was a constant spark even as the nascent commission began its work without a budget – or a staff.

Julie Whitman, who took on the role of CISC executive director in 2017, summed the situation up this way: “It was just an effort to say ‘let’s all come together.’”

Four years later, the commission includes 18 members and more than 300 total participants representing all three branches (executive, legislative, and judicial) of state government. Lawmakers, state agency leaders, and even the office of the governor are part of a wide array of experts and professionals coming together to make a lofty vision something much more than a dream.

The result is an ever-growing collaborative effort aimed at helping all Hoosier children, but especially those who are most vulnerable. Vulnerable youth are defined according to a 2013 statute as those served by the Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS), Family and Social Services Administration (FSSA), Indiana Department of Correction (DOC), or a juvenile probation department.

Getting to this point has taken time, effort, and heart, but perhaps more than anything, it’s taken an almost literal village.

Whitman explained there are four commission task forces, which combined work toward juvenile justice reform, child health and safety, mental health and substance abuse prevention and treatment, and positive educational outcomes. Additionally, CISC is composed of committees that focus on equity and inclusion, data sharing, and child trauma, among others. As a whole, the task forces and subcommittees are that “village” working in close tandem to support Indiana’s youth.

“The commission brings all child serving state agencies to the same

(DCS). “The commission is focused [not only] on how best to support young people in their current situation, but [how best to] serve them in the future.”

It’s a forward thinking approach that is working by bringing subject matter experts together to find solutions they might not have considered – or been able to accomplish – on their own.

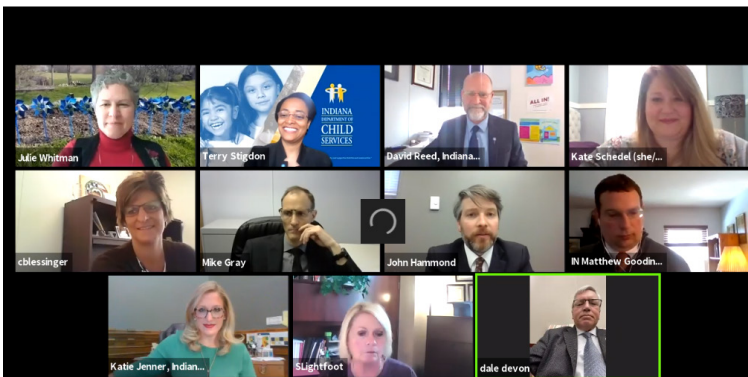
Whitman, citing one recent example, explained that the collaborative effort at the core of the Commission has been integral in addressing the state’s opioid crisis.

Indiana Supreme Court Chief Justice Loretta Rush, who was at the forefront of the Commission’s creation, called a meeting with Whitman, Indiana Family and Social Services Secretary Dr. Jennifer Sullivan, Indiana Department of Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box, and others in 2018 to help come up with ideas for a solution. Whitman said the “brainstorming session” led to the creation of Indiana’s first Statewide Opioid Summit.

“Every single county in the state sent a team of court personnel where Dr. Sullivan and Dr. Box provided speakers from science and medical professions to share how courts can be agents of change,” Whitman said. “I don’t know if that meeting would have happened without the Children’s Commission.”

The summit allowed justice system professionals to learn about the

table to address real issues in real time, facing Indiana’s youth,” said Melaina Gant, director of Education Services for the Indiana Department of Child Services



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Collaboration, care guiding Commission on Improving the Status of Children

science behind addiction, as well as options for treatment and intervention, straight from the experts.

That sort of teamwork might well have been part of Chief Justice Rush's vision nearly a decade ago when CISC was formed. But having served youth as a judge in Tippecanoe County prior to her appointment to the Indiana Supreme Court, it's always been clear that the welfare and livelihood of children would always take center stage in CISC. Chief Justice Rush explained, "Judges regularly collaborate with many community partners to create a path for parents to safely reunite with their children, thereby preserving families. Future generations depend on their parents for safety, love, and stability. The Children's Commission brings state leaders together to support communities and families."

"She conceived of the commission as a way to use government for the benefit of kids," said Whitman.

To that end, CISC continues its work, unswayed even by the COVID-19 pandemic. That's a source of pride for Whitman who, along with other commission members, has taken to online

meetings to continue their collaborative efforts. In spite of the crisis, the commission has been able to keep making a difference.

"There was a lot of groundwork that continued to be built within the subcommittees," Whitman said. She described those groups as seeking solutions that have "high impact and high feasibility."

Looking ahead, the commission hopes to continue spreading word of its mission. State employees are encouraged to learn more and join a [sub-committee or task force](#). A great way to learn more about the commission, Whitman said, is to watch a meeting. The virtual format has made that easier than ever. For example, the most recent online CISC meeting can be seen on YouTube [here](#).

The Indiana legislature is also doing its part to help shape the commission into a continued force for assisting Hoosier youth. [House Enrolled Act 1537](#), which passed in April at the close of the legislative session, allows for two additional committee members. These positions would be filled by young adults who were once part of the Indiana juvenile justice, child welfare, or social service system, allowing for contemporaneous first-hand accounts that are

likely to be invaluable for the commission.

Continually guiding the group forward is the commission's Strategic Plan for 2020 - 2022, which includes four main goals:

1. Improve the health and safety of vulnerable children and youth
2. Increase access to quality mental health and addiction services for children and their families
3. Improve educational outcomes of vulnerable youth
4. Improve safety and outcomes of youth who come into contact with the juvenile justice system

The road ahead is a long one, but CISC, its task forces, committees, and most importantly the Hoosiers dedicating their time toward the mission are all uniquely prepared to face it. Like the outcomes for which they hope, those involved in the commission's perennial efforts maintain a rosy outlook for the future.

"The commission has a great opportunity to help our state agencies break down silos and collaboratively serve all of Indiana's youth," observed Gant. "We are stronger together in supporting the needs of our youth and serving the whole child."

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department



DNR will host 'Teddy Bear Camp' for stuffed animals in May

Because even stuffed animal friends need a break, the DNR Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology (DHPA) will host its inaugural Teddy Bear Camp, May 16 to 22.

This pre-summer camp will give teddy bears and other stuffed animals belonging to kids age 5 to 12 who live in Marion, Hamilton, Hancock, Shelby, Johnson, Morgan, Hendricks, or Boone counties a chance to relax and unwind before their child owner is out of school for the summer.

For your child's stuffed animal to participate, complete a registration

form (available at on.IN.gov/dhpa), then drop off it and your child's stuffed animal (not your child) at one of three partner locations, at the dates and times shown below.

- Franklin: The Historic Artcraft Theatre, May 10, 2 to 4 p.m. or May 12, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
- Indianapolis: Indiana State Museum, May 11, 9 to 11 a.m. or May 12, 2 to 4 p.m.
- Indianapolis: Fort Harrison State Park: May 13, 9 a.m. to noon

During the camp, DHPA staff will take the stuffed animals to visit a variety of sites to learn about history, architecture, and historic preservation. Photos of the visits will be posted to DHPA's [Facebook page](#) during the week, and, after the camp, a photo album will be emailed to the adult contact designated on the registration form. For participating, all stuffed animals and their child owners will be certified as an "Indiana Junior Preservationist."

The program will conclude with owners picking up their stuffed animals at their drop-off location from May 25 to 27.

Wuestefeld receives Purdue Distinguished Alumni Award

Amanda Wuestefeld, director of DNR Division of Fish & Wildlife, received the Purdue University College of Agriculture Distinguished Alumni award in March.

The award is given to mid-career alumni for their accomplishments, contributions to their field, and potential.

Wuestefeld has been with the DNR for 25 years. Her early years included serving as an interpretive naturalist at state park nature centers and as an information specialist at DNR's central office. Later, she led the creation of the State Fair Fishing Pond and launched the division's hunter recruitment and retention program. Wuestefeld coordinated the State Wildlife Action Plan and served as assistant director of the Division of Fish & Wildlife before being named director in 2019.

Throughout her career, people have been at the center of her work, whether she's creating programs related to fish and wildlife or leading teams of employees.

"We are here to serve as stewards of fish and wildlife for the benefit of this and future generations of our Hoosier customers," she said.

To young people who dream of careers in natural resources, Wuestefeld's advice is simple: get as much experience as possible.

"Experience and then the people that you work with through those experiences are what gets you places," she said.

This recent recognition adds to a long list of awards Wuestefeld has received during her career. She has previously received awards from the Environmental Education



Association of Indiana, Keep Indianapolis Beautiful, and Indiana Bowhunter Association, and as the DNR Employee of the Year.

Wuestefeld spends her free time outdoors with her family, enjoying mushroom hunting, gardening, and ice fishing in winter.

For additional details about the award and Wuestefeld's career with DNR, click [here](#).

Nurturing the garden at T.C. Steele – and at your house

Lori Willis, the regional landscape manager at the T.C. Steele State Historic Site in Nashville, is a third-generation master gardener with 30 years of experience.

She earned her Master Gardener degree from Purdue University in 2000 and worked as an account manager at Designscape Horticulture in Nashville, Indiana, for almost 15 years before joining the [Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites](#) staff last December.

In other words, she's a great person to ask for gardening tips. So, we did. Here's what she said:

Gardening never stops. Willis is always gardening at least two seasons – and sometimes two years – ahead. That means, among other things, that most of the spring bulbs about to bloom or already blooming at T.C. Steele were planted last fall. But just because you didn't start your garden work six months ago doesn't mean you can't start now. Go to a garden center now and get spring bulbs that are in a pot. Since spring bulbs need to acclimate with the environment – they need to be cold – put them in the refrigerator for 3-4 weeks before taking them out and putting them in planters. Then give the bulbs a week to acclimate to the outdoor weather before planting them outside.

D'oh! A Deer. Are deer eating plants in your yard? Willis recommends a product called Liquid Deer Fence. Another option is a peppery systemic. She likes Repellex systemic tablets. Crush one up at the base of a plant and it will soak in through the roots and come up tasting bitter to the deer. "But this takes a little while," she

says. In the spring, workers at T.C. Steele apply the peppery mixture to plants, but they also spray Liquid Deer Fence. Another option: Pick plants that are more deer resistant, like Angelonia, heuchera, anemone, and ferns.

You've got to mulch. You've got to. "I like mulch aesthetically, but people put it on way too heavy, especially around the trees," she says. "I don't like 'tree volcanos.' That's what they look like to me, and it's terrible for the tree." Keep mulch away from the trunks of your trees and don't let it pile up. It should be a nice, smooth mound. Otherwise, you're going to rot your trunk. Also, before you put down the mulch, place old newspaper down and wet it. Then put the mulch on top. Worms love the paper – especially the sports section (kidding) – and it's great for the soil. Cardboard can be used too.

Nothing says fertilizer like ... Dehydrated chicken poop. Willis uses a product called Replenish, which doesn't burn plants when you apply it. "It seems to give everything a big boost and it's organic."

That said ... Willis prefers not to use chemicals, if possible. But sometimes – like when she's trying to remove honeysuckle that's invading the wisteria at T.C. Steele – she will. What she'll do in that case is cut the honeysuckle one and a half to two inches from the soil and apply an eyedropper's worth of Tordon herbicide to the stump. "When you put that on your cut, it will kill it from the root. It doesn't leach into the soil. I want to make sure I'm not doing more harm than good."



Looking for heirloom plants? Old House Gardens (<https://oldhousegardens.com/>) is her favorite website. Plants in the formal garden at T.C. Steele were restored using plants from that site.

Respect the weather. "I've been a gardener my whole life, and some of the biggest mistakes I've ever made were being too anxious for spring – buying annuals, putting annuals out, filling up the pots, filling up the urns," Willis says. "That is not going to happen anymore." You can buy now, but wait until Mother's Day to plant outside. Plants need to get accustomed to the wind and sunlight, so put them on the porch or in a planter that you can move inside and out.

Save the tulip. The best way to handle tulip bulbs is to dig them up every year and store them in sawdust, in a garage, so they don't get mushy. Put a tarp over the tray to keep critters out. Keeping critters from eating planted tulip bulbs is another issue. You can create a couple of different kinds of barriers. One is to put a chicken wire box in the soil, fill it with compost, put bulbs in there and cover. Or, if you have access to mattress springs, put the bulbs in the springs and plant them.

Have a gardening question? Contact Lori at lwillis@indianamuseum.org.

Indiana MPH program aims to skill-up state employees in data

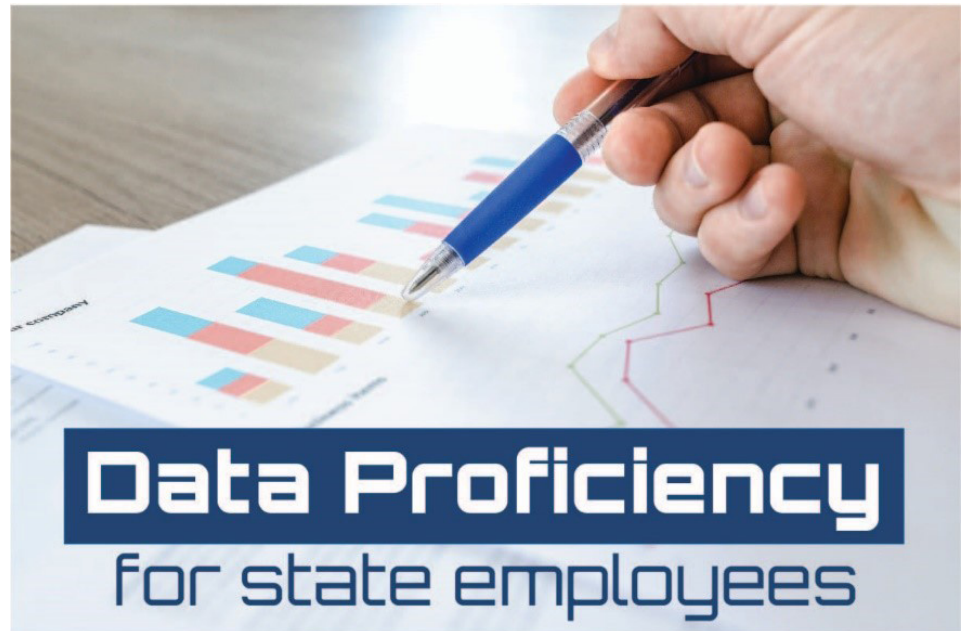
State employees were sent an email from the [Indiana Management Performance Hub](#) (MPH) April 16 introducing the Data Proficiency Program.

The email included the first training lesson and included links to videos and articles sourced by MPH. The training lessons will arrive monthly in your inbox from mph@subscriptions.in.gov. If you did not receive the first lesson via your state email account, you can [subscribe to our mailing list](#) to receive the monthly lessons. Look for lesson 2 in your inbox the week of May 10.

Lesson one discusses how data impacts all of our jobs and the importance of creating a culture of data proficiency. MPH asks that you treat the lessons as any other state-issued training and take the time to review the material. The

video in the opening lesson comes from the Study Hall Data Literacy series on YouTube and discusses critical vocabulary data used by analysts -- and what it means to be data literate.

You can learn more about the program and access all available lessons on the MPH website at: <https://www.in.gov/mph/1162.htm>.



Farmer's market, free yoga series return to White River State Park

The Market at White River State Park kicked off May 2!

The Market at White River State Park in downtown Indianapolis is excited to offer Indy residents and



visitors the opportunity to support local farms and businesses!

Located in the heart of the city, White River State Park's iconic Celebration Plaza (the greenspace between the NCAA Headquarters and White River State Park Visitor Center) is the perfect location. The Market welcomes a large range of vendors offerings farm produce, meat, eggs, prepared foods and drinks, flowers, plants, and handcrafted artisan goods.

The Market will be held on the first and third Sundays during May

and June so be sure to mark your calendar for 9:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. May 16, June 6, and June 20.

Free Yoga Series

In partnership with CITYYOGA, The Market will offer free yoga sessions from 9 to 9:45 a.m. in the Celebration Plaza Amphitheater, adjacent to The Market. Bring a yoga mat if you have one, or use one of the mats provided and enjoy a morning flow with a beautiful view of the White River and downtown Indianapolis. All experience levels are welcome.

Data Day 2021 now available to stream via MPH website

All four hours of Data Day 2021 hosted by the [Indiana Management Performance Hub](#) (MPH) are now available on the MPH website and YouTube channel.

You can watch the fourth annual showcase of the collaborative efforts to improve outcomes for Hoosiers through the use of data. Join the celebration and learn more about how data continues to play an increasingly important role in state government.

The Data Day Virtual Event featured how state of Indiana agencies and key trusted partners came together to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as advancements in addressing the opioid epidemic. Also, learn more

on how agencies and external partners are collaborating to create clear pathways between education and workforce. Special guests include Gov. Eric Holcomb, State Health Commissioner Dr. Kristina Box, Secretary of Education Dr. Katie Jenner, Indiana's Executive

Director for Drug Prevention, Treatment, and Enforcement Doug Huntsinger, and more.

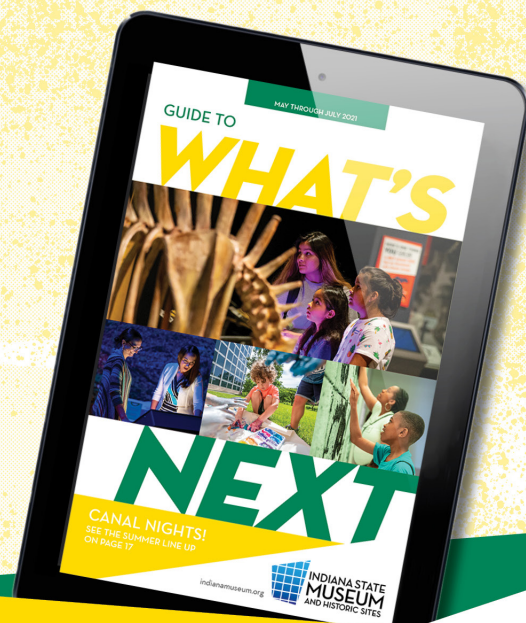
Watch Data Day 2021 at www.in.gov/mph/1058.htm



MARK YOUR CALENDARS FOR SUMMERTIME NON-STOP FUN!

Our online magazine is chock full of programs and events happening at our 12 locations across the state this spring and summer.

[VIEW NOW!](#)



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