



# The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

June, 2020

## Gov. Holcomb issues statement on protests

Governor Eric J. Holcomb offered the following statement June 1.

*“Hoosiers have long been people who find solutions to the challenges we face, whether it be in response to a pandemic or to an injustice like the world witnessed so tragically inflicted upon Mr. George Floyd in Minnesota.*

*“As I stated yesterday, injuring the innocent in response to an injustice is counterproductive. I’ve asked the Indiana State Police to fully support and make resources available to*

*local communities across our state to ensure our citizens and their property remain safe.*

*“In the days ahead, peaceful assembly and clear voices will be important if we are to make progress. Violence and vandalism will set us back in our shared desire to resolve differences. Let us again, each of us, be part of the solution.”*



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The Torch is published monthly by the Indiana State Personnel Department and is available online at [in.gov/spd/2540.htm](https://www.in.gov/spd/2540.htm).

## Got a story?

Submit your story ideas to:  
[spdcommunications@spd.in.gov](mailto:spdcommunications@spd.in.gov)

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

# Correctional administrator honors frontline heroes

First responders and frontline workers have been some of the greatest heroes throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Jim Frye, a longtime Indiana Department of Correction employee, took time to share his thoughts on the work of correctional personnel throughout a nationwide crisis.

*Note: This letter has been edited for space constraints.*

“My name is Jim Frye, and this is my story about some heroes I know fighting COVID 19.

“I have been with the Indiana Department of Correction (IDOC) for over 18 years, presently serving at Miami Correctional Facility (MCF). I have seen a lot over my career, [but] there’s one thing I haven’t seen: I’ve never seen any of our staff give up. And that’s still true today in the face of an unseen threat, a threat you could rightfully call an “enemy” we have never had to face before. Of course, the enemy I’m speaking of is the COVID-19 virus.

“Since we, as a state and a nation, were made aware of this threat, I’ve been nothing short of amazed – and proud – to see how my co-workers have responded. They come to work, shift after shift, and perform their duties without

regard for their own safety, always concerned for the safety of their co-workers and the safety of the offenders they are charged to watch over. Each of these correctional staff members have families at home for whom they also work each day to protect as well.

“Every day brings a host of personal and professional challenges in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. Yet, each day they report to their assigned area of responsibility and they will keep reporting even after the COVID-19 pandemic becomes a part of our history. While others [must] stay home away from the threat, correctional staff look at their families and say, ‘I love you. I’ll see you when I get home.’ When they get home, they have to make sure the same virus brought into the correctional environment from the outside world doesn’t also invade their own home, in turn placing their loved ones in jeopardy.

“I spent most of my career in uniform until this past year when I transitioned into an administrative role at MCF. I now see from a perspective I didn’t have before all that is involved for a correctional facility to operate safely, efficiently, and with the welfare of both staff and offenders being part of



*Jim Frye, Miami Correctional Facility*

every operational decision. For this reason, I’m not able to pick a ‘single’ hero, because as the old saying goes, there is no ‘I’ in the word ‘team.’

“I’ve had the privilege and honor to work with a team of heroes. They prove it each and every day, not just at MCF, but at each and every correctional facility across Indiana as they face the unseen threat and do what is necessary to win this fight.

“The Indiana Department of Correction has an army of heroes working for the great citizens of Indiana. If you happen to know a correctional officer, please thank them for their service, especially since the week of May 3rd to the 9th was National Correctional Professionals Week.”



*Heroes work here: Miami Correctional Facility Administrator Jim Frye took time to honor his fellow correctional workers during Public Service Recognition Week. Seen here are Terrence Rivera (maintenance), Kelly Smith (mailroom), Amanda Spencer (HR), Charles Williams (training), Raquel McMath (Aramark), Jim Frye (Community Service/PIO), Ryan McCullum (custody), George Rentschler, (re-entry), Sandra Roark (ICI).*



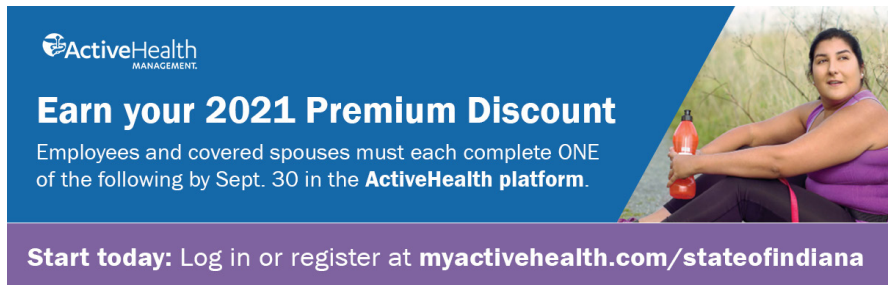
# Still time to save on your health plan premium in 2021

Have you completed your chosen [ActiveHealth](#) activity to qualify for your 2021 health plan premium discount yet?

If not, there's good news: You still have time!

Call ActiveHealth at 855-202-4219 or go online to [myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana](http://myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana) TODAY to get started. Four easy phone calls with a qualified health coach can help you get moving on your health goals AND save you money on your health insurance costs next year.

Speaking with a coach is the fastest and easiest way to save money and work on your wellness plans, but you can also qualify for the premium discount by learning valuable health tips through a treasure trove of online educational materials. Reach Level 5 by completing the Health Goals and Health Education modules at [myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana](http://myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana) and you'll be on



**Earn your 2021 Premium Discount**  
 Employees and covered spouses must each complete ONE of the following by Sept. 30 in the **ActiveHealth platform**.

**Start today:** Log in or register at [myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana](http://myactivehealth.com/stateofindiana)



**Complete four health coaching sessions**  
 (in person or by phone).



**Reach Level 5 (9,000 hearts)**  
 in online education.

your way to making healthier habits a part of your lifestyle. You'll save on your annual premium too!

*Note: If your spouse is covered by your Indiana State Personnel Department-sponsored health plan, they will also need to complete the chosen activity.*

You can keep tabs on how you're progressing by visiting the Rewards Center in your ActiveHealth portal. **It's so easy!**

But there's no time to delay! You'll need to call and schedule your health coaching session by **July 1** in order to have enough time to complete all four by the **Sept. 30 deadline**.

What are you waiting for? Call or log-on today! And for more great health tips year-round, make checking out [investinyourhealthindiana.com](http://investinyourhealthindiana.com) a regular part of your wellness routine.

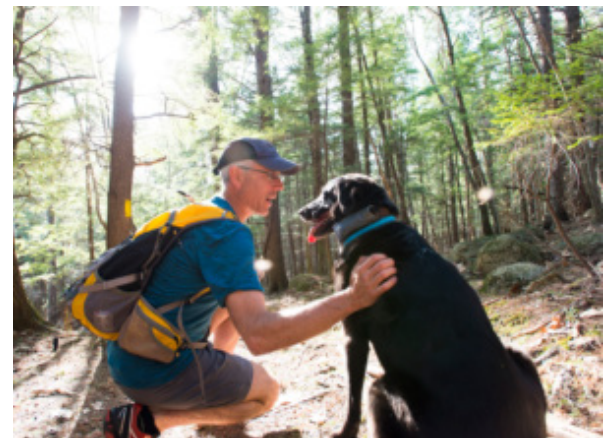
## June webinar focuses on men's health

Men, how well do you know your health?

Do you know when to get a physical or a preventive exam? Learn about specific risk factors and health needs for men, and how you can help the men in your

life stay on top of their health in this month's ActiveHealth webinar.

Join at 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., or 4:30 p.m. Tuesday, June 16 to learn more. Register [here](#).



## June is Men's Health Month

Studies show men are less likely to seek medical care for a number of reasons.

Some avoid care because they feel fine. Others are nervous about an exam or what it might reveal. Some men even see medical care

as a sign of weakness. But staying healthy is a sign of strength. It's important to keep your whole health in check.

Check out this blog at <http://www.investinyourhealthindiana.com/fitness-2/june-is-mens->

[health-month/](http://health-month/) and visit [investinyourhealthindiana.com](http://investinyourhealthindiana.com) regularly for more tips to help keep you healthy all year long.

# Keeping up with your health



Think about your total well-being. Here are some focus areas for men.

## Take care of your heart



Even if you don't have symptoms, men are at greater risk for heart disease.<sup>1</sup> Make sure to get your blood pressure checked. Stay active and keep a healthy weight. And if you smoke — quit. Check with your doctor for help getting started.

## Get screened



Getting checked for colorectal cancer becomes more important as you grow older. Recommended screenings begin at age 45.

## Recognize your feelings



Depression affects both men and women. But men are less likely to talk about their feelings or get treatment. Know the signs and talk to your doctor with concerns.

## Seek friendships



Friends are often tied to common interests like a hobby, sports, raising children or jobs. That means they can change over time, making them harder to keep. Make time for others. Friendships can have a positive impact on your health.<sup>2</sup>

## Stay involved



Find your passion. Join a club, learn a new skill, go back to school, volunteer or find other ways to be part of your community. Having interests helps you build meaning in your life.

## Be fiscally fit



Plan for your future and invest each month in a retirement savings plan. Even a small amount adds up over time. Pay down debt and have an emergency fund set aside.

<sup>1</sup>Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Underlying Cause of Death, 1999–2017. Accessed October 16, 2019.

<sup>2</sup>Health & Human Services. Healthy Friendships in Adolescence. Available at <https://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-development/healthy-relationships/healthy-friendships/index.html> Accessed October 16, 2019.



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# ‘Virtual PSRW’ creates togetherness in time of separation

The first-ever ‘Virtual Public Service Recognition Week’ was packed with fun activities and unique ways to celebrate all those who serve.

If you missed out on some of the highlights, such as an inspiring concert featuring performances from state of Indiana employees, or a relaxing at-home painting program with the Indiana Office of Technology’s Jeffery Lahr, you can still check them out!

Lahr’s painting program can be viewed in its entirety on his Facebook page, Art by Lahr. Grab some brushes, markers, or even that giant 64-pack of crayons (you know, the one with the awesome sharpener built in the back!) and create your own masterpiece.

April McManus, an Indiana Department of Revenue business systems consultant, did just that. She said she watched Jeffery’s presentation and followed along with a box of Crayolas. Her finished work was certainly fridge-worthy.

That completely amazing concert, which featured the Indiana Department of Transportation’s

Shelby Rivers, Indiana Department of Revenue’s Mark Minzes, and the Indiana State Personnel Department’s Zach Salaz and Brandon Denman, can be viewed on YouTube here. An audience of more than 500 joined to watch the musical performances.

Another fun activity was a virtual 5K that could be completed throughout the week. Many participants used the Wellness Challenge Portal to track their distance on the way to a 3.1 mile journey around the neighborhood, the backyard, or any of the state’s gorgeous parks and trails. In all, more than 150 people participated via the Wellness Challenge Portal.

Some employees also chose to share why they choose to work in public service, while others singled out some of the first responders and frontline workers who are striving each day to protect their fellow Hoosiers amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

“I have worked as a program director/intake coordinator for the majority of my time here with [the Family and Social Services Administration’s] BDDS (Bureau of Developmental Disabilities), said Trevon Lones. “It is definitely my calling. My absolute favorite component of my work is working directly with the families we service. I realize that I am often a person’s very first interaction with DDRS (Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services) and I do my very best to make them feel, well, like family!”

Lones has worked for the state of Indiana for approximately six and a half years. Her office is based in Gary.

Jim Frye, an Indiana Department of Correction employee for almost two decades, spoke of his

correctional colleagues as “heroes” in the fight against COVID-19.

“I’ve had the privilege and honor to work with a team of heroes at the Indiana Department of

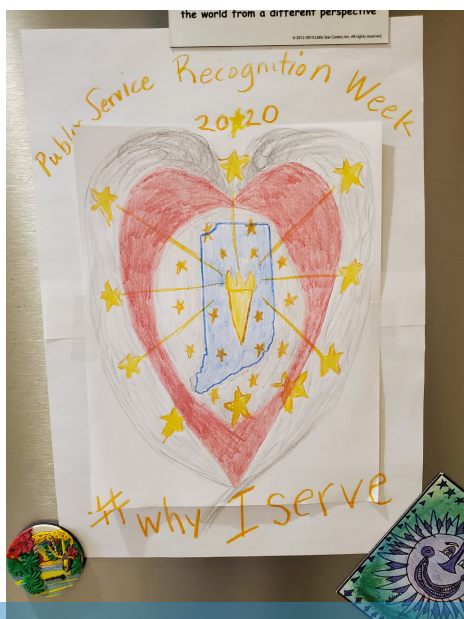


*Trevon Lones said working with Hoosier families is her favorite part of her job.*

Correction,” Frye wrote in a piece you can read in full on page – of this issue. “They prove it each and every day, not just here at the Miami Correctional Facility, but at each and every correctional facility across Indiana as they walk, head held high, facing the unseen threat and doing what is necessary to win this fight.”

Meanwhile, a crew of Wabash Valley Correctional Facility employees with more than 200 years of combined service to the state of Indiana took time for a photo op.

“Wabash Valley Correctional Facility employees continue to work at the facility each day and follow guidelines to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” said Janna Anderson, a clerical assistant to



*April McManus’ PSRW painting was a crayon-crafted colorful masterpiece worthy of its spot on her refrigerator.*

*(Continued on page 6)*

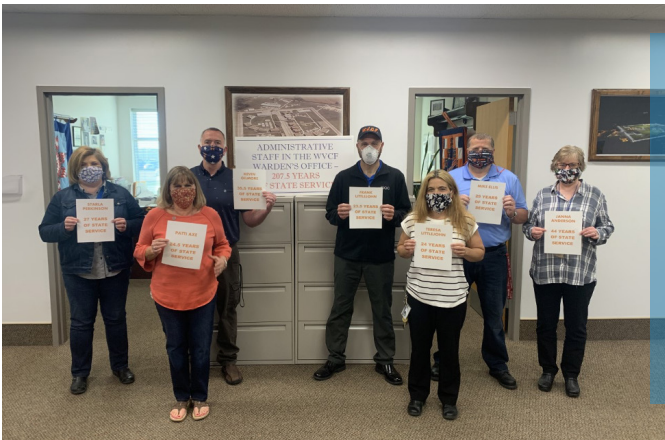
(Continued from page 5)

## ‘Virtual PSRW’ creates togetherness in time of separation

the warden. Anderson has served the state for more than 44 years. She was joined by fellow clerical assistants Mike Ellis (29 years), Starla Perkinson (27 years), and Patti Axe (24.5 years), as well as administrative assistant Teresa Littlejohn (24 years) and deputy wardens Kevin Gillmore (35.5 years) and Frank Littlejohn (23.5 years). All dressed in their appropriate colors for PSRW Years of Service Day.



These Vanderburgh County DCS employees gathered in support of Child Abuse Awareness Month while also practicing social distancing.



These longtime Wabash Valley Correctional Facility employees know they can always rely on one another. This photo was taken in support of the Virtual PSRW ‘Coping Crew’ activity

The Vanderburgh County Department of Child Services kicked off May (and PSRW) by sharing a photo of their employees practicing social distancing while also recognizing National Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

“Code Blue from 82” included Lynn Deig, Sandy Yoder, Wendi Leslie, Katlyn Madsen-Rockett, Andrea Ivy, and Donna Garrison.

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department

## Get ready to Run the State at Ouabache State Park



Lake is a sublime fishing, swimming, and boating location, while basketball and tennis courts expand the seemingly limitless amount of

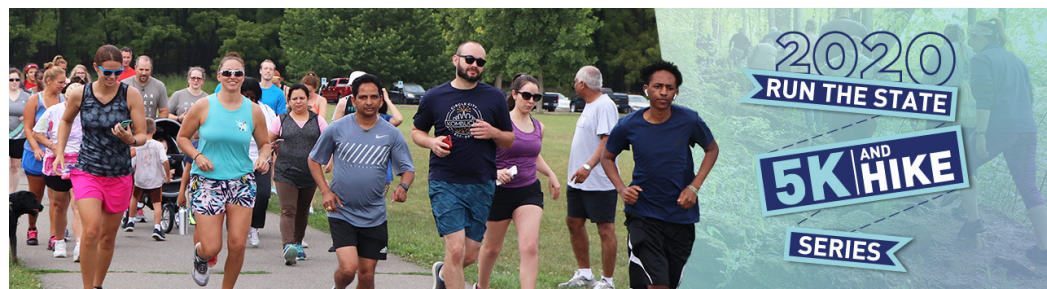
outdoor fun offered by the park.

To allow for proper social distancing, the 5K start times will be staggered between 8 and 9:15 a.m. Participants will start from the park’s Rustic Oak Shelter.

Sign up [here](#) and learn more about the course with this quick [fact sheet](#).

The annual [Run the State 5K and Hike Series](#) returns for its 2020 debut Saturday, June 27 with a 5K at [Ouabache State Park](#).

Located in Wells County, Ouabache State Park is known for its bison as well as for a fire tower that dates back to the Franklin D. Roosevelt administration. The 25-acre Kunkel





# ISDA photo contest now open

The Indiana State Department of Agriculture is now accepting submissions for the 13th annual Indiana Agriculture [Photo Contest](#).

The contest is open to Indiana residents and was created to recognize the hard work and contributions of Hoosier farmers, as well as the beauty of the state's agricultural landscape.

"Indiana has some of the most breathtaking views and unique areas, and this contest is the perfect opportunity to showcase what you find most beautiful about our great state," said Lt. Governor Crouch.



Participants are encouraged to submit photos that reflect the wide array of agriculture. Here are the categories:

- **Conservation:** Highlighting Indiana's natural beauty with photos of landscapes, water and wildlife.
- **Agritourism:** This category includes seasonal and agricultural destinations, orchards, wineries,

farmers' markets and produce.

- **Faces of Agriculture:** Featuring those who grow and produce food, fuel and fiber engaged in farming/agricultural activities.
- **On the Farm:** Every building, piece of equipment or activity that is a part of life on an Indiana farm can be included.

In total, 10 winners will be selected: two from each category and two overall. Winners will be invited to attend a special ceremony at the Indiana State Fair, where they will be recognized

and receive certificates from Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch and Indiana State Department of Agriculture Director Bruce Kettler. Contest winners will also have their photographs featured in the offices of the Lt. Governor's Family of Business in Indianapolis.

"Agriculture touches each part of our state," said Kettler. "Through your photo submissions we can see the

diversity, beauty and tradition that is Indiana agriculture."

Contestants can submit up to five photos in digital format. Photos will be evaluated based on creativity, composition and category representation. Entries must be submitted by 5 p.m. (ET) June 30.

Click [here](#) for entry forms, guidelines and criteria.

## State employee blood drive set for June 10

State employees can [sign up today](#) to donate blood on the Indiana Government Center campus June 10.

Appointments are available from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in IGC-S. conference rooms B and C. Participants will be required to follow

social distancing guidelines and remain six feet from one another. Registrants will also be required to wear a mask or face covering.

Learn more about how Versiti Blood Center of Indiana is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic [here](#).

## Stay up to date with COVID-19 news

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

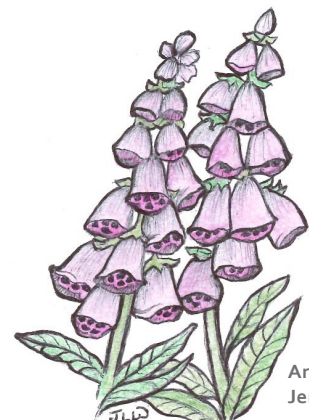
## Helpful resources

### Anthem Resources

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

### General Resources

- ISDH COVID-19 Call Center—877-826-0011 (open 8am-8pm)
- 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 (espanol)



Artwork by  
Jerry Williams

# State Fair Canceled

Finding a Lemon Shakeup or a fried Snickers bar may be a bit difficult this summer, as the Indiana State Fair Commission and the State Fair Board have decided the Indiana State Fair will not operate as it has in past years, at least not in 2020. Instead, there will be a modified State Fair 4-H Livestock Show, with some additional activities in

August. These changes, as you have probably already guessed, are due to the impact of COVID-19.

State Fair Commission officials say they had to pivot as key elements such as vendors and partners began “falling off” for the annual event. Still, the commission hopes to remain true to its mission by providing events that will allow

4-H members to be “recognized for their dedication and hard work.” The commission has promised the State Fair will be back at full strength in 2021.

For more information regarding the cancellation, and the remaining 4-H events, visit [indianastatefair.com](http://indianastatefair.com).

## SuccessFactors updates set to improve employee experience

SAP SuccessFactors 

We’re happy to announce some updates to SuccessFactors that will improve the employee experience.

These updates will be available beginning Saturday, June 6 and include the following enhancements:

- Improved People Search Function – The people search function will now deliver better results. All state of Indiana employees will benefit from this feature.
- Candidate Profile Direct Links – Hiring managers with permissions to access requisitions, HR employees, and recruiters will now be able to access a candidate’s profile

directly, with a link included when a colleague forwards a candidate’s information.

- Copy and Share Application URL – Recruiters can now copy and share an application URL from the job application summary screen to increase efficiency and productivity.

Additionally, as of June 1 the People Profile will be enhanced to include your performance rating for the 2019 review period. The People Profile allows employees to view personal/job information and share previous work experience and education. The Background Information and Talent Profile sections of your Profile are

currently visible only to you. As we work to enhance your employee experience, you will be notified when this information is made visible to your HR representative and agency management to offer targeted, professional development opportunities. View/update your People Profile by selecting “My Employee File” or “Employee Files” from the main menu.

This summer, a new feature will allow managers visibility to their requisitions and requisitions that are further down the organizational chart. This is more transparent and efficient.

## INSPD working with CVS to help ensure state employees stay current on vaccinations

The Indiana State Personnel Department (INSPD) is committed to ensuring that employees and their families stay current on their vaccinations.

In light of the ongoing pandemic, INSPD has decided to work with CVS to come up with effective and safe solutions for employees and dependents to receive necessary vaccinations.

Employees and dependents are always welcome to visit a CVS

Pharmacy near them in order to receive preventative vaccines throughout the year. The following list of immunizations can be found at most CVS Pharmacy locations.

Employees and dependents will need to bring their Anthem insurance card. No appointment is needed, and the waiver form can be completed ahead of time to further increase the process. The waiver form can be found in the Invest In Your Health website, click

[here](#) to access it.

Immunizations Available:

- Shingles
- Tdap
- Hep A
- Hep B
- Pneumonia
- MMR

Please contact the Benefits Hotline at 317-232-1167 or 877-248-0007



# Alec, Gary, and the story of the first ‘Kidney of the Wabash’

## Governor’s digital media director donates kidney to father

Being named a “Sagamore of the Wabash” is one of the highest civilian honors a Hoosier can receive.

The award, which dates back to the mid-1940s, has recognized the distinguished service of some of Indiana’s most notable celebrities, sports stars, and even ordinary citizens who accomplish extraordinary things. Among the honorees are the likes of David Letterman, Eva Mozes Kor, John Morton-Finney, Adam Vinatieri, Muhammad Ali, and Ryan White. It’s a rather exclusive club comprised of people who made a world of difference in their own ways, via a lasting impact on the Hoosier Heartland -- and the nation as a whole.

It’s difficult to say with any certainty exactly how many Hoosiers have received the honor, which is awarded by the governor at his or her discretion, and in the grand scheme of things it’s a relative few who could say they’re members of such a “club.”

But there’s only one “Kidney of the Wabash,” and the young man on which this admittedly facetious and cheeky nod to the esteemed Sagamore was bestowed more than earned his one-of-a-kind distinction. Gary Gray is living proof of that, and months after a life-changing kidney donation from his son, Alec, both are in good health and even better spirits.

### From son to father

Alec Gray proudly displays his “Kidney of the Wabash” in his home office. The digital communications director for Gov. Eric Holcomb, Gray (and his soon-to-be donated organ) were presented the honor in a “going away” party that preceded Alec’s

preparation for surgery, and his subsequent time away from work to recover.

“The going away party for my kidney was not only hilarious, but really meaningful,” Alec said. “It was one of those things that was so unexpected, but that’s what made it perfect. You could have offered me any other prize or reward against it, and I’ll take the Kidney of the Wabash 10 times out of 10.”

But the humorous decree and an Operation-themed cake were really just physical symbols of the care and support he received from his colleagues as he prepared to go “under the knife” for his dad.

“My coworkers stepped in and helped out every time I had to take time off to go have an appointment and while I was recovering,” Alec said. “I’m incredibly thankful for that support because without it, I’m not sure I would have been able to do the donation.”

The support of Alec’s friends and family was vital as there was little time to waste. Gary was in need of a kidney as the organ he’d received from a donor in 2001 was failing. His kidney function had decreased to around seven to nine percent. Dialysis would be necessary if much more function was lost.

The elder Gray was diagnosed with Type 2 diabetes earlier in life. He was the recipient of a pancreas transplant in 2005 that, coupled with his earlier kidney transplant, dramatically improved his quality of life.

“He no longer had to watch his blood sugar or be as mindful about the foods he was and wasn’t allowed to eat,” Alec said.

As Gary’s kidney function deteriorated, his wife Anne created a Facebook page called “Gary’s Journey to a New Kidney” in January 2019. It was around that



Alec Gray was awarded a “Kidney of the Wabash” as a parting gift from his colleagues in the office of Gov. Eric Holcomb prior to donating a kidney to his father.

time that Alec began to wonder if he could be his dad’s donor.

“The link to the initial Living Kidney Donor form was posted on the page and I decided to fill it out to see what happened,” Alec said. “To be honest, I figured I would just fill out the form and see what they said.

The answer he got wasn’t the one he wanted.

“The Living Donor coordinator left me a voicemail shortly after that essentially said that I didn’t fit in their weight criteria,” said Gray. “I had to lose 15 pounds before they would be able to move to the next step and they wanted me to be closer to 210 pounds to actually do the procedure.

At the time, Alec said he weighed about 260 pounds. The disappointing news served only to motivate him to do whatever he needed to do to qualify as a donor.

“It became more of a personal challenge to see if I could lose the weight,” Alec recalled. “I was at the point where I thought to myself, ‘fifteen pounds doesn’t seem like

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

## Alec, Gary, and the story of the first ‘Kidney of the Wabash’

that much. I’ll do it and see what happens.’ I knew I wouldn’t forgive myself if I never found out if I was a match just because [of my weight]. I had to know if it was possible for me to donate or not.”

### Making it happen

Alec bought an exercise bike and worked out on it regularly. He dropped soda from his diet and began to eat healthier. After a lot of hard work and commitment, the pounds dropped off and Alec found that not only was he qualified to donate, he was a match for his father. In all, Alec lost more than 40 pounds.

In February, the important day finally arrived. Alec and Gary were admitted to IU Health in Indianapolis where the procedure would be performed. After all of his work to improve his health, Alec would now have the chance to vastly enhance his father’s quality of life.

“I felt great heading into the surgery,” said Alec. “The team at IU Health does a lot to keep you prepared through the whole process and my friends, family, and coworkers were very supportive.”

As one might expect, however, the prospect of undergoing such a delicate procedure gave Alec

butterflies.

“My blood pressure was up for sure that morning, but the support system I had there was really helpful,” said Gray.

Alec spent three days in the hospital. He remembers little of the first and fought through pain on the second. He did get the chance to see his dad for the first time after the surgery on that initial day, which is one of the few things he can recall immediately post-op. By the third day, Alec felt well enough to walk to the unit in which Gary was recovering.

“Emotionally, I think it was great,” said Alec. “I was happy that I could help my dad out. His energy level just got higher and higher each day in the hospital. It was good to see him have energy again because before the surgery he really wasn’t able to do much with his kidney function being so low.”

Alec credits his wife Kaylyn, a nurse, for playing a significant role in his recovery, but the joy of seeing his dad’s health improve dramatically undoubtedly reminded Alec that he’d made the right decision.

Not that there had ever been any doubt.

“[My parents] told me from day one that I didn’t have to do it,” said Alec. “My mom constantly reminded me that it was okay if I changed my mind. I’m pretty stubborn and I had to get it from someone. There was never any doubt that I should go through with the surgery, and I’m thankful for the support I have gotten my whole life from my parents.”

comes from personal experience.

Alec’s mother previously donated a kidney to one of her team members at Anthem, so she knows everything there is to know about the process. Both of Alec’s parents have volunteered for [Donate Life America](#), speaking in classrooms about the importance of organ donation.

“They are really incredible people and I’m proud to be part of our family,” said Alec.

Family is everything to the Grays, all native Hoosiers. Alec grew up in Martinsville, attended high school in Greenwood, and graduated from Franklin College.

“Indiana is a huge part of my life and I can’t think of anywhere else I’d rather be,” he said.

If home truly is “where the heart is,” the Grays are certainly there – and there is plenty of heart to go around among them. Gary’s improving health is perhaps the greatest takeaway from this unique experience for Alec.

“My dad is doing great,” said Alec. “His kidney function is great; I think he might actually have the best function of any of us. The best part is seeing him have energy again. Before the surgery, all he could really do was sit on the couch and watch TV. Now he is able to take walks and be more engaged in the things we can do as a family.”

That prized “Kidney of the Wabash” award also comes with some good-natured joking around.

“My dad and I have always been close, but I know he appreciates what I did,” Alec said. “I know that if the roles were reversed, he would have done the same for me. I do joke with him that if he is mean to me that I will take the kidney back, but I don’t think he’s buying it.”

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department



Alec Gray donated a kidney to his father in February. Alec, who works as the digital communications director for Gov. Holcomb, and Alec’s father Gary are doing well in the months following the procedure.

### Family bond

Their advice



## Starting with one good day

### Addiction recovery specialist pens first book

For the better part of 30 years, Michael Rounds has fought to stay free from the addictions that at one time threatened to upend essentially every facet of his life.

For more than a decade and a half, he's leaned on those experiences, and his will to live the life he's always wanted, to help others overcome a nightmarish servitude to drugs or alcohol. Rounds, an addiction recovery specialist for the Indiana Department of Correction's Branchville Correctional Facility, knows the battle well because he fought it himself – and won.

"I was sitting on a barstool, completely intoxicated once again, only this time I was at the point which nearly cost me everything; and when I say everything, I mean everything," Rounds wrote in his new self-published book.

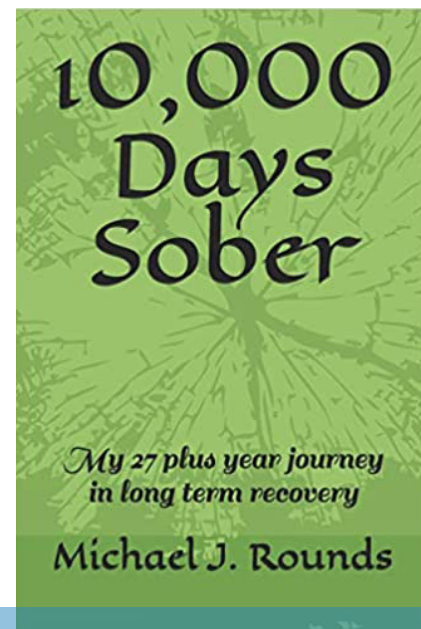
With more than 10,000 days of sobriety behind – and ahead of him – Michael is now sharing his personal trial through his book, *10,000 Days Sober: My 27-Year Journey in Long-Term Recovery*. His work is a recap of his struggles with alcoholism and offers a firsthand look at a journey he hopes others battling addiction will also take. It's a physical and psychological pilgrimage of sorts that not everyone is fortunate

enough to complete. But it's a journey rooted in hope, and Michael Rounds is working to share that optimism through his job as well as his newfound calling as an author.

### One good day

"They say the road to recover is a hard and sometimes bittersweet journey, and it all begins with the decision to start on the journey – and I had to start with the first day," Rounds writes in *10,000 Days*. For the married army veteran, working to help others overcome addiction has been a cathartic and fulfilling experience. When he decided to put it all into words in the form of a book, he found the process therapeutic.

"I started writing my book in January 2018, when I took some time off to get my life in focus as I had been going through some difficult times," Rounds wrote. "I would say I was amazed how much I could reflect on as this



Michael Rounds released his first book earlier this year. It's called *10,000 Days Sober: My 27-Year Plus Journey in Long-Term Recovery*. It can be purchased [here](#).

was nearly 30 years of my life. There are days I cannot remember what I had for breakfast the day before."

The experience of confronting his long personal battle for the purposes of sharing it with others was a trial in itself.

"I would also say that as I look back on those 30 years that there were a lot of times that I could have gave into my own personal demons and addiction and would have never made it as long as I did, and that actually is extremely frightening."

Thinking of the possible negative outcomes that might have stemmed from his addictions helps fuel Michael's desire to point others on the same path he once walked in a better direction.

"Being an individual that has been in long-term recovery, I felt that I had something to give," Rounds said. "When the Therapeutic Community/Recovery While Incarcerated Program was introduced to Branchville,

(Continued on page 12)



Michael and Julie Rounds are pictured here with their children Johnathan, Justin, Michael, Kayla, Isaiah, and Lena. Michael, an addiction recovery specialist at Branchville Correctional Facility, recently published his first book which recounts his own battle with addiction and his nearly three decades of sobriety.

(Continued from page 11)

## Starting with one good day

I wanted to be a part of it to be able to help rehabilitate those individuals incarcerated to be able to re-enter society and live a life without having to go back to their addiction.”

### Guiding light

That was in 2006, about two years after Michael began his work at Branchville Correctional Facility. The Perry County native started as a correctional officer before becoming a substance abuse counselor. In 2010 he became an addiction recovery specialist.

With approximately half of his journey of sobriety spent helping others wage their own wars against dependency and addiction, Rounds has found joy in the success stories and vicarious pain through the ongoing struggles of those he wished to help.

“I think that the thing that I enjoy the most about what I am doing is being able to see the growth and the development of an individual that wants more out of their life,” said Michael. “I have run into individuals on the outside of the prison, and hearing how they are

doing tells me that I had a part of the change in their life.”

On the other side of the coin, Rounds cites the inmates who see the recovery program as little more than an opportunity to potentially receive a reduced sentence and others who are not truly committed to facing their addictions as the most difficult part of his work. Still others, ultimately, lose the battle.

“Another challenge is hearing about someone that had overdosed and passed away due to having to have that fix one last time,” Rounds reflected.

### For Judy. For Kayla. Forever.

Tragedy and loss in Michael’s own life have helped shape who he is and what he continues to do to help others.

His mother Judy died from cancer in 2016. His daughter Kayla died by suicide in 2018. Rounds owns a 1966 Ford Mustang that has become a regular at classic car shows, many of which are organized to benefit charitable causes.

He named the car “Judy.”

“I take the opportunity to talk to whoever I can about lung cancer and suicide awareness,” Michael said. “I have attended

over 100 car shows over the years, and I enjoy talking to others about my car and especially about my mother and daughter.”

Michael and his wife Julie live in Perry County. They’ll celebrate their 25th anniversary July 1. They’ve adopted five children throughout the years, who now range in age from 14 to 21. It’s a stark contrast to where his life was almost 30 years – 10,381 days and counting - ago.

Michael Rounds is living proof that addiction doesn’t have to dictate any person’s outcome. He’s hoping to use his life experiences to help others see a light that, in his earlier years, Michael himself thought he might never see. He’s doing it every day at Branchville, and his first book is a first-person account of how he’s made it this far.

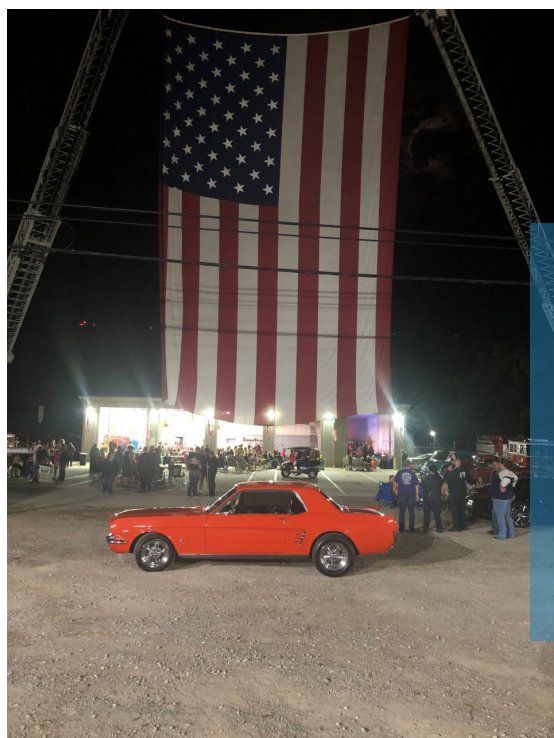
And he’s not giving up.

“I would have to say that I had a story to share with others that needed to be told,” said Rounds. “Working with those that have addiction issues in the system gave me the inspiration to those individuals across the country that are still active in their addiction to give them hope that they can live a life without using. My hope is that they see someone has been sober for 10,000 days and [that] will cause them to pick up the book to see that it can be done.”

Michael Rounds’ 10,000 Days Sober: My 27-Plus Year Journey in Long-Term Recovery can be purchased online [here](#).

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department

Photos submitted by Michael Rounds, Indiana Department of Correction



*Michael named his 1966 Ford Mustang after his mother Judy, who passed away in 2016. Rounds has brought the vehicle to more than a hundred classic automobile shows where he shares information about his mother and his daughter, Kayla, who died in 2018, with attendees.*



# Health coaching leads to better wellness for longtime DOR employee

Randal Boone was serious about making healthy changes to his lifestyle, but when it came time to consider options to make that goal a reality, he made a choice that, in spite of his initial reservations, helped make his wellness journey a more positive experience than he might ever have imagined.

To be sure, the concept of working one-on-one with a health coach was, for Randal, perhaps the least desirable of the activities available to him through the [ActiveHealth portal](#). Completing activities such as reaching Level 5 by finishing online health modules and goals, meeting a physical activity goal as outlined [here](#), or working with a health coach one-on-one qualify those enrolled in a health plan sponsored by the Indiana State Personnel Department to receive a discount on their premium in 2021.

“Doctor’s orders” and the goal of reducing his healthcare costs were some motivating factors for Boone to move forward with pursuing a healthier lifestyle, but how he would achieve those goals was something of a question mark.

Taking advantage of the benefits of the free ActiveHealth program made perfect sense, so Randal explored the options and eventually took the route that, at least at first, was probably the least comfortable option for him.

“First, let me say I was very skeptical and the thought of having health-related discussions with a stranger was something I would have never considered,” the Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR) Motor Carrier Services director said.

But that was more than 16 months ago, and prior to meeting ActiveHealth health coach Sarah Anderson, one of a team of wellness professionals who work one-on-one with state employees to help them meet individual health goals. A dedicated team offering 1:1 coaching over the phone provides a service similar to that provided by Sarah, a Purdue University grad with more than 14 years of experience in her field.

Anderson’s expertise allayed any of Boone’s initial uneasiness.

“Sarah has a knack for making people comfortable while discussing important health issues,” said Randal.

Through the program, Anderson encouraged Boone to adopt some healthier habits while connecting him with online resources to help further advance his personal health goals.

“We have discussed eating habits, exercise, and tricks to make healthy food taste better,” said Randal. “Sarah sends me articles and health updates to support my health education.”

Functioning as a coach and even a support system for Boone’s push toward a healthier lifestyle, Anderson’s input has helped Randal realize many of his wellness goals, in a relatively short period of time.

“To date, I have lost weight, lowered my hemoglobin A1C, blood pressure, and cholesterol to acceptable levels,” commented Boone, who has worked for the state of Indiana for more than 13 years.

After his initial hesitancy, Randal Boone is now perhaps as comfortable as he’s ever been in accepting wellness advice, and he’s more than happy to share his positive experiences with others.

“I am a great believer in the program and would be happy to discuss my experiences with anyone who is hesitant to participate,” said Randal.

Boone’s one-on-one coaching program began before the public health emergency related to the novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) led to widespread changes in the daily lives of Hoosiers and others throughout the world.

Fortunately, state of Indiana employees can take advantage of a similar option by talking with a health coach over-the-phone. Call 855-202-4219 to get started. Completing only four sessions will qualify you to earn a premium discount in 2021! Learn more [here](#). Note: If your spouse is covered under your health plan, they will also have to complete an activity in order to qualify for the 2021 premium discount.

For more ways to be your best (and healthiest) you, visit [investinyourhealthindiana.com](http://investinyourhealthindiana.com).

*Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department*