



Greetings:

As you are aware, businesses, individuals and organizations around the world are making preparations for the potential spread of the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) that has heavily impacted a number of countries. The state of Indiana is no exception to these preparations. Whenever a new illness occurs and spreads rapidly, it naturally can cause worry, especially in rapidly evolving situations when information is changing frequently.

At this time, no confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been identified in Indiana, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says that for the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is low. However, the CDC also has urged Americans to stay informed and take steps to ensure personal readiness. This is a time to plan, not to panic.

What does this mean for you?

- Regularly practice the same steps you would if you had influenza or another respiratory illness, such as washing your hands thoroughly and often, covering your cough, staying home if you're sick, and regularly disinfecting surfaces (especially in common areas);
- Continue your current workplace practices, reporting to work and communicating if you are ill as you typically would.
- When considering travel, follow the CDC guidance, which you can find [here](#).

My team at the state Department of Health is working diligently under the direction of Governor Eric J. Holcomb to make sure the state is prepared and communicating the latest information about the outbreak. The situation changes rapidly, and I know that can cause concern because we don't have all the answers yet. What we do have, however, is a plan for how to respond if and when COVID-19 comes to Indiana. The state also has acquired the needed test to perform COVID-19 testing for possible cases in Indiana.

We are hosting weekly meetings with county health departments and healthcare providers, are operating a 24/7 call center, have formed a state-level advisory group, are offering guidance to schools and universities, are surveying providers to gather the most up-to-date information about their capacities and services and are ordering supplies.

We have also launched a dedicated [webpage](#) where you can get the most up-to-date and accurate information. We also have a call center that is open 24 hours a day. The center may be reached at 317-233-7125 from 8:15 am. To 4:45 p.m. Eastern Time and 317-233-1325 after hours. Although COVID-19 is concerning, influenza remains a larger concern at this time. More than 60 Hoosiers have died from influenza this flu season, and activity remains high across our state. An effective vaccine is available for influenza, and it is not too late to get your flu shot.

We will keep you updated if there are significant changes to the outbreak or to protocol.

Best wishes,

Dr. Kris Box
State Health Commissioner



The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

March, 2020

Run the State 5K and Hike Series returns April 18



Indiana Dunes State Park will once again serve as the debut event for the Run the State 5K and Hike Series. A 5K will be held at this popular northwest Indiana tourist destination April 18.

Fifth annual series hits Dunes, Ft. Ben, Ouabache, Spring Mill

What has caves, a pioneer village, sand dunes, horseback riding, some of the Hoosier State's most scenic walking trails, dog parks, fishing, biking, golf, miles of sandy beaches, an astronaut memorial, a one-of-a-kind fire tower, camping, AND... um, bison?

The amazing array of [Indiana State Parks](#) hosting the 2020 Run the State 5K and Hike Series – that's what!

With a total of four fun events planned as part of this annual

[Invest in Your Health](#) staple, this year's slate of hikes and run/walks will allow state employees to experience a whirlwind tour of some of Indiana's most unique and memorable state parks.

The new Run the State season once again kicks off with a trip to [Indiana Dunes State Park](#), a majestic northwest Indiana location that is home to three miles of beaches and unique sand dunes. It also has a stroller and pet-friendly trail that has established itself as a favorite for casual walkers as well as avid runners.

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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.

Got a story?

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

Social media



Follow [@SOIEmployees](https://twitter.com/SOIEmployees)



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



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

Run the State 5K and Hike Series returns April 18

Participants will visit the dunes **Saturday, April 18**, for the first Run the State 5K. Always an appropriate mid-spring debut for the series, Indiana Dunes State Park is beautiful year-round. Guests may want to dress warmly, however, as April on the shores of Lake Michigan can get a bit chilly.

Of course, that's nothing a good run can't fix, right?

The next stop will take us to Wells County for the first time since the summer of 2018. [Ouabache State Park](#) features a bison enclosure (home to an entire herd of majestic creatures) as well as a 100-foot fire tower built in the 1930s. The **June 27 5K** is bound to be a pleasant walk for employees and their families, though the course is not stroller-friendly.

Located on the banks of the Wabash River, Ouabache (which is actually pronounced "Wabash," but you'll be hard pressed to find someone in Bluffton who doesn't call it "O-ba-chee"), was first recognized as a state park in 1983. It's less than half an hour's drive from Fort Wayne, and is perhaps one of northeast Indiana's best kept "secrets."

Next on the agenda is a trip to [Spring Mill State Park](#) – a first for Run the State – to hike an

expansive park that features a period-perfect pioneer village and a spring-powered watermill. The first hike of the season will take place in a cavernous park seemingly frozen in time, [transporting guests into 1863](#) to see how some Hoosier settlers lived in the midst of the American Civil War.

The hike at Spring Mill State Park is set for **July 11** and should be a mid-summer blast for fledgling Run the State participants AND seasoned hikers who've been part of the fun since the series began in 2016.

All Hoosier state parks are steeped in history, but did you know that [Fort Harrison State Park](#) wears an important bit of Indiana's past on its sleeve – er, uh, in its name?

The Lawrence-based park bears the name of former U.S. President Benjamin Harrison (you may have heard it called "Fort Ben") who, though born in Ohio, served as a U.S. Senator for Indiana. Following his single-term presidency, he resided in Indianapolis until his death in 1901. The park bearing his name opened in 1906 and is located on part of what was once the site of Fort Benjamin Harrison.

More than a century later, the park remains an attractive option for golfers, equestrians, and anyone wanting to walk or hike some absolutely gorgeous Hoosier scenery. Paying homage to its military roots, visitors can also enjoy the park's [Museum of 20th Century Warfare](#).

Fort Harrison has previously served as the grand finale for the Run the State series, and this year will be no different when we visit the historic park **Aug. 15**. What will change a bit, however, is the format. Previous events have welcomed runners and walkers to identical 5K events

held (almost) back-to-back. The 2020 program retains the popular 5K, but adds a hiking option in lieu of a second race.

The dual-event setup will encourage runners and walkers to take a stroll (or try to set a new personal best 5K time), while hiking pros will surely enjoy time on the trail. It's the best of both Run the State "worlds" and should be an appropriate send-off for another great season of outdoor events.

The 5K and hike series is open to all state of Indiana employees and their families. Some visitors choose to bring along the family's four-legged members as well. The dogs involved typically appear to enjoy the event as much as their human counterparts – and maybe more so.

As always, the Run the State series is intended to encourage state employees to be active while simultaneously showcasing the nearly limitless fun that awaits visitors to Indiana state parks. Guests are encouraged to "make a day of it," exploring the parks and checking out some of each location's distinct features and attractions.

There is no charge to attend any of the events, though a park entrance fee of \$7 (which allows admittance of a carload of people) is in place.

Check out the links below to register for your chosen event.

- [Indiana Dunes State Park - April 18](#)
- [Ouabache State Park - June 27](#)
- [Spring Mill State Park - July 11](#)

Note: Registration for Ft. Harrison State Park will open at a later date.

Be sure to keep an eye on investinyourhealthindiana.com all season long for event photos, wrap-ups, and more.



One of the new additions to the 2020 Run the State 5K and Hike Series is a hike at Fort Harrison State Park. This year's grand finale takes place Aug. 15 and will feature a 5K as well as a hike.

2021 Premium Discount – Start earning yours now!



Earn your 2021 Premium Discount

Employees and covered spouses must each complete ONE of the following by Sept. 30 in the **ActiveHealth platform**.



2021 Premium Discount – Start earning yours now!

We are now two months into the 2020 ActiveHealth program year.

Have you started working on an activity to qualify for the 2021 Premium Discount?

This is your chance to earn the lowest medical premiums possible on any plan you choose for 2021! In order to qualify, employees **and spouses enrolled** in coverage must each complete **one** of the following options by Sept. 30, 2020:

1. Complete four individual health coaching sessions (in-person or by phone) through ActiveHealth.
2. Reach Level 5 in ActiveHealth’s online portal by completing health education modules and goals.

3. Record 200 days of physical activity fitness tracking through a device synced to the ActiveHealth platform. Any day with 10,000 steps or 30 minutes of physical activity counts toward the 200 day goal.

If you want to complete the Physical Activity option, **March 15 is the last day you can start**. Make sure you have reconnected your fitness tracker to the ActiveHealth portal in 2020. Keep track of your progress towards completing an activity in your Rewards Center on the ActiveHealth portal.

In addition to the 2021 Premium Discount, you can also earn a \$50 e-gift card for completing your health assessment and a \$100 e-gift card for completing your biometric screening.

Complete details are available at [InvestInYourHealthIndiana.com](https://www.investinyourhealthindiana.com).

ActiveHealth is a wellness program offered by the Indiana State Personnel Department (INSPD) as part of your medical benefits package. It helps you make little changes that can have a big impact on your health. Employees and spouses enrolled in a SPD-sponsored medical plan have unlimited access to health coaches and a library of health information.

For more information, please check out the resources available at [InvestInYourHealthIndiana.com](https://www.investinyourhealthindiana.com), or call the INSPD benefits hotline at 317-232-1167 or 877-248-0007 from 7:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday. Email the benefits team at spdbenefits@spd.in.gov.

Got a minute?

The [CVS Minute Clinic](#) option is now live and the voucher is available in the [ActiveHealth Portal Rewards Center](#).

To find the voucher, log in to the ActiveHealth portal and click the “Get a biometric screening” link on the homepage, then scroll down under Option 2 and click on the “voucher” link.



Remember: Print the voucher and take it with

you to the screening.

There are 43 Minute Clinic locations throughout the state of Indiana, and locations in other states can be used as well. Depending on what Minute Clinic

is chosen, employees and spouses may schedule an appointment or hold a spot in line so there is less waiting time when they arrive.

Click [here](#) to find Minute Clinic locations and make an appointment, and be sure to print the voucher from your ActiveHealth Portal to take with you for screening.



March 2 - 15

**GRAB YOUR TEAM, GET YOUR STEPS
FOR THE CHANCE TO WIN
A \$25 AMAZON GIFT CARD!**

To Participate:

- Form your team of 2 - 4 people
- Only steps from a fitness tracker connected to the Wellness Challenge Portal will count
- All teams who reach the 560,000 step goal will be entered into a prize drawing

Questions? Call 317-537-9764

5 Tips to Get Started:

- Take the stairs
- Walk during phone calls
- Park further away
- Schedule a walking meeting
- Take walks on your day off



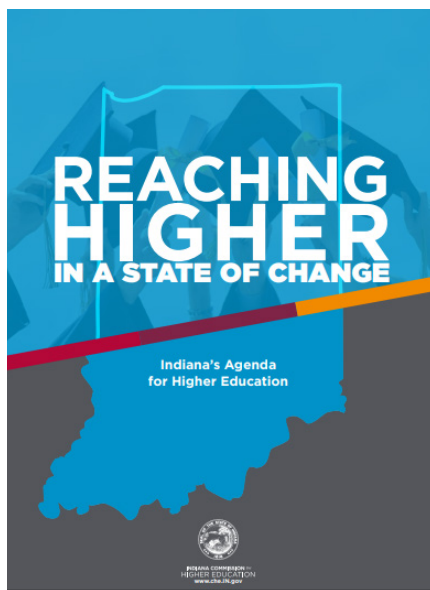
Lubbers presents state's new agenda for higher education

CHE to use fourth strategic plan as guide to 2025

The [Indiana Commission for Higher Education](#) is prioritizing college completion, equity and talent through its fourth strategic plan, [Reaching Higher in a State of Change](#).

Teresa Lubbers, Indiana's Commissioner for Higher Education, introduced the new guiding document for the state of Indiana during the 2020 State of Higher Education Address.

Lubbers unveiled the details of the new plan Feb. 11, during her eighth annual address in the north atrium of the Indiana Statehouse.



Reaching Higher in a State of Change is the Commission's plan to get to 2025, which is the deadline for Indiana's big goal of having at least 60 percent of Hoosiers with quality credentials beyond a high school diploma. Currently, 43.4 percent of Hoosiers have education and training past high school.

"*Reaching Higher in a State of Change* provides the vision to get us to our goal by 2025," said Lubbers. "We have outlined key

strategies and policies in what we are calling our 'Blueprint for Change,' which are aggressive and essential to our success. These strategies have been selected to support our priorities of completion, equity and talent."

Completion

College completion has been a continual goal for the Commission. Approaching 2025, the changing landscape of higher education and the demands of a new and changing economy require an expanded definition of "completion" and "higher education." This means postsecondary education includes all quality credentials from short-term certificates, apprenticeships and industry certifications to two- and four-year college degrees.

Equity

In defining equity, the Commission acknowledges that life's circumstances or obstacles should not dictate a person's opportunity to succeed. Since 2013, the Commission has been focused on reducing and eliminating the state's achievement gaps, resolving to cut those gaps in half by 2018 and close educational gaps by 2025. More work is needed to eliminate the gaps entirely.

Talent

The Commission also highlights the priority of talent, in order to unlock the state's talent needs and develop and unleash Indiana's potential. By taking into account a full range of education and workforce credentials, *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* goes beyond the "either-or" depiction of higher education and workforce to a more productive and meaningful focus on developing talent.

"Indiana's willingness to embrace this new higher education compact

with a collective sense of urgency and optimism will determine our state's readiness and prosperity for decades to come," said Lubbers. "The Commission is focused on creating a talent system that affords all Hoosiers the benefits associated with higher learning – learning that can be attained in multiple ways to respond to a changing world of work."

Measuring change

A key component of *Reaching Higher in a State of Change* is measuring the state's progress. The Commission will issue an annual report card leading up to 2025, highlighting these three metrics for change:

- **Educational attainment**, through progress toward 60 percent of Hoosiers with education above a high school diploma; as well as progress on college-going and completion indicators that move the needle on educational attainment
- **Career relevance and preparation**, through progress toward 100 percent of post-secondary programs requiring an internship, work-based learning, research project or other student engagement experience that has career relevance
- **Economic impact**, by measuring progress toward Indiana becoming a leading Midwest state for median household income (adjusted for cost of living), including short-term and long-term goals:
 - By 2025, Indiana will be above the average

(Continued on page 7)

Lubbers presents state's new agenda for higher education

of peer states for median household income

- By 2030, Indiana will be in the top five of its peer states for median household income

“These are ambitious goals but they’re the right ones for Hoosiers and our state,” Lubbers said.

“We know that the Commission cannot meet these ambitious goals alone. We need strong partners inside state government and our institutions, along with employers and the philanthropic community.”

Reaching Higher in a State of Change highlights several Hoosiers and stories about their individual

journeys through education and training. During her address, Lubbers recognized those featured in the strategic plan and others who are making a difference in Indiana.

“The work we are doing across our state is impacting individuals’ quality of life,” Lubbers said. “Real Hoosiers are making the decisions to pursue education and new skills to the betterment of their families, their communities and their futures.”

Lubbers also highlighted the state’s early college promise scholarship, the [21st Century Scholars](#) program. Earlier in the day during 21st Century Scholars

Day, the Commission hosted current college Scholars, alumni of the program, key community partners, universities and colleges and others in celebration of the program’s 30th anniversary. Governor Eric Holcomb recognized the day with a proclamation and both chambers of the General Assembly approved resolutions to acknowledge that 40,000 Hoosiers have completed a degree with the Scholars program and over 100,000 students – from seventh graders to seniors in college – are enrolled today.

To read the full 2020 State of Higher Education Address, [click here](#).

Fun happenings at Statehouse Education Center

Spring and summer camps just around the corner

The [Indiana Statehouse Education Center](#) is gearing up for spring and summer fun.

The annual **Spring Camp** for kids in second through sixth grade starts April 2. Children of state employees can sign up now to learn all about Gene Stratton Porter and how to be a naturalist.

Spots are also open for **Summer Camp** taking place this year from June 15 to 26, June 29 to July 10, and July 13 to July 24.

Team leaders are also needed for Summer Camp. The Statehouse Education Center is looking for anyone age 18 or older to serve as a team leader. This is a paid position. Education Center coordinator Bailey Hinton-Matthews said can communicate with individual colleges so that students may receive academic credit for serving in this position.

For more information about these programs, contact Hinton-Matthews at bhinton1@idoa.in.gov or 317-233-5582.



The poster for Camp Indiana Spring Camp features a yellow background with a sun in the top left corner, a blue bird in flight, a wooden birdhouse, a wooden fence, and a signpost. The text on the poster includes:

Camp Indiana Spring Camp

Spend the day with us learning about Gene Stratton-Porter and how to be a naturalist

Campers must have parent/guardian working for State of Indiana

Campers must be going into 2nd-going into 6th grades

For more info: Bailey Hinton-Matthews, BHinton1@idoa.in.gov, 317-233-5582

\$20

April 3rd

ISDH community survey examines needs of Hoosier women and children

The Indiana Department of Health (ISDH) is conducting a maternal and child health needs assessment.

ISDH staff ask that anyone interested in participating should respond to this short 15 minute [survey](#) before March 16 to make sure the needs of women, children, teens, and families in your community are heard!



What is a maternal and child health needs assessment?

- As a part of the Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Block Grant, every five years the Maternal and Child Health and Children with Special Health Care Services divisions at ISDH complete a comprehensive needs assessment to better understand the state of health and well-being of women, children and families in Indiana. As part of the needs assessment, ISDH looks at the capacity of our state and local systems to meet those needs.



IN IT TOGETHER

Indiana Title V Needs Assessment

- ISDH is reviewing existing materials, reports and data to answer the question, *What do we already know?* ISDH recognizes the information they already know does not represent all community needs and that things may have changed since information was last collected. For that reason, ISDH is conducting a community survey.

What is the Community Survey?

- The community survey is being distributed to women, youth, parents, community members, and people who work with women and children across the state.
- The survey is short on purpose: The goal is to make sure ISDH hears about all the needs of women, children, and families in Indiana. After collecting responses ISDH, we will compile a big list of needs of this population. The final step is to identify additional activities to help narrow down the list to a set of statewide priorities.

How can you help?

- Post the community survey link on your website or social media, email it to your program staff, send it out to partners and participants via email distribution lists, and of course, respond to the survey yourself!
- ISDH also encourage you to send the link to family, friends and any other social groups you are a part of; ISDH wants to hear from anyone who might have thoughts about what women and children in Indiana need to thrive and reach their fullest potential.

Discounts



**March 18:
Pacers vs.
Warriors**

State of
Indiana
employees
can save

on the upcoming Pacers vs. Warriors game on Wed, March 18 at the Bankers Life Fieldhouse.

[Click here](#) for details and discount info.



**Quicken
Loans
promotions**

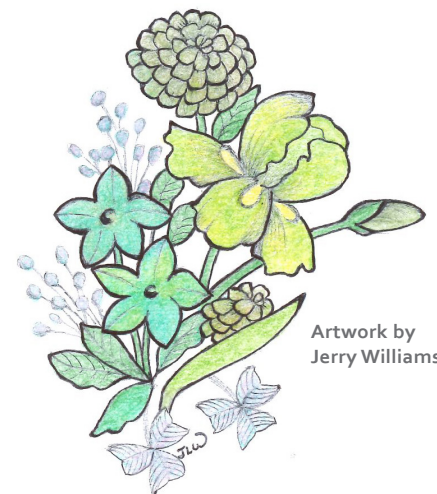
State of
Indiana
employees
can receive

\$1,000 off closing costs and \$500 back after closing.

[Click here](#) for details.

More discounts

For a full list of all discounts available to state employees, [click here](#).



Artwork by
Jerry Williams

BMV sets new milestone in customer wait time reduction

New technology, improved business practices, and enhanced employee training are helping Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (BMV) branches reduce customer wait time throughout the Hoosier State.

In 2019, the agency reached a new milestone in reducing “customer experience time” with an average visit taking only 13 minutes and four seconds. The mark was significant enough to earn mention from Gov. Eric Holcomb during his [2020 State of the State address](#) in January.

But the BMV isn’t stopping there. Kevin Garvey, BMV Chief Operating Officer, recently took time to discuss how the agency is continually making strides in improving customer service and satisfaction, from reducing visit times to making services more accessible.

Q: The Indiana BMV recently announced that customer visit times in 2019 averaged only 13 minutes and four seconds. How does this figure compare to past years’ customer visit times?

A: BMV customer experience time has consistently averaged under 15 minutes for several years. Investments in new technology, training, and process improvement have all contributed to the efficient customer service. In 2018, the BMV did have a spike in experience time, averaging a little over 18 minutes, because of significantly higher volumes of expiring driver’s licenses and IDs in one calendar year. Despite the one year spike, customer satisfaction rates have remained over 97 percent.

Q: What are some of the ways BMV branches are making services more convenient for customers?

A: The Indiana BMV is one of the leading and most innovative motor vehicle agencies in the

Indiana BMV Deputy Commissioner of Policy & Programs Noah Shelton and Indy West Team Leader Shannon Dubecky check out a BMV Service Kiosk. The kiosks allow customers to complete more than a dozen routine BMV transactions, 24/7.



country and is continually investing in technology to create choices for customers. The BMV has installed more than 30 24-hour BMV Connect kiosks* throughout the state and offers an online customer transaction site, [myBMV](#), to give Hoosiers choices when completing BMV transactions. The kiosks and online portal provide options for conducting business with the BMV any time of day. Customers can complete routine transactions such as renewing a registration, driver’s license, or requesting a replacement ID card at their convenience.

In 2019 the BMV also increased its Mobile Branch presence throughout the state and hosted multiple events to accommodate a variety of customer schedules and needs. In addition, processing centers for dealer and fleet customers were implemented to streamline services and give customers an option to conduct business with BMV partner locations on days the BMV is typically closed.

***BMV Connect kiosks are 24-hour self-service terminals, where customers can conduct more than 15 routine BMV transactions. Customers now have access to more than 32 BMV Connect kiosks throughout the state, plus five Kroger grocery store locations.**

Q: How have BMV personnel changed their practices in order to reduce wait times?

A: The agency has built on its success and continues to proactively invest in our associates. There have not been dramatic changes; rather a focus on making incremental changes to improve service. The BMV’s Learning and Development team transformed associate training and career development including both technical and soft skills. Associates now have access to a soft skills library, six fully staffed training centers across the state, and an increased number of trainers statewide. The new training curriculum and tools have improved training consistency, decreased training time for new associates, and the agency has seen a decline in turnover. The new training aims to help BMV associates grow in their job and give our team members necessary tools for a successful career, all while providing great government service to all Hoosiers - including low customer experience times.

Q: Who are some of the people who helped the agency reach this new level of service?

A: The BMV has worked together as one agency with the commitment of all BMV branch and central office associates to help maintain low customer experience times and exceptional customer service. The agency continues to look for new, innovative ways to engage with customers and allow Hoosiers to

(Continued on page 10)

BMV sets new milestone in customer wait time reduction



BMV Communications Graphic Designer Daniella Conti (left) and Customer Service Representative Kasey Hunt examine a BMV Connect Self-Service Kiosk. The agency is continually working to improve customer experiences, and new technology such as these computerized kiosks, is helping Hoosiers complete routine BMV tasks without even having to visit a branch.

such as the annual March Madness Tournament and “The BMV 500.”

Q: What’s next for BMV customer service? How does the agency plan to continue meeting customer needs in a speedy fashion?

A: *The BMV will continue to look for new opportunities and invest in technological advancements to provide great government service to all Hoosiers.*

The agency is still investing in new BMV Connect locations based on community need and branch transaction volume. In addition to increasing kiosk locations, the BMV intends to add to available transactions. Customers will also see upgrades to the myBMV online transaction site during the next few years.

Beyond those mediums, the BMV Mobile Branch will continue to increase pop-up events hosted by Indiana businesses and community organizations to accommodate various customer schedules and needs.

choose how they conduct business with the BMV.

Q: Do individual BMV branches track their wait times? If so, is there any “friendly competition” among the branches for who can achieve the best time? Can you share the branch with the lowest official wait time?

A: *All BMV branches track their customer experience times in two areas- Ticketed Visit Times and Total Ticketed Time. Ticketed Visit Times refer to how long it takes a branch associate to complete*

a customer’s transaction. Total Ticketed Times include the customer’s total time spent inside a BMV branch, also referred to as “customer experience time.” All branches have a goal to stay under 20 minutes for both Ticketed Visit Times and Total Ticketed Times.

Internal quarterly contests among all BMV branches help keep a competitive, but friendly nature among associates. Branches compete for the coveted title of champion and bragging rights during quarterly competitions

Don’t miss a moment and upgrade to a Real ID at the BMV’s Mobile Branch!

As of Oct. 1, 2020, all Hoosiers must have a Real ID to board a commercial flight or enter certain federal facilities.

State employees can upgrade to a Real ID at the BMV’s mobile branch located in the Indiana Government Center South Conference Center during the month of April.

Schedule an appointment by visiting in.gov/bmv/2405.htm. From the page, click “Schedule a Transaction Appointment” and you will be re-directed to the Appointments and Cancellations page. Next, click “Make an appointment” and then select “ROOM 7 APRIL 8” from the ‘Select

a Branch’ drop-down menu. You may select up to 5 transactions to complete during your Mobile Branch visit. After you click ‘Continue’ make sure to click April 8th on the calendar view to see available appointment times.

Only credit and debit card payments will be accepted at this event. Walk-in customers are welcome on a first-come, first-served basis with limited availability.

When: Wednesday, April 8

Where: IGC-S Conference Room 7

Time: 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Please bring all required

documentation to prove your identity, Social Security number, Indiana residency, and lawful status. **Also, if you have had a name change, additional documentation is required (marriage license, divorce decree, or court order).**

Plan ahead and check the required documents list before you schedule your appointment. Visit REALID.in.gov for a full list of acceptable documents in each of the above listed categories.

Don’t get grounded! Upgrade to a Real ID before the 2020 deadline.

Nominations now open for Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence

Do you know an individual, organization or government agency that is remarkable in its efforts to protect the state of Indiana's environment?

If so, consider nominating them for the Indiana Governor's Awards for Environmental Excellence.

The Indiana Department of Environmental Management (IDEM) is now accepting nominations for these awards, which recognize individuals and organizations that have implemented outstanding environmental strategies into their operations and decision-making processes.

"These are Indiana's most prestigious environmental recognition awards," said IDEM

Commissioner Bruno Pigott. "Each year the governor and I are proud of the ingenuity and innovation from Hoosiers and organizations around the state."

IDEM and Gov. Eric J. Holcomb's office will present seven awards, one in each of the following categories:

- Energy Efficiency/ Renewable Resources
- Environmental Education/ Outreach
- Five Year Continuous Improvement
- Greening the Government
- Land Use/Conservation
- Pollution Prevention
- Recycling/Reuse

The public is invited to submit nominations, and organizations may self-nominate. Nominations are open to all Indiana facilities, government agencies, individuals and other groups that implement exemplary environmental projects or initiatives with measurable results. An instructional webinar, eligibility requirements and details about the nomination process are available [here](#).

Nominations must be received by IDEM no later than **5 p.m. EDT Monday, April 6**. Awards will be presented at the annual Pollution Prevention Conference Sept. 16 at the Marriott Indianapolis N. For questions about the nomination process, contact Cameron Maschino at 317-233-5434 or GovAwards@idem.IN.gov.

Be a VIP, learn about Hoosier S.T.A.R.T. ASAP

YOU'RE A VIP... a Valued Indiana Participant!

Join plan advisors from the Hoosier S.T.A.R.T. Deferred Compensation plan and Empower Retirement for monthly events designed to help you save for the future and reach your dream retirement.

Each month this year, you'll have a chance to learn more about your 457(b) deferred compensation plan, also known as Hoosier S.T.A.R.T. On March 20, Hoosier S.T.A.R.T. will host an in-person VIP Open House at the Evansville-



Vanderburgh County Library Central Branch. This all-day event will allow plan participants to meet one-on-one with a Retirement Plan Advisor to discuss investment and retirement goals.

To register for this event or to learn about other VIP in-person events and online webinars, visit www.HoosierSTART.IN.Gov and click on "register for open houses."

Support Team IHCD!

The Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD) is participating in the [2020 UNCF Bowling for Scholars Bowl-A-Thon](#) Saturday, March 7.

The UNCF Bowl-A-Thon is a community fundraising event in which you can recruit family

members, friends, and co-workers to participate in a non-competitive bowling tournament to raise the much-needed funds to support UNCF students. The only competition is for the prizes, which go to a team and/or individuals based upon the amount of funds raised.

Click here to donate to one of the two IHCD teams:

Team 1 – [click here](#)

Team 2 – [click here](#)



Indiana Grown adds to long list of maps, trails and guides

[Indiana Grown](#) in February released its newest map of local artisans, the [Indiana Grown Distillery Trail](#).

This guide adds to the previous five maps, trails and guides Indiana Grown has created over the past two years to highlight the various segments of agriculture within their membership.

The Distillery Trail features 18 distilleries and their craft spirits, such as whiskey, vodka, and gin. Participants will discover members like Old 55 Distillery, which is Indiana's only sweet corn distillery, and [Hotel Tango](#), a veteran-owned distillery whose name pays tribute to the owner's military service. The distilleries are all members of Indiana Grown and many choose to partner with Indiana Grown member farms as well for their ingredients. This creates a unique collaboration that is purely Indiana from grain to glass.

"Indiana has a wealth of agritourism destinations and by creating these resources, Indiana Grown is helping shine a spotlight on their members who can attract consumers both inside and outside

of the state," said Lt. Governor Suzanne Crouch. "Our hope is that Hoosiers, and more broadly all Americans, will realize the quality products Indiana has to offer to those near and far."

The Distillery Trail is the latest resource added to the wide selection of maps Indiana Grown has to offer. Released in May of 2018, the [Indiana Grown Wine Trail](#) was the first of its kind for the program and featured 31 member wineries. Its success has since resulted in the Wine Trail's expansion to nearly 50 wineries. Most recently, the [Indiana Grown Brewery Trail](#) launched Jan. 30 highlighting 21 Indiana Grown member breweries. From pilsners to porters, these breweries are located all around the state and are using local ingredients to create delicious brews.

"We are proud that our Wine Trail has become the largest in the Midwest, and the overwhelming positive response we have received from members and consumers has our entire team working to meet the demand for more of these trails" said Indiana Grown program director Heather Tallman.



MAPS • TRAILS • GUIDES



"Our hope is that with each map, trail and guide, an opportunity is created for consumers to discover and connect with a new area of our membership."

In addition to the Wine Trail and Brewery Trail, Indiana Grown has developed a number of other guides, including a [map of Christmas Tree farms](#), a [Winter Farmers Market map](#) and a [Protein Guide](#) listing producers who sell proteins directly to consumers. Indiana Grown plans to continue developing new guides throughout the year for Hoosiers and our visitors to enjoy.

You can find more information about the program and all of the Indiana Grown maps, trails and guides at www.IndianaGrown.org.

Still need to file your taxes? You may be able to for free!

The April 15 tax deadline is quickly approaching!

Are you still waiting to file your taxes? If your adjusted gross income was \$69,000 or less last year, you may be eligible to file your state and federal taxes for free with Indiana freefile (*INfreefile*) from the Indiana

Department of Revenue (DOR). This free service provides a faster, easier and secure way to file your taxes. File today at freefile.dor.in.gov.

If you have questions, contact DOR's Customer Service Center at 317-232-2240 or check us out on [our website](#), [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) or [Instagram](#).



Special delivery

IHCDA can drive helps small-town food pantry meet community needs

For the better part of the last three years, Mable Capps and a small crew of dedicated volunteers have been working to meet the needs of a growing number of people in a tiny rural community in west-central Indiana.

Capps, her husband Edward and 26-year-old son, Steven, are part of a handful of volunteers who provide canned goods and other non-perishables, meats, and dry goods to people in need each Wednesday and Thursday morning. The pantry offers evening hours on the second Thursday of each month in order to “make sure people who work [during the day] have a chance to come in,” Mable said, noting that the modestly-sized pantry that has served the Poland and Cunot communities for more than 30 years continually seeks to help as many people as possible.

The Capps family’s friends, Linnie Shields and Judy Acton, serve as board treasurer and secretary and round out a big-hearted group dedicated to doing all they can to make sure the people of Cunot are able to put food on the table. It’s not a full-time job for anyone involved, by any means, but it’s certainly one that never truly ends.

“This is my goal in life,” Mable said. “I love to be able to help people.”

That’s life at the [Cunot Food Pantry](#), which serves upwards of 150 families every month at no cost, no questions (other than those legally required) asked.

Some days and months are busier than others of course, but as the 2019 holiday season got into full swing, the pantry found its shelves mostly empty, its stock in the grateful hands of people who otherwise might not have had the necessary ingredients for an adequate Thanksgiving dinner.

But as the food supply diminished, the need did not and it quickly became clear that the ever more-bare shelves at Cunot desperately needed to be re-stocked. It was

Pictured are Mable Capps (far left, holding child) and other Cunot Food Pantry volunteers along with IHCDA staff members Dave Pugh, Jack Powell, Kellie Gunnell and Debra Swinson. IHCDA staff collected 1,862 canned goods for the small community food pantry.



never more so than around Thanksgiving when the pantry served more than 60 families in a single day.

“We got hit hard,” Capps said.

Mable took to her organization’s Facebook page for help.

“Our funds only come from donations that people, churches, businesses, etc. give us,” she wrote. “We have struggled all year, so I’m asking you. We know that there is a need for this small pantry, so please help us out because Christmas is coming too. It is a rough time for a lot of families and we are doing our best to help.”

What Mable didn’t know at the time was that help – much more than she might have imagined – was on the way.

A different kind of ‘Canstruction’

Having participated in a fun food pantry restocking activity in 2018, the [Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority](#) (IHCDA) was eager to get involved in the contest’s expected sophomore showing in late 2019.

The annual “Canstruction Competition,” however, was pushed back a bit on the heels of an extended State Employees Community Campaign (SECC) that raised more than \$1.6 million for charitable institutions. Recognizing the impact food pantries and soup kitchens have on people in need in their respective communities, Canstruction returned in early 2020 with the goal of restocking those nonprofits after the holidays – a time, as Mable Capps alluded to her in Facebook post, that often sees pantries struggle to match community members’ needs.

There just isn’t enough to go around.

Having collected for the [Hoosier Veterans Assistance Fund](#) in 2018, IHCDA executive director Jake Sipe planned to mobilize again the 80 or so IHCDA employees to start collecting canned goods for Canstruction.

When staff learned of Cunot’s plight, however, they took it upon themselves to take can collecting to the *next level*.

“It was a small group that looked like they could use some help,” said Dave Pugh, lead grant manager for IHCDA’s Real Estate Production division.

Pugh and IHCDA Real Estate Production division funds management and reporting specialist Debra Swinson soon took the lead, using just about every option at their disposal to collect more and more cans. They spoke with Mable Capps and learned of her organization’s dire need, which touched them both on a personal level.

“She’s serving five counties and people are walking to her pantry,” said Swinson. “I couldn’t fathom that they come there just for a few cans and groceries. It became personal. I became determined; I was going to do something.”

With the help of colleagues like Kellie Gunnell and Jack Powell, Debra and Dave got to work.

Their passion for the program proved to be contagious as the group pulled out all the stops to

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Special Delivery

keep the IHCD team engaged.

"I told them, 'I'm going to get on everybody's nerves,'" Swinson said with a laugh.

The idea was that constant gentle reminders could go a long way in getting employees to buy-in to the program. Swinson and Gunnell were the architects behind several types of games such as bingo, golf, and Price is Right-inspired activities that kept the can drive on the minds of all of those reporting to work at 30 S. Meridian in Indy each day.

They printed "Jake Bucks" with executive director Sipes' face on them that could be redeemed for IHCD merchandise and other prizes. Cans or money donated to spend on cans could be traded for jeans days, and players who did well in the games earned certificates they could display at home or on the walls of their cubicles.

"We kept it fun," Swinson said.

Walking into work each morning, employees were also greeted by a massive illustration of a thermometer. The goal was to collect 1,500 cans, but the group's efforts blew away that mark by a wide measure, closing out the

contest with a grand total of 1,862 cans.

Pugh kept in weekly contact with Capps so that she was aware of IHCD's efforts and so that staff could coordinate buying the goods that were needed most. They went shopping in their free time and took advantage of online shopping services to get exactly what was needed in the shortest amount of time.

With too many items to fit in an ordinary vehicle, the team rented a cargo van and made the approximately one-hour trip down I-70 to Poland/Cunot to meet a very grateful food pantry crew.

An offer you 'Cunot' refuse

Rolling up in a van filled with enough non-perishables to feed a small army, Debra, Dave, Kellie, Jack, and IHCD communications director Brad Meadows met Mable in person for the first time and immediately got to work restocking the pantry's nearly-empty shelves. It didn't take long for the formerly-bare cupboard to be filled to the brim with vegetables, soups, canned meat, and other goods.

Mable and the rest of the Cunot Food Pantry crew were more than grateful for IHCD's contributions.

"I was tickled to death," Mable said. "They have no idea how much it touched our hearts, they really don't. It really touched our hearts, big time. I went home and just cried."

Swinson said she identified with Mable's plight, and meeting her may have helped forge an ongoing friendship.

"I have a large family and I do understand how it is trying to make ends meet and things of that nature," said Debra.

Learning of Capps' heartfelt commitment to helping others moved Debra and further solidified for her how

important the work IHCD had just completed truly was.

"It just felt right," said Swinson. "That's just the way I was brought up."

Like Mable Capps, it was clear the IHCD crew's collective heart was in the right place. When people like Dave Pugh and Debra Swinson step up to lead, as they did in this canned food drive, the results can far exceed expectations.

And the end result is plenty of touched hearts.

"We need people like Deb and Dave to lead these things," Brad Meadows said. "We have to have people that care and want to drive it. It was more than just providing those reminders to the staff who generally have a good heart and want to help; it was about how passionate they were about wanting to help."

Meadows said he hopes these types of activities are something all state agencies and employees will choose to support.

"It's really about connecting, making those local connections," he said.

What's next for IHCD? That's currently undecided, but one certainty is that it will have a positive impact on Hoosiers.

You can bet your "Jake Bucks" on that.

"Around November, Jake gets that twinkle in his eye," Pugh said. "We try to get ahead of it, but there's no telling what he'll come up with."

Sipe, in turn, lauded his team for their efforts.

"I'm so proud of Dave, Debra, and the whole team for what they accomplished," he said.

To see a short video chronicling IHCD's canned food drive on YouTube, click [here](#). To assist the Cunot Food Pantry, contact Mable Capps at mablecapps50@gmail.com.

Story by Brent Brown, INSPD



Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (IHCD) employees delivered more than 1,800 canned goods to the Cunot Food Pantry in January. The pantry serves as many as 200 families per month and was in desperate need of supplies after the holidays.

Canstruction Competition collects thousands of canned goods for nonprofits, brings state employees together

The State of Indiana's Canstruction Competition brought out the best in employees as they collected canned goods and additional items in order to help restock local food pantries around the state in January.

Using those same cans and, in some cases, craft materials and other items to make each project as unique as its creators, employees from across the state took the food drive – and the building competition – to the *next level!*

Each Canstruction stood out for one reason or another, but in the end it was a creation by the **Indiana State Fair Commission** that was named **Best Structure**.

The Canstruction team put together an image of a basketball sailing through a hoop in honor of the Indiana Farmers Coliseum hosting the Horizon Basketball League Championships in March.

The winning creation used **5,078** cans!

That astonishing total led to the **State Fair Commission** garnering the award for **Most Cans** as well. The final total collected by the **49 participating teams** was **23,620!**

The Office of Gov. Eric Holcomb, Indiana Department of Child Services Director Terry Stigdon, and Indiana State Personnel Department Director Britni Saunders served as the panel of judges who selected the creation as the winner among a crowded field of entries.

Employees referenced pop culture characters and properties like Star Wars, Super Mario, and SpongeBob, and in other cases paid homage to subjects as wide-ranging as the Roman Colosseum, the American flag, state of Indiana agency logos, important local landmarks, and so much more.

The winner for most cans collected was the Indiana State Fair Commission, which gathered an astonishing 5,087 cans! In honor of hosting the Horizon Basketball Championships at the Indiana Farmers Coliseum next month, State Fair personnel arranged the cans into the shape of a basketball going into a hoop.



The creative array of Canstructures proved once again that state employees are at their best when they work together. Through the 2020 Canstruction Competition, food pantries in just about every corner of the state of Indiana will receive a welcome boost to their available non-perishable goods stock.

For some offices, the event was a team-building exercise.

"We had a lot of fun with it by making it a competition within our office," said Jamie Wilson, a family case manager supervisor for the Tippecanoe County Indiana Department of Child Services (DCS). "It was really cool to see the competition and excitement of our office whenever someone would bring a big batch of items in. An uproar of amazement and excitement would erupt each time and you could see many people of the office coming together, building bonds, and raving about the number of items."

In all, the team collected 1,059 canned food items. Wilson said she was "incredibly inspired" by her teammates.

"As a whole, they found time to give back even after giving so much to the community by keeping children safe," Wilson added.

The Tippecanoe team arranged their cans into the shape of the state of Indiana. They donated their items to Lafayette Transitional Housing. Wilson noted that the nonprofit assists area families, including those serviced by DCS.

Another team that ended up building more than just a tower of canned goods was the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles Office located on S. Meridian St. in Indianapolis.

Angela Baker, a senior driver examiner for BMV Region 8, captained the "Roadrunners" who added a graphic of the famously fast Looney Toons bird to their stop sign "Canstruction." The creation read "Stop Hunger."

"Our team really came together on this project," remarked Baker.

Emily Wann, Project NextDOR director for the Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR), summed up her team's participation this way: "We had a blast!"

Some teams are already getting ready for a potential 2021 Canstruction Competition as well.

Linda Mahlie, a forensic scientist for the Indiana State Police Laboratory, joked that she hoped

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Canstruction Competition collects thousands of canned goods for nonprofits, brings state employees together

her team's double helix DNA structure would hold together until their expected donation date. They're readying for next year after putting the finishing touches on another of this year's most original entries.

"This is a great idea and a fantastic way to support a good cause," she said.

After judging was completed, the structures were disassembled and the cans were distributed to each participant's chosen food pantry. That's another great example of how State of Indiana employees give back and

continually make a difference in their communities.

See all of the **2020 Canstruction Competition entries** [here](#).

Story by Brent Brown, INSPD



"It's a-me!" Super Mario, perhaps the most popular videogame character in history, was one of the 2020 Canstruction Competition's most original entries. Nintendo's famous plumber was joined by the iconic first Mario game's opening stage, enemies, and end-of-level flagpole and castle in this colorful creation by the Plymouth BMV.

Happy trails to state's oldest employee

Chief surveyor Bob Vollmer, age 102, left the Indiana Government Center South as an employee for the last time the morning of Feb. 6.

Vollmer worked for the Indiana Department of Natural Resources (DNR) for 57 years, mostly in the field or out of his home office in Brown County. Vollmer exited the building after a two-hour reception with fellow employees. His last day of working in the field, surveying in Clinton, in Vermillion County, was Wednesday, Feb. 5.

DNR honored Vollmer with an invitation-only retirement dinner party Feb. 7. Earlier in the week, the state's senior employee had pie and coffee with Gov. Eric Holcomb and DNR director Cameron Clark at Abe Martin Lodge at Brown County State Park.

Vollmer, who started with the agency as project engineer at Glendale Fish & Wildlife Area in 1963, is older than the DNR itself—the agency turned 100 last year.

"From his service to the country in World War II to his service to the people of Indiana, Bob exemplifies what it means to serve," Clark said. "He will take with him decades of knowledge that will be nearly

impossible to replace. We will also be losing his 100 years of stories. He will be missed greatly, and we wish him a long and enjoyable retirement."

Many of his stories involve being part of three combat operations in the South Pacific. Returning there is part of his extensive retirement plans.

"I want to visit some of the islands I was on, visit some of the cemeteries," Vollmer said. "I also might build myself a swimming pool, and I want to help my three great grandsons build some things."

Vollmer, whose mother, Anna Francis Vollmer, lived to 108, says he believes in working, but his body told him it was time to go.

"There's a lot of things I want to do but I gotta slow down," he said. "I just can't get around like I used to, but I bet you I do."

He attributes his success to the help he's received along the way.

"I've been lucky all my life," he said. "I got a lot of people to thank—I can't remember them all. If I can continue with the luck I've been having, I'll have a real good retirement."



Indiana DNR Chief Surveyor Bob Vollmer formally retired from his position after 57 years on the job Feb. 6. Vollmer began working for the state of Indiana in 1963. Now 102, the World War II veteran plans to read and travel in his retirement.

Which, to him, means staying active.

"I don't have a reverse gear in my transmission," he said. "You don't want to quit — when you quit, you're confined to the rocking chair, and that's where you die. When I go down, I want to go down swingin'."

Deputy Secretary of State named to Indiana Business Journal's 2020 'Forty under 40'

[Chief of Staff and Deputy Secretary of State Brandon Clifton](#) was one of two state of Indiana employees named to the Indiana Business Journal's prestigious '[Forty under 40](#)' list for 2020.

Clifton joins [Office of Career Connections and Talent Secretary Blair Milo](#) on a list that includes young professionals continually striving to make the Hoosier State an amazing place to live, work, and play.

A Lafayette native and Wabash College graduate, Clifton served as assistant general counsel for the Indiana Department of Administration and as counsel and policy advisor at the Indiana Department of Education prior to joining the Office of the Secretary of State in 2014. In his current role, Clifton serves as senior advisor to [Secretary of State Connie Lawson](#)



and represents her in official capacities.

Named to IBJ's annual list in February, Clifton said he felt "incredibly humbled" by the honor. He shared the information below with the Indiana State Personnel Department, commenting on his friendship with Secretary Lawson, his gratitude for those who nominated for the honor, advice for young people, and even some of his hobbies.

Q: From practicing law to working to ensure fair and secure elections, is your current position as Deputy Secretary of State where you might have envisioned yourself during your days as a student at Wabash College?

A: *I thought I was going to be a teacher. After a week of student teaching, I realized my place was elsewhere. I've always been interested in politics and found motivation in the work. I enjoy the strategy and the action in this space.*

Q: You've cited Secretary of State Connie Lawson as a mentor and a close friend. How has her guidance helped shape your career? Is there a particular bit of advice she's given you that you'd like to share?

A: *Secretary Lawson has made an enormous impact on my life. I'm surrounded by what I call the 'pentagon of women'. It used to be a square, but I keep adding amazing women to my circle of influence. The most recent addition was my daughter, who is now 2-years-old.*

The Secretary puts her family first. When thinking about my future, she's solidified the fact that nothing is more important than family. Second, the Secretary impressed upon me the importance of surrounding yourself with people with excellent personalities and trusting them to do great work.

Q: Being recognized alongside other young Hoosier professionals such as Secretary of Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo and Indiana Pacers all-star Victor Oladipo in IBJ's annual 40 under 40 profile is quite an honor. How did you feel when you found out you'd been named to this prestigious list?

A: *The award was a tremendous honor. My Deputy Chief of Staff,*

Valerie Warycha, ran point on the nomination, which I understand was rather substantial in effort. She acquired letters of recommendation from Secretary Lawson, former Secretary of State Ed Simcox, Greenwood Mayor Mark Myers, Hiron Communication Tom Hiron, and Dewand Neely, former Director of Information Technology for the State of Indiana.

It took a considerable amount of time to work up the courage to sit down and read the letters. Perhaps that is an indication of the honest humility I experienced throughout this process. The friendship, let alone the recognition of this group of people was an enormous moment for me.

That said, most important to me and of the greatest value was recognizing the amount of time and effort my friend, Valerie, invested into this process. She's become a great friend and knowing she put this much effort and coordination into recognizing a colleague means the most. She's a great example of the quality we enjoy in the Secretary's office. From the Secretary to our interns, there is a consistent spark throughout the office. Our staff works hard on behalf of Hoosiers and they are some of the brightest and kindest I've come across.

Q: You've mentioned the possibility of returning to school to learn more about cybersecurity. If you do so, how do you feel that educational opportunity will help you in your position as Deputy Secretary of State, and how will staying up-to-date on changes in technology impact Hoosier voters?

A: *The elections space has experienced an extraordinary amount of change over the last*

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Deputy Secretary of State named to Indiana Business Journal's 2020 'Forty under 40'

four years. I fully expect similar, if not more aggressive changes before the next presidential election cycle. The cybersecurity work we do requires leadership that can fold inputs from highly technical personnel into executive level decisions. That's why I think it's important to consider additional education.

Q: What advice would you give a young person who is considering trying to follow a career trajectory similar to yours?

A: Be more interested in the footballs you drop rather than the touchdowns you score. If you're only focused on what you're supposed to be doing in the first place, you can't grow. Focusing on what you can improve upon will

keep you humble and sharp.

Q: What is a challenge you face in your professional career and how are you working to meet it?

A: I wouldn't say that this necessary a challenge, but a reality of working in this space: Working in a political office means our time together as an office will come to an end at some point. This is a reality in our peaceful transitions of power. That means we have to be mindful of what comes next and preparing for that eventuality.

Q: You told IBJ that some of your hobbies include upgrading your Jeep Wrangler and watching YouTube videos. What type of Wrangler is your favorite, and how

do you hope to upgrade it? What are some YouTube videos you'd recommend our readers check out?

A: I own a white Jeep Wrangler Unlimited. It's awesome. I've put a lot of work into it already, but the project is never-ending. I've put on suspensions, lights of nearly every kind, a winch and many, many more accessories. It's rather addictive in its possibilities as it's an adult-sized Lego.

With regard to YouTube, I'm a fan of fail compilations, relaxing sound channels, restoration channels and nearly anything Jeep related. Everything I've done to my Jeep was first studied on YouTube. You can learn nearly anything on YouTube.

Secretary of Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo named to IBJ 'Forty under 40'

As the very first Secretary of Career Connections and Talent in Indiana, [Blair Milo](#) leads a group working to find just the right talent to fill an estimated one million job openings before the end of this decade.

A Navy officer and a former mayor, Milo's long list of achievements, which include adding more than a thousand new jobs in her hometown of LaPorte and earning the 2017 American Legion Military Person of the Year (Reserve Category) award due to her distinguished naval service, were more than enough to earn a spot on the 2020 roster of the Indianapolis Business Journal's vaunted '[Forty under 40](#)' list.

In the wake of that honor, Secretary Milo took time to discuss her mentors, people who inspire her, and some of her career aspirations as she continues to lead a team dedicated to providing great government service to Hoosiers.

Q: During your interview with IBJ, you mentioned Rear Adm.

Gene Black as a mentor, saying he "has been a constant example to me of servant leadership as well as a trusted mentor." How has Rear Adm. Black's leadership and commitment helped shape your military and civilian careers and how do you put that wisdom into practice in your daily life?

A: Admiral Black is the kind of leader you'd walk through fire for because you just don't want to let him down. Anyone who has the blessing of serving with and learning from him feels his loyalty, as he consistently challenges and encourages his team to reach their maximum potential by sharing the importance of the mission and everyone's critical role in achieving it. Admiral Black and his wife Lori are an impressive partnership, as she would always go out of her way to serve and support the family members of every command he has led or been a part of. One of the many leadership lessons he taught me was to "always err on the side of the sailor." The idea



behind this is that even if you end up being wrong, which will happen, if as a leader you do everything you can to support each member of your team and give them the opportunity to succeed, then you'll create an environment where most will. This is something I strive to do when I have the opportunity to serve a team because the only way we accomplish big things is together.

Q: What advice would you give to a young person hoping to follow

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Secretary of Career Connections and Talent Blair Milo named to IBJ ‘Forty under 40’

in your path of helping create jobs and growing new employment opportunities for Hoosiers?

A: *As Purdue University President Mitch Daniels says, “Government doesn’t create jobs. Government at its best creates the conditions in which men and women of enterprise create wealth in and amongst themselves.” Access to quality schools, healthcare and infrastructure, affordable utilities and safe communities are just a few of those critical components needed to create an environment in which business and jobs can thrive. There are any number of career and/or service opportunities where we need the ideas and dedicated efforts of young people to grow that positive business climate, so I would encourage anyone interested in creating jobs to think about what it is they are passionate about and pursue it, as its positive outcomes will inevitably contribute to creating a community and state where business and jobs will grow.*

Q: What is the biggest challenge you face in your current position and how are you working to meet it?

A: *The greatest challenge is that there is a lot of information, programs, and opportunity for individual Hoosiers and Hoosier businesses to leverage, but it doesn’t all exist in any one single place, making it both easier and more difficult to leverage. On the reverse side of any challenge is opportunity, and we have the opportunity to connect data to decision-makers, resources to leaders and opportunity to our students, schools, communities and businesses when everyone works together. We’re working to meet this challenge in a variety of ways, most specifically through a partnership connecting the IEDC, Office of Career Connections and Talent and Civic Lab called the 21st Century Talent Regions initiative.*

Through the 21st Century Talent Regions initiative, self-defined regions with participants from a variety of sectors - business, local government, K-12 and higher education, economic and workforce development, and non-profit - all come together to first map out regional partners and initiatives already in place for attracting, developing, and connecting talent. They then collectively identify data-driven goals and strategies for achieving them in order to grow the population, increase postsecondary educational attainment, and raise median household income. So far, five regions across Indiana have earned the 21st Century Talent Region designation with nine more in progress, covering almost 86 percent of all counties.

Q: Who are some people who continue to inspire you? (Note: this could be anyone – from a family member to a teacher or even a favorite sports star or actor.)

A: *Senator [Richard] Lugar’s commitment to well-informed, thoughtful, inclusive public service; [Indiana Commission for Higher Education Commissioner] Teresa Lubbers’ visionary leadership and dedication to ensuring a quality education for all Hoosiers; and Fred Rogers’ kindness and thoughtful approach to equipping kids (and adults) with tools to positively engage with one another.*

Q: If there is one aspect of your career of which you are most proud, what would it be?

A: *Pride is a funny thing, in that, it’s important to celebrate wins and accomplishments, particularly when it requires hard work. At the same time, I know that any progress that has been made through service to my hometown, Indiana, or this country came from those times I was able to carry out the commandments to love God*

and love people. I don’t always get it right, but thankfully God forgives and is willing to meet me midway. If there’s anything I can be proud of, it’s the times I’m able to answer God’s call for my life - to love people through my passion for public service aimed at ensuring equal opportunity to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for all.

Q: If you are ever part of a ‘50 under 50’ profile of successful 40-somethings (or another type of similar spotlight years in the future), what do you hope to have accomplished in your professional life by that time?

A: *During a period of time when I felt unsure of what I needed to be doing in order to progress my career development, one of my mentors provided me with some words of encouragement: “If you do the best you can in the job you’re in, the right opportunities will present themselves at the right time.” I can’t say what opportunities I’ll have the blessing of participating in over the next 10 years, but I hope to continue working with a team dedicated to building equitable access to opportunity for all people, and serving the broader ideals of inalienable rights of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness on which our Republic was founded.*

Q: You jokingly told IBJ that being part of Gov. Holcomb’s staff requires that you “up your game” when it comes to cowboy boots (the governor’s signature footwear) and you even wore a pair to the IBJ photo shoot. Is there a friendly competition among cabinet members and staff to try to keep up with – or even outdo – the governor’s formidable “boot game”?

A: *There isn’t to my knowledge, but perhaps there should be! It may be unwinnable, but it would be a fun competition to watch.*