



FSSA UPDATE

December 2022 | Volume 11, Issue 4

Dr. Rusyniak hosts all-staff presentation

On Dec. 7, 2022, Secretary Rusyniak hosted an in-person and live-streamed all-staff presentation. Topics covered during this presentation included the successes and collaborations across the agency, FSSA’s 2023 priorities and much more.

If you were not able to attend the presentation live, a [recording is available](#) by visiting Indiana FSSA on YouTube.



FSSA employees celebrate milestones at Long-Term Employee Reception

On Dec. 7, 2022, long-term employees were invited to come together for the Governor’s Long-Term Employee Reception to celebrate 35, 40, 45, 50 and 55+ year milestones in their tenure with the state!

While we’re astounded by the accomplishments of each of these FSSA team members and the other 243 employees, with whom celebrate 9,000+ combined years of service, we’re equally proud of the enduring work culture that’s inspired such dedication from individuals like these.

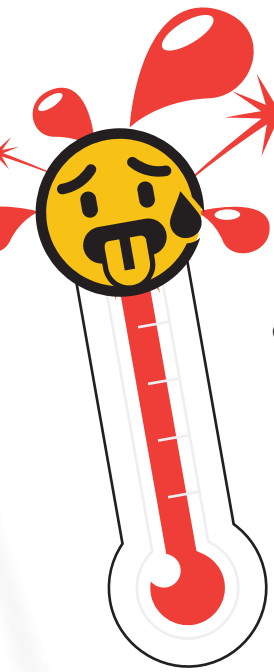
Each of these employees’ hard work, dedication and enduring commitment to our fellow Hoosiers exemplifies what it means to be a public servant, and we are grateful for their continued contributions to FSSA and the state of Indiana.

Years	Name
45	Penny Jo Brim
	Victoria Campbell
	Marilyn Casey
	Carol Munson
	Lila Schmaker
40	Pamela Dewey-Pugh
	Marianne Gibson
	Karla Gould
	Deborah Hart
	Rita Hine
	Jeanette Holle
	Susan Landis
	Diane Jeffries

Years	Name
35	Donald Anderson
	Kimberly Bower
	Gregory Day
	Fred Farlow
	Melissa Gibson
	Gregory Harris
	Mary Hess
	Sarah Jordan
	Kelly Kissel
	Tammy Madden-Lueders
	Colleen Tripenfeldas
	Jennie Veregde
	Susan Watson

IN THIS ISSUE:
SECC RESULTS
EMPLOYEE RESOURCE GROUPS

VR SUCCESS STORY
FSSA & DOC COLLABORATION
FIVE QUESTIONS: COURTNEY PENN



SECC final totals: It's gonna get Hot Up-In-Habañero

This year's State Employee's Community Campaign ended on Oct. 31 and FSSA had another outstanding year, having raised \$175,001 for our favorite charities. By reaching this amount, Dr. Dan has bravely volunteered to eat an habañoero pepper. Don't worry—a video is in the works!

Over the course of the campaign staff participated a number of events to help reach our goal, benefiting countless local, national and international charities. Events included the Paddle Battle, pie in the face, personal care item drive, corn hole tournament and much more.

Thank you to everyone that participated in this year's campaign!

Area	Total 2022	# Donors
Administration	\$30,151.32	20%
Disability Determination Bureau	\$5,021.64	19%
Indiana 211	\$1,490.00	30%
Division of Mental Health and Addiction	\$3,758.20	19%
Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning	\$3,763.53	20%
Evansville Psychiatric Children's Center	\$897.37*	2%
Evansville State Hospital	\$9,561.37	14%
Madison State Hospital	\$12,145.88	13%
Logansport State Hospital	\$10,096.58	14%
Richmond State Hospital	\$4,342.00	12%
NDI	\$5,907.62	11%
Division of Disability and Rehabilitation Services	\$21,149.81	23%
Division of Family Resources	\$51,220.11	30%
Division of Aging	\$2,688.24	28%
Medicaid Policy and Planning	\$12,807.33	25%
Total:	\$175,001.00	18%
Goal	\$150,000.00	
Need to goal	\$(25,001.00)	

*Includes items donated

OHO Employee Resource Groups

An Employee Resource Group is a voluntary, employee-led group focused on creating community within FSSA. Groups can focus on any number of shared experiences. FSSA's ERGs are all supported by the Office of Healthy Opportunities and aim to provide professional development opportunities for all staff. The groups introduce new and current employees to our culture, create leadership opportunities for staff and help build and maintain employee engagement and satisfaction.

There are several benefits to staff participation in an ERG. Learn more by accessing key documents at [OHO's SharePoint page](#).

Current Employee Resource Groups

No Barriers

No Barriers provides employees with a safe space and supportive atmosphere for individuals with disabilities and their allies. Meetings allow members to share experiences and information to reduce internalized ableism. No Barriers also offers speakers and provides education to FSSA employees to advocate for themselves and for agency constituents with disabilities.

Professionals in Progress

Professionals in Progress aims to build a community among FSSA's early career professionals, identify opportunities for interagency collaboration, generate conversations for career growth and development, and advise on how to recruit and retain talent. PIP hosts speaker series, provides space for soft skill development, community engagement and professional networking.

Joint Awareness for Minoritized Staff

Joint Awareness for Minoritized Staff will launch in early 2023. JAMS provides a space for meaningful conversation to support recruitment and retention among staff of color. The group will support staff within FSSA by providing resources and strategies for thriving in the workplace and tools for allies to provide support.

Get involved

Interested in creating an ERG? You can submit your application at the [FSSA Employee Resource Group Application page](#).

Please email FSSA's Office of Healthy Opportunities with questions about how to join an existing ERG at healthyopportunities@fssa.in.gov or fill out a new ERG application.

A VR success story

With proper supports, employment can be possible

Jackson, 30, was introduced to Vocational Rehabilitation while in high school when a VR counselor attended one of his case conference meetings. At the time, Jackson, who is diagnosed with Autism, anxiety, and developmental delays, was working not one, but two part-time jobs he obtained through his school's employment training program. Jackson's mother, Jan, was able to learn more about the value of VR through Partners in Policymaking, a program through the Indiana Governor's Council for People with Disabilities. At the time, Jackson was experiencing some anxiety when it came to his ride schedule and he was also needing help remembering to clock in and clock out at work, so he and Jan made the decision to pursue VR services to help him explore ways to not only maintain, but also be successful at his jobs.

“Everyone should be given the chance at competitive integrated employment because with proper supports it can be available. It might take working at a few jobs to see the one that is best for you. Don't give up.”

With the help of VR, Jackson worked with an employment service provider and also underwent an assistive technology evaluation that resulted in VR purchasing a smart watch and accompanying app that he uses to keep track of his schedule. The watch also helps him remember to clock in and out, and it has also lessened his anxiety about his ride schedule. Now that Jackson's VR case is closed, he continues to be successful in his employment by relying not only on his watch, but also on his current support system, which consists of his parents, employers, coworkers and behaviorist who is provided by BDDS waiver services.

Jackson has now been successfully employed at his two jobs for nine years! He is employed at his local library, where he shelves books and all other types of media, shelf reads and returns books back to their proper places. He loves fixing mistakes and the exactness of the job. At his second job, a local pharmacy, Jackson enjoys his responsibility of stocking shelves, but at both jobs, he enjoys working with and talking to his coworkers about his daily activities and weekend adventures. Jan stated that the most challenging part of employment for Jackson is how much he loves his jobs and how he “never wants to miss one day.”



When it comes to future plans, Jackson would like to continue working both jobs for the foreseeable future, do what is asked of him and continue taking pride in his accomplishments. When Jackson isn't working, he enjoys going to the movies, swimming, and shopping. He is also a very involved athlete in the Special Olympics where he competes in cycling, softball, bowling and basketball.

When it comes to advice to share with other people who have a disability who are looking for employment, Jan shared that, “everyone should be given the chance at competitive integrated employment because with proper supports it can be available. It might take working at a few jobs to see the one that is best for you. Don't give up.”



WHAT'S HAPPENING AROUND FSSA!!



On Dec. 7, 2022, long-term employees came together for the Governor's Long-term Employee Reception to celebrate milestones in their tenure with the state. Left to right: Gov. Holcomb, Kelly Kissel, Dr. Rusyniak.



Left to right: Lila Schmaker, Gov. Holcomb, Marilyn Casey, Penny Jo Brim, Dr. Rusyniak.



Left to right: Gov. Eric Holcomb, Susan Landis, Jeanette Holle, Diane Jeffries, Dr. Dan Rusyniak.



Dr. Steven Eckert, psychology director at Logansport State Hospital, nominated Dr. Danny Meadows and Bethany Schoenrad for a "Patriotic Employer" award from the Department of Defense.



The NDI and Logansport State Hospital both held pie-in-the-face fundraisers as part of their SECC events.



Collaboration drives better outcomes for justice-involved Hoosiers

FSSA's Data and Analytics team partners with Department of Correction to improve care and reduce recidivism for Returning Citizens

Maranda Williams is talking to a woman holding a baby at a table in a small dayroom. Like most conversations with new moms and babies, there is a lot of smiling and cheek-pinching taking place. There are the typical questions about how the baby is eating and if mom is getting enough sleep, and she's excited to report how much the baby has grown and how he has started to crawl.

But unlike most conversations with new moms, this interaction is taking

place inside a building surrounded by tall fences and razor wire. Maranda is the director of the Department of Correction's Transitional Healthcare team and is visiting an incarcerated

woman when they are released from DOC facilities, referred to as Returning Citizens, to ensure a seamless transition of care. Maranda's team also works with the Returning Citizens to

Too often, Returning Citizens fail to access critical health services, life-saving medications and treatment during their transition home.

connect them to local resources, housing assistance, food pantries and substance use treatment programs. At

the Leath Unit, Maranda is checking to make sure the woman is connected to a pediatrician and has a safe place to live when she is released later this month. *Continued on next page*

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Data Team visit to the Leath Maternal Child Unit at the Indiana Women's Prison. L to R: Matt Kirby, D&A, Madeleine Wynkoop, DOC, Maranda Williams, DOC, Cristian Guandique, D&A.

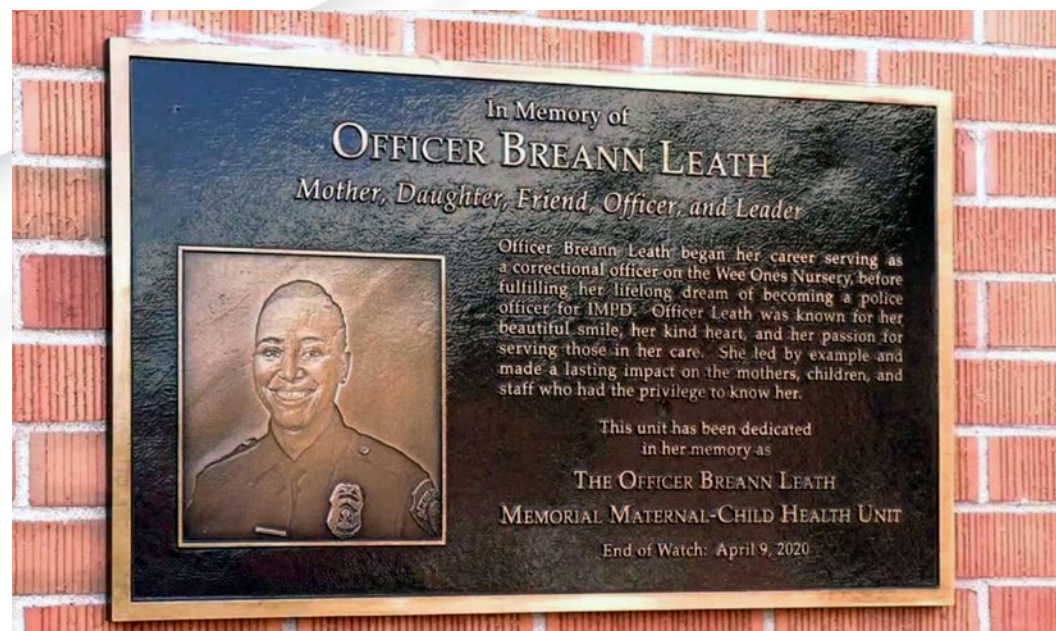
The woman at the Leath Unit is one of the over 8,000 Hoosiers who will be released from prison this year. Like most Returning Citizens, she faces a variety of challenges to successfully transition back to post-incarceration life. Too often, Returning Citizens fail to access critical health services, life-saving medications and treatment during their transitional period home. The unfortunate result is a high rate of homelessness, substance use, emergency room utilization and recidivation.

To address these challenges, DOC and FSSA established a collaborative initiative in 2019 by creating the Medicaid Taskforce, now known as the Returning Citizen Taskforce. After a hiatus due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the interagency Taskforce was re-established in 2022 by members of Transitional Healthcare and FSSA's Data and Analytics team. Through collaborative data sharing with FSSA, the Transitional Healthcare team was able for the first time to see the Medicaid claims of Returning Citizens and better understand the outcomes of the high-risk population receiving their services. Charged with evaluating the group's collective work to date, the Taskforce produced a 2022 annual report with the following findings:

The collective efforts of the DOC and FSSA have dramatically improved Medicaid processing times post-release. In 2014, less than 4% of Returning Citizens were active in Medicaid within seven days. Today, over 91% are active in that time.

Returning Citizens who received Transitional Health services were 10% less likely to require acute care 120 days post-release compared to Returning Citizens who did not receive Transitional Health services.

The focus on improving access to healthcare for the most vulnerable Returning Citizens also correlated



A memorial plaque honoring IMPD officer Breann Leath.

with lower rates of recidivism. High-risk Returning Citizens who received Transitional Health services were 21% less likely to recidivate 180 days post-release compared to high-risk Returning Citizens who did not receive Transitional Health services.

“The Medicaid claims data that we are now able to see from FSSA is giving us a far more complete picture of what’s happening to Returning

The collective efforts of the DOC and FSSA have dramatically improved Medicaid processing times post-release.

Citizens after they leave our care,” said Williams. “The progress that’s been made over the past several years with our FSSA partners has shown that when agencies work together collaboratively, we can have a significant impact on improving internal processes, improving health outcomes, and reducing the rate of recidivation.”

Despite these significant steps forward, Williams concedes the work of Transitional Health and the collaboration with the Taskforce is just getting started. “Only 25% of Returning

Citizens are flagged as high-risk and receive Transitional Healthcare services,” says Williams. “Nevertheless, many of the individuals who are not identified as high-risk continue to experience poor outcomes following release.”

According to the report’s findings, one in three of all Returning Citizens require emergency services within one year and one in nine require multiple emergency services within 120 days. The Taskforce’s annual report also provides data-informed recommendations for continuing to strengthen the relationship

between DOC and FSSA and addressing these ongoing health challenges.

“Efforts to combat substance use, improve mental health and increase public safety all benefit when Returning Citizens are well served,” said Williams. “We look forward to continuing to build our relationship with FSSA and improving how we care for some of the most vulnerable people within our state.”

To learn more about the Transitional Healthcare team, please visit the [Transitional Healthcare Services webpage](#).

Dr. Greg Bell honored for his 50 years of service

Logansport State Hospital enjoyed presenting Dr. Greg Bell with the Governor's Award for his 50 years of service. The Mayor of Logansport, Chris Martin, presented Dr. Bell with a key to the city, and issued a proclamation deeming Nov. 7, 2022, "Dr. Greg Bell Day" in the city of Logansport. Mayor Martin encouraged all citizens to thank Dr. Greg Bell for his unwavering commitment to excellence and applaud his dedicated service to our community. Dr. Bell

was also presented a note of gratitude by Mark Doud, regional director, on behalf of Sen. Mike Braun. The Allied Health Center (the location of his dental office) was renamed the Bell Allied Health Center.



Logansport State Hospital a "Patriotic Employer"

Award presented by Dr. Eckert

Psychology director Dr. Steven Eckert presented Dr. Danny Meadows and Bethany Schoenrad a "Patriotic Employer" award from the U.S. Department of Defense. He noted, "Superintendent Schoenrad has been more than accommodating by hiring and supporting me in learning my new job for five months knowing that I would be leaving for a six-month deployment to Kuwait. Her flexibility and professionalism are greatly appreciated!"

Nancy Ward receives Mental Health Professional of the Year



Nancy Ward, chief nurse consultant, Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning, was awarded the Mental Health Professional of the Year by Mental Health America of Indiana. This award has been given each year for individuals who have gone over and beyond to live out the Mental Health America of Indiana mission.

Nominated for being a voice for Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health and Consultation Nancy has been avid supporter, through promotion and prevention, of child care providers who manage children impacted by adverse childhood experiences.

Nancy notes that sometimes when an educator is at their wits end on what to do with a child, it is too late. Birth to five is such an important time to provide a nurturing and accepting learning environment. These types of environments can help balance the effects of trauma in an environment outside of child care.

FIVE QUESTIONS



Name: Courtney Penn

Title: Director of the Office of Early Childhood and Out-of-School Learning

Education: B.S. Child Development and Family Life, master's in human development

Center director, local, state and national child care resource and referral work, Director of Child Care Licensing overseeing the state child care and after school regulatory work prior to this role, experienced in professional development content development and facilitation.

1 What attracted you to a career here at FSSA?

I was excited for the opportunity to be able to support the work of the early childhood field from the state government level. I have had years of experience as a head start teacher and center director and worked for many different contractual partners of the state, but I loved the idea of being able to be at the table when decisions that impact children, families and child care programming in Indiana are being made because I understand the importance of the work and the critical time we are in for the field. It was also the excitement of leading a team that serves the state in so many different ways and assists our more vulnerable population, young children.

2 What gives you a sense of accomplishment professionally?

I feel a sense of accomplishment professionally when I see my team thrive and our goals and priorities being met. As a leader, I love to watch people come into their own and grow in their professional goals and enjoy their work. I also feel accomplished when I am able to provide support to a person on the team, a child care provider or a family and help them in their day-to-day world. I try not to get lost in all the really big wins and start everyday thinking of how I can be successful and make a difference that day.

3 What do you want FSSA workers to know about the work you're doing?

I want FSSA colleagues to know that my team and I are working hard to help build capacity and access to quality child care for children and families. We are working very strategically to ensure that we are building out initiatives and projects that helps support the needs of the early childhood and out-of-school-time learning programming.

4 What is the best advice you can offer, based on your years of experience?

I will say that I have been at FSSA for less than two years, but what I can say from my years of experience as a professional in general is that you have to give yourself the grace and the space to learn from mistakes and not fear them. Of course, no one wants to make mistakes, but they do happen. And when they do leverage them as a lesson learned and move on and try not to dwell too much on them.

5 What about your background might your co-workers find surprising?

Something about my background that my coworkers might find surprising is that when I first went off to graduate school, I was going for college student affairs and I was a graduate assistant in the student life office. In that role, I was able to help book, schedule and pick up national talent that came to the campus for performances and engagements. One of the most memorable rides was being able to pick up Jane Elliot (Brown Eyes Blue Eyes exercise leader) from the airport and riding back with her and getting to talk to her one-on-one. I am still in contact with her today.