

MAY 2019

PULSE

A look at what keeps ISDH ticking



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FUN FACT

Beards are the fastest growing hairs on the human body. If the average man never trimmed his beard, it would grow to nearly 30 feet long in his lifetime.



Indiana State
Department of Health

Mission:

To promote, protect, and improve the health and safety of all Hoosiers

FOCUS ON TEAM BUILDING

The ISDH executive team has recently participated in two Leadership Town Hall meetings, first with managers, then with supervisors. These are opportunities for us to engage with ISDH staff, share what we're doing at a leadership level and, most importantly, answer questions and address concerns. These sessions are part of the leadership team's efforts to be more accessible to staff, along with my walk-arounds and division visits.

Some common themes have emerged in the questions posed at these two sessions, and I wanted to share the responses and encourage anyone who has a question or an idea about how to address a problem to share it, regardless of your role.

Chief among the questions are those related to employee recruitment and retention. Like a good Indy 500 driver, our agency's success is only as strong as its team. I know it's frustrating to spend time building your team, only to have someone you've invested in leave for another opportunity.

It can also be discouraging to find the perfect candidate only to discover that we can't meet his or her salary needs, or to have a small applicant pool for

the same reason.

ISDH isn't alone in these challenges. Our turnover rate is about 14 percent, which is consistent with other state agencies. While that's little consolation if you've just lost a key team member, I think it's important to recognize who – and what – we're competing against.

Ask your team what motivates them. Is it solely salary? Is it the opportunity to work closer to home? Is it the opportunity to climb a career ladder? We likely will never be able to compete with private sector salaries or some personal or professional priorities, but if we can plug into other motivations, such as work-life balance and opportunities to grow, we may well find that we can retain more people.

Our Office of Public Health Performance Management, which coordinated both town halls, is working to take the pulse of our staff through surveys such as PH Wins and others. The leadership team has

also been working with the State Personnel Department to evaluate pay equity in several divisions. That isn't a fast process, and we have to work within our existing financial resources, but we've been able to make adjustments in some areas that we hope will improve retention and job satisfaction. This process will continue as resources are available.

have largely promoted from within during my tenure as health commissioner, and I remain committed to ensuring that all staff members have opportunities to advance within ISDH as their skills match with available openings. We need to consistently build the talent pipeline so that the next generation of public health worker is in the wings. In addition to having a robust candidate pool, we also need to ensure that we have a diverse pool that reflects the populations we serve.

We have seen in communities across the state that public health is most effective when we can reach people where they live, through people with whom they can relate. My goal is to accurately reflect our communities. If there are places we should be recruiting, or good candidates you think will help us reach Hoosiers who might not be represented, please let us know.

We have a strong team here at ISDH, and keeping it that way is a joint effort. By working together to identify what motivates our staff and doing everything in our power to make ISDH an employer of choice, we can maintain a workforce that will position us to meet any challenges that come our way.

Keep the good questions coming!

Yours in health,
Kris



**Kris Box,
MD, FACOG**

I'm proud of the fact that we

RUNNING BEYOND THE WALL

By Greta Sanderson

Challenging. Exhilarating. Amazing. Tough. Mind-blowing. Those are some of the words Mohan Ambaty, director of the ISDH Office of Technology and Compliance, used to describe what it was like to run a half marathon earlier this month on the Great Wall of China.

The Conquer the Wall Marathon/Half Marathon on May 18 was the first leg of Ambaty's quest to complete a half marathon on all seven continents in seven years. He not only completed the Great Wall event, he qualified to start among the first group of participants and finished sixth out of 36 runners in his age group with a time of 2:39:35.

The first 8.5K was all hill and steps, 2,564 steps to be exact. Ambaty is a long-time runner, and he started planning for this event nearly a year ago. Race organizers advise that runners not take this challenge run as their first event. "This is an adventure marathon/half marathon with a challenging course. Runners should be physically fit and in shape as this marathon/half marathon can be extremely strenuous," the tour organization says.

Ambaty said the life-changing experience was beautiful, hard and epic. The laughter and smiles of the young Chinese children who lined the streets giving runners high fives and flowers as they ran past were contagious and an unexpected highlight of the race.

He stayed in Beijing, which he didn't expect to have so many people, but he said the infrastructure was well planned to accommodate the many bikes, cars and buildings. He also had a little time to experience the local culture and food.

"Whatever we ate, we can't find here," he said, describing that each meal is served as a group of dishes that people share at a round table, rather than as individual plates of food. The language was also a challenge.

He said that while he learned hello and thank you, he used his smartphone to help translate. He added that for the native people, the number four is unlucky and eight is lucky, so none of the hotels had a fourth floor.



Mohan Ambaty runs on the Great Wall of China May 18, marking Asia off his list to complete a half marathon on all seven continents in seven years.

Ambaty has six more continents to cover, and his quest gives him motivation to keep healthy. His next destination will likely be Europe or Australia in 2020, but he is already planning for his race in 2023 – in Antarctica.

He said the biggest challenge of that race won't be the snow and cold, but the boat trip from Argentina on rough seas that make the passengers seasick right before the run. If Beijing was any indication, he's up for the challenge.

"Photos don't do it justice or my words," he said, adding that the inspiring view from the Great Wall helped keep him motivated. "The only way for someone to fully understand what it was like was to be there, so if any of you are thinking of taking on this challenge then I'd say, to borrow Nike's slogan, 'Just Do It'."

STAFFING UPDATES

Welcome to the following employees who recently joined the ISDH staff:

David Mullins, metrologist, Program Development and Quality Initiative; Luke Ryle, microbiologist, Laboratory; Deanna Paddock, chief nurse consultant, Epidemiology Resource Center (ERC); Ryan Cunningham, lead records consultant, Trauma & Injury Prevention; Ashley Judge, health data intern, ERC; Conner Tiffany, prescription drug overdose prevention intern, Trauma; Taylor Goodman, intern,

Trauma; and Danielle Hopkins, chemist, Laboratory.

Congratulations to Manda Clevenger, who was promoted to director of the Food Protection Program, and Tamara Johnson, who was promoted to field operations director, Immunization.

Kathy Borgmann transferred to exercise coordinator in Public Health Preparedness & Emergency Response; and Monica DuHack transferred to special projects coordinator for Women, Infants, & Children.



LOOK WHO I MET ON THE ELEVATOR!

Josh Dowell

NAME: Josh Dowell

TITLE: HIV informatics epidemiologist

Brief job description: Integrate various databases in the HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis Division to visualize and analyze data.

Time at ISDH: Four months

What do you like most about working at ISDH: It's a wonderful work environment where I feel I make a positive impact on people living with HIV/AIDS.

Other information: Dog dad of two goldendoodles, Buddy and Zoey; love trying new and different foods; and sad that Game of Thrones is over.

RICHARDSON STAYS IN THE KNOW

By Greta Sanderson

As a disease intervention specialist in ISDH District 7, Kira Richardson doesn't just rely on past experience to get her job done. She keeps her skills up to date through continued professional development and involvement in her community.

Richardson lives in Bloomington and was looking for a career in public health when she heard about the opening at ISDH. Since graduate school, she had worked in acute hospital settings, at a U.S. Air Force base, and on a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration Grant Project as a prevention specialist with youth to keep them from developing a substance use disorder or contracting HIV.

"Public health is where I landed and plan to stay," she said. "It was an easy decision for me."

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention defines a DIS as a public health professional with ground-level investigative skills that are key components of STD partner services, TB outbreak response, HIV exposure notification, data to care activities, other infectious disease control efforts and emergency response.

Because most of her work is in the field and away from the ISDH office, staying connected to her community and taking advantage of opportunities for professional development has been key to Richardson's success over the last two years at ISDH.

In March, Richardson received the Outstanding Black Woman Leader of Tomorrow Award from the City of Bloomington Commission on the Status of Black Males. The

award was presented at a 15th Annual Black History Month Gala event she hosted with her husband, Brian, who is the director for diversity at the O'Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs at Indiana University.

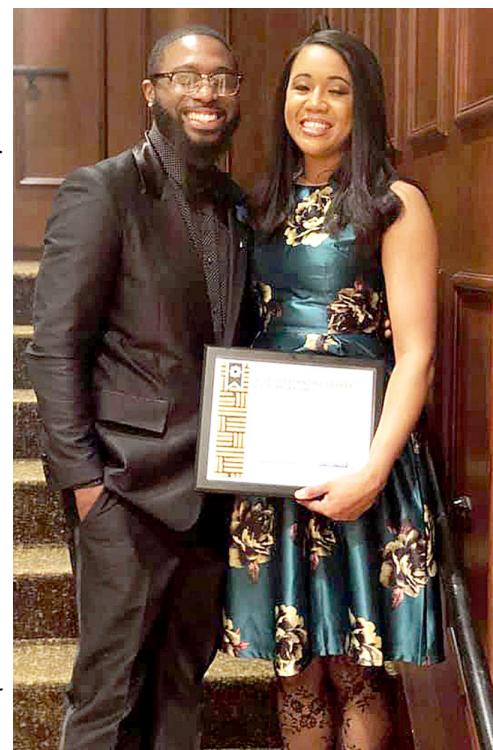
"I let him do most of the talking and tell the jokes, but it was fun," Richardson said.

She also has a role with the American Public Health Association's Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV/AIDS sections. Richardson helps review abstract submissions for both sections in preparation for the annual meeting in November and will start reviewing film submissions in June.

"It's a good way to hear up-and-coming research and things that might affect the field," she said. "It's a great way to see what might be coming down the pipeline to shape the way we do our work."

Richardson is involved with the HIV League, a not-for-profit organization that awards a scholarship each year to an individual living with HIV, and she's also being considered for the organization's advisory board. These two organizations give her the opportunity for continuing education and professional development and to meet other professionals in the field.

Locally, she just completed the Leadership Bloomington-Monroe County program where she worked on a communication plan developed for the Community Foundation that highlighted the available resources for childcare centers and families in Monroe County. Richardson is a commissioner on the City of Bloomington's Commission on the Status of Children and Youth and serves on the executive board for the Community AIDS Action Group that works to address



Kira Richardson with her husband, Brian, at the 15th Annual Black History Month Gala in March.

HIV/AIDS at the local level.

She says all of this experience makes her a better staff member, particularly now when her division is making policy revisions.

"It helps to see what others do so the program can improve," Richardson said, thanking her division director, Caitlin Conrad, for her support. "Working as field staff can be a little isolating because you're not around other people from the division all the time. It's good to stay connected in those ways."

OPHPM provides accreditation readiness help to LHDs

By Patricia Truelove

The Office of Public Health Performance Management (OPHPM) looks internally to provide support to ISDH staff for all of our quality improvement and workforce development needs. This year ISDH provided assistance to local health departments (LHDs) and community partners.

Through this grant opportunity, six LHDs and one health foundation will be able to acquire resources or trainings to provide better services and ultimately improve the health of their communities.

Funding was awarded to:

- King's Daughters' Health Foundation, \$295 to buy conference records to use for training
- Henry County HD, \$2,841 for hepatitis C training
- Floyd County HD, \$5,000 to update the website
- Knox County HD, \$2,920 to attend a conference
- Elkhart County HD, \$550 for training on new software
- Boone County HD, \$1,019 to attend a conference
- St. Joseph County HD, \$975 for patient privacy act training

BENEFITS REMINDER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, one in five people will be affected by mental illness in their lifetime. May is Mental Health Awareness Month, which makes it a great time to discuss the many mental health resources available to state employees and their families.

EAP

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is probably the most obvious place to start when speaking about mental health resources. It is available to all full-time employees and their household members. EAP can be your resource for assistance with managing problems at home and at work. The program provides 24-hour, seven-days-a-week toll-free telephone access to licensed mental health professionals for consultation, information, assistance and resources for a variety of concerns.

Coverage includes up to eight free visits

per issue, per year. EAP providers are also available at the Government Center Clinic by appointment on Monday, Tuesday and Thursday afternoons, as well as through LiveHealth Online.

ActiveHealth

Your ActiveHealth portal is another great place to find mental health resources. It is available to all employees, spouses and adult dependents enrolled in a medical plan sponsored by the State Personnel Department.

ActiveHealth has social communities, which are good sources of peer support and platforms to ask questions and chat with others who might be having similar life experiences. One of these is a Depression Community. In addition, ActiveHealth has topics surrounding depression, anxiety and stress that can be found in the Your Health Education Center.

OurHealth

Yet another resource available is the Wellness Challenge portal, which has many topics available to choose from concerning mental health. Wellness challenges are available to all active full- and part-time employees regardless of their enrollment in a health plan. Some of the broader topics include self-acceptance, managing stress and anxiety, managing depression, positive relationships and knowing yourself. These are all activities that you can turn into challenges for yourself.

These resources are provided free, so make sure to check them out! The phone number for EAP services is 800-223-7723 and is available 24/7. EAP services can also be accessed [here](#) using the code State of Indiana. To utilize the resources from ActiveHealth, log in [here](#). The Wellness Challenge portal is available [here](#).



LINKEDIN LEARNING COURSE OF THE MONTH

Dodging adversity is often not a choice. Encountering a devastating event — the gut-wrenching kind that zaps away joy — is an inevitability of life.

In their *New York Times* best-selling book “Option B: Facing Adversity, Building Resilience, and Finding Joy,” Facebook COO Sheryl Sandberg and Wharton psychologist Adam Grant share their insights on building resilience in the face of such setbacks.

They offer practical steps you can take to reimagine and rebuild your life when your first choice — your Option A — is no longer on the table, and you’re faced with the task of making the absolute best of Option B. This course highlights some of the powerful topics in this book, including how to talk to friends and colleagues who are hurting when you’re not sure what to say, how to fight the idea that the hurt you’re feeling is permanent and how to give yourself permission to experience happiness again.

State of Indiana employees have free and unlimited access to premium learning content via LinkedIn Learning. It’s still early in the



**Indiana State
Personnel Department**

program, but employees have already completed more than 3,600 courses, including 96,565 instructional videos.

Detailed information on how to access LinkedIn learning under this program is available in this quick-start [guide](#).

FOOD PROTECTION BEGINS FARM INSPECTIONS

By Vivien McCurdy

With more than 1,800 produce farms across Indiana, fruit and vegetable production is an important sector within our agriculture industry.

While these foods are an essential part of a healthy diet, they can pose public health risks, as fruits, vegetables and nuts accounted for nearly a quarter of all reported human foodborne illness outbreaks nationwide between 2009 and 2015.

Common foodborne pathogens associated with fresh fruits and vegetables include *Cyldospora cayetanensis*, *E. coli* O157:H7, hepatitis A, *Listeria monocytogenes*, Norovirus, Salmonella and Shigella. Consumption of contaminated produce can lead to illnesses including diarrhea, vomiting and even death.

The Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) Produce Safety Rule (PSR) was finalized in 2016 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. This regulation provides enforceable safety standards for the production and harvesting of produce consumed by humans.

In conjunction with national safe produce standards, Indiana SEA 331 was signed into law on March 15, 2018, and allows the ISDH Produce Safety Team to enter or inspect, at reasonable times, any produce farm that grows, harvests, packs or holds covered produce as defined by the PSR. In addition,



produce farms covered under the FSMA Produce Safety Rule are required to register with ISDH. While growers can anticipate a rigorous regulatory inspection approach, the Produce Safety Team is committed to following the agency's "educate before and while we regulate" principle.

Beginning in July 2019, the Indiana Produce Safety Team will inspect farms or operations that handle generally eaten raw crops, such as apples, berries, melons,

herbs, mushrooms, leafy greens, cabbages, carrots and cucumbers. Farms or operations that have more than \$500,000 in sales are the focus of the first round of inspections.

The compliance deadline for farms with \$250,000 – \$500,000 in sales is January 2020, and inspections of very small farms with sales between \$25,000 and \$250,000 are slated to begin in January 2021.

Farms with less than \$25,000 income are exempt from the rule and are not subject to inspection. The new law outlines the types of farms regulated, which include outdoor farms, indoor farms, produce auction houses and packing or holding facilities.

The ISDH Produce Safety Team is comprised of five staff members and housed within the ISDH Food Protection Program.

JoAnna Beck is the Produce Safety Supervisor; Jennifer Coleman is responsible for inspecting the northern Indiana farms; Heidi Walker will inspect central Indiana farms; and William (Bill) Tuley will inspect southern Indiana farms.

I am the grant coordinator for the program. During inspections, farms will be evaluated based on worker health and hygiene practices, agricultural water testing, application of biological soil amendments, observation of wildlife and domestic animal excreta, sanitation of production equipment and facilities and record-keeping practices.

GOVERNOR SIGNS BILL TO REDUCE INFANT MORTALITY

State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box joined Gov. Eric Holcomb May 8 as he signed House Bill 1007 into law. This is the OB Navigator and Universal Verbal Screening legislation that is ISDH's latest stride toward improving infant mortality rates in Indiana.

The OB navigators program will help ensure all pregnancy risk factors are identified and met to create healthy outcomes for mothers and babies, even in the highest-risk areas of our state that may have limited access to care.

The program connects pregnant women who receive Medicaid benefits in Indiana to services in their communities to guide them during pregnancy and through their baby's first year.

The second part of the legislation will

reduce the impact of substance use disorder among pregnant women and their babies. We know the drug epidemic is contributing to our infant mortality and maternal mortality rates.

Through universal verbal screening, healthcare providers will identify expectant mothers with alcohol and substance use disorder (SUD) as early in their pregnancies as possible, and continue follow-up screenings. The goal of the screening is to detect SUD as early into the pregnancy as possible and will connect women to treatment to limit the effects on the mother and her newborn baby.

This important step promises to dramatically improve outcomes for Indiana moms and babies.



Dr. Box was with Gov. Eric Holcomb May 8 when he signed the OB Navigation/Verbal Screening bill into law. The bill passed the 2019 General Assembly without any amendments.

CELEBRATING FITNESS



Several ISDH staff members were among the more than 35,000 participants in the OneAmerica 500 Festival Mini-Marathon on Saturday, May 4. The Mini is one of the nation's largest half marathons. Participants from ISDH included: (front row, from left) Mike Connor, Donna Chan, Shravan Alishala, Sara Caudell, (back row, from left) Yuan Ho, Hollie Kicinski, Eldon Whetstone and Amanda Scott. Laura Banter is not pictured. It was the 43rd running of the 13.1-mile course that starts and finishes in downtown Indianapolis and includes a lap around the Indianapolis Motor Speedway's famed 2-1/2 mile oval track.



ISDH staff members Lindsey Bouza, Alicia Earnest and Pete Fritz celebrated Bike to Work Day May 17 on Monument Circle in Indianapolis. The Central Indiana Bicycling Association mapped 18 different cycling routes into downtown for the event. Fritz, who helped organize the event in Indianapolis, rode in from Broad Ripple with Mayor Joe Hogsett.

PUBLIC HEALTH NURSE CONFERENCE RETURNS

The spring Public Health Nurse Conference, held May 8 and 9 at the 502 East Event Centre in Carmel, drew more than 325 attendees and exhibitors. Topics included updates on immunizations, lead, tobacco cessation and paramedicine.

RIGHT: Harm Reduction Program Manager Erika Chapman talks with a conference participant in the exhibit hall. **BELOW:** Tuberculosis/Refugee Health Director Kelly White leads a breakout session.

