

October 2020

# PULSE

A look at what keeps IDOH ticking

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### FUN FACT

Laughing can increase blood flow by 20%.



**Indiana  
Department  
of  
Health**

#### Mission:

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

## Recharging during the holiday season

October is often a time of excitement. It's the unofficial kickoff to the holiday season. Stores break out their holiday decorations, children get excited about Halloween, and many families start making plans for travel or gatherings over Thanksgiving and Christmas.

This year has a different look and feel because of the COVID-19 pandemic. As our cases rise across the state and nation, we are facing tough choices about how traditional fun-filled family events will look this year. It's one more cruel blow that 2020 has dealt so many of us.

But I want to encourage you all to find something to look forward to this season, whether it's a family hike to see the colorful leaves or starting a new tradition at home. I know our team is exhausted. I see it in your faces and hear it in your voices as yet another request is made of you. You continue to rise to the challenge because that's just how



**Kris Box,  
MD, FACOG**

good you are, but I know that doing so often comes at tremendous personal cost.

We have been in the throes of fighting this pandemic for nine months. And unfortunately, we still have a long road ahead. So self-care is more important than ever.

If you haven't had time off, work with your supervisor to schedule it. Even a long weekend can help refresh the body and mind. Find those activities that you enjoy that can be done safely. Maybe it's an outdoor movie night with blankets and a fire pit, or that hike with family. Find a quiet corner and read that book that's been sitting by your bedside for months. No matter how you do it, take an opportunity to recharge.

As I was recently forced to stay home to recover from my own COVID diagnosis, I was reminded of the importance of finding those moments to slow down and appreciate our blessings. COVID has demanded much from us this year. But we can't let it make us lose sight of what matters most.

**Yours in health,  
Kris**

## Big things happening, helping littlest Hoosiers

Indiana's OB Navigator program, which was launched this year as the latest effort to reduce infant mortality, is seeing significant early success despite the pandemic, with hundreds of women agreeing to participate in the program and a new name – My Healthy Baby.

My Healthy Baby started as a collaboration between the Indiana Department of Health, the Indiana Family

and Social Services Administration, and the Indiana Department of Child Services. Funding was appropriated to the Indiana Department of Health to establish a perinatal navigator program, engaging pregnant women in early prenatal care and providing referrals to pregnant women for home visiting and wrap-around services in Indiana communities.

When the House Enrolled

Act was first signed into law in May 2019, the program goal for My Healthy Baby was to impact 20 counties by the end of 2020. The program is currently live in 22. As of October 9, My Healthy Baby has reached out to 4,487 pregnant women, and successfully contacted 1,454 of them. Of the women contacted, 789, or 54.3%, have agreed to be

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# Spotlight

## Employees recognized by Indiana National Guard

The Indiana National Guard honored Ramzi Nimry of the Division of Trauma and Injury Prevention and Mike Sutton of Environmental Public Health on Oct. 9, presenting them with the Indiana Commendation Medal for their collaboration with the Guard on various testing efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

Guard members nominated Nimry and Sutton for their ability to troubleshoot and solve problems, whether they were related to weather conditions, supply issues or staffing, and for their efforts to take care of the testing site teams, regardless of whether the team members wore a uniform.

Nimry was acknowledged for solving issues with masks at a Fairbanks testing site, streamlining staffing needs at a Hammond drive-thru and finding new locations and addressing schedul-

ing issues. Sutton was honored for quickly recognizing the need for more registration help at a Johnson County Jail testing operation, solving language barrier issues during testing at a Du-bois County business, and assisting with supply and other logistical needs during long-term care and Fairbanks testing.

Nimry thanked the Guard, health department staff and community partners for coming together to make the testing efforts successful.

"This (medal) is for me, but it's more than just me and I'm appreciative to have the opportunity to help Lake County and the state as a whole," he said. "Hopefully, the citizens of Indiana realize we're all in this together. I'm really humbled by this."

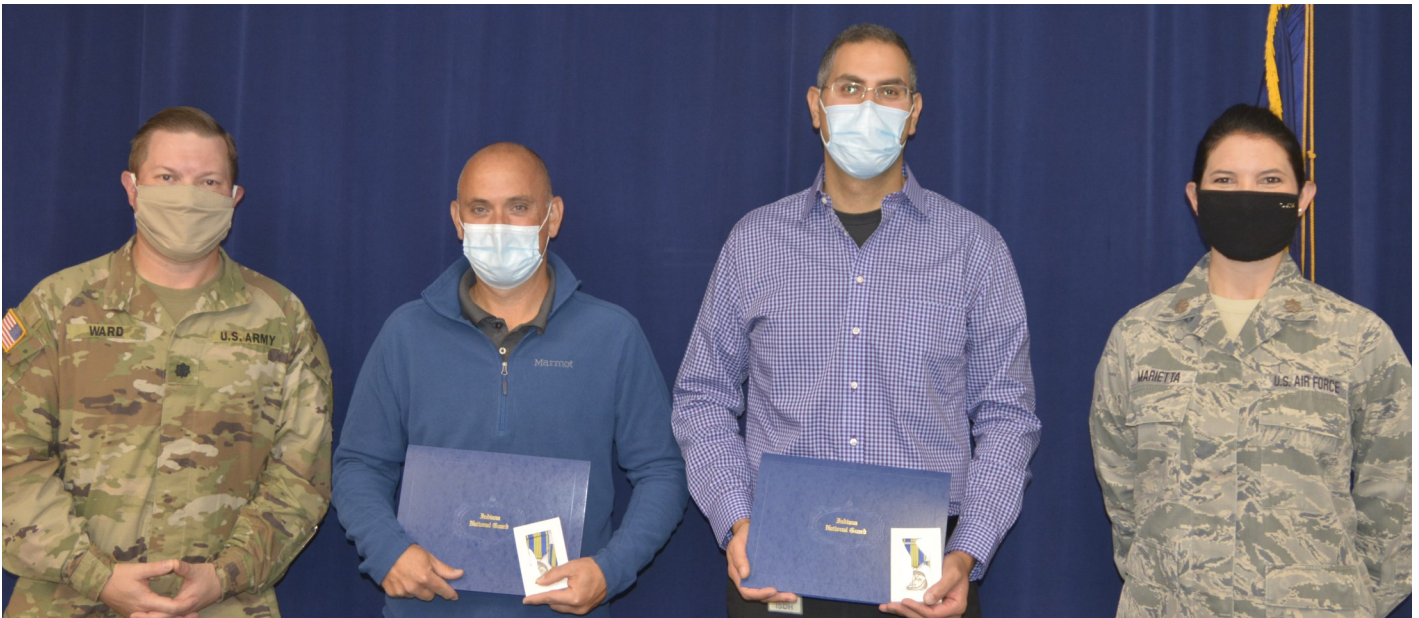
Sutton called the medal "very meaningful" and also emphasized the



importance of coming together for a shared mission.

"We just worked together on it. It was a full team effort," he said. Being recognized, he said, "is humbling but very impactful."

Congratulations to both, and thank you for your teamwork and for your service to Hoosiers.



The Indiana National Guard honored Mike Sutton (center-left) of Environmental Public Health and Ramzi Nimry (center-right) of the Division of Trauma and Injury Prevention on Oct. 9, presenting them with the Indiana Commendation Medal for their collaboration with the National Guard on various testing efforts throughout the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Flu season is here

Flu season has arrived, and IDOH is asking all employees to help in reducing the spread of influenza in the workplace, among our families and in our communities.

"The best way to do this is to get vaccinated," according to Immunizations Director Dave McCormick. "Everyone 6 months of age and older should receive a flu vaccine before the end of October to be properly protected from seasonal influenza and other respiratory illnesses."

The flu is different from the common cold. It can last two weeks or more and cause serious complications such as pneumonia.

Every year, flu affects millions of people nationwide. It causes between 140,000 and 710,000 hospitalizations and 12,000 to 56,000 deaths and costs the American economy billions of dollars. Proper etiquette for coughs and sneezes, frequent handwashing and other good health behaviors help, but getting vaccinated is the best way to protect against the flu.



Seasonal influenza vaccines are a safe, effective way to protect yourself from the flu and other respiratory illnesses.

To find locations to get vaccinated, visit <https://vaccinefinder.org/>. Immunizations are at the core of building a healthier workforce, healthier families and healthier communities. Thank you for supporting this effort.

For more information about influenza and vaccination, visit <https://www.in.gov/isdh/25462.htm>.



Open enrollment is happening now! The State Personnel Department is holding several virtual meetings in Microsoft Teams to educate state employees about their options.

Visit the State Personnel Department website at <https://www.in.gov/spd/openenrollment/> to enroll in a new health insurance plan, educate yourself on your options, compare policies and more.

Resources currently available online include the following:

- **Review the 2021 plans and rates to make an informed selection**
- **Check out information about prescription options, health savings accounts, flexible spending accounts and life insurance**
- **Learn more about options available to improve your health: Sydney Health app, LiveHealth Online and Anthem EAP**

The deadline to take advantage of open enrollment is Nov. 18, so make sure you start reviewing your options soon!

### The annual State Employees Community Campaign is underway!

Through November 20, state employees can make charitable contributions to benefit communities around the state.

For more information on the SECC, go to [www.indianasecc.org](http://www.indianasecc.org), or contact Kim Rief at [krief@isdh.in.gov](mailto:krief@isdh.in.gov) today!



## Labor of Love Goes Online!

### Infant mortality summit adapts by going virtual

The state Department of Health is hosting the Labor of Love Infant Mortality Summit as a virtual conference on Dec. 10. The focus of the eighth annual summit is "Delivering Health for Life," reflecting the importance of good health at any age and the impact that healthy choices have on protecting our state's most vulnerable population. Topics of this year's summit include health disparities, effects of adverse childhood experiences and how to break the cycle of poor health and poverty among adolescent mothers and their children. For more information, or to register, visit <http://www.infantmortalitysummit-indiana.org/>.





## ♦ BABY, continued from page 1

referred to a local family support program.

My Healthy Baby Program Director Karen McKeown hopes to capitalize on the current momentum. "On October 13, we launched a marketing campaign designed to create awareness so that when we reach out to women, they will have already heard of the program and will be more likely to opt in for a referral," said McKeown.

McKeown said the marketing agency conducted focus groups with participants drawn from members of My Healthy Baby's target audience throughout the state. Input from those groups influenced how IDOH is promoting the program (in both English and Spanish), including billboards, video ads and the choice to rename it My Healthy Baby.

In addition to the marketing campaign, two funding opportunities were released by My Healthy Baby. First, Advanced Practice Registered Nurse grants worth \$1.5 million over the next two years were issued to four organizations across Indiana to increase the access to prenatal care in counties with limited OB services or OB deserts. Additionally, infrastructure funds were granted to support the delivery of coordinated and comprehensive perinatal home visiting services to families.

The infrastructure grants were awarded to 18 different organizations to bolster home-visiting programs in underserved parts of Indiana. The grants, combined with the new marketing campaign, position My Healthy Baby to make a substantial impact on the availability of perinatal care in areas otherwise regarded as maternity deserts.

"Indiana currently has the lowest infant mortality rate ever recorded in the state," said State Health Commissioner Kris Box, M.D., FACOG. "We are not done, though. Programs like this help us continue to support Indiana communities in the fight against infant and maternal mortality by connecting women to the care and support that are essential to having a healthy pregnancy."

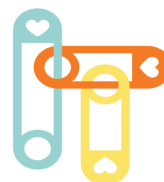
Advanced Practice Registered Nurse

Grants were awarded to the following organizations:

- IU Health – services the East-Central part of the state in Blackford and Jay Counties. Obstetric services were recently discontinued in Blackford County. Grant funding will allow IU Health to coordinate prenatal care with delivering physicians in neighboring Delaware County.
- Union Hospital – provides prenatal and delivery services in West-Central Indiana. Grant funding will allow them to reach the more rural counties in that region with access to local prenatal visits in local clinics and patient homes. The hospital will serve Parke, Vermillion and Clay Counties with this funding.
- Southern Indiana Community Health Care – a Federally Qualified Health Center in South-Central Indiana. They will use the funding to provide a traveling family nurse practitioner to offer routine prenatal services to Crawford, Martin and Washington Counties.
- Logansport Memorial Hospital – serving Carroll, White and Cass counties. Grant funds will facilitate an advanced practice nurse to increase the percentage of women getting necessary prenatal care and offer innovative strategies like telehealth services to prenatal patients as needed.

Home Visiting Program Manager Casey Kinderman of the Maternal and Child Health Division is hopeful for the impact My Healthy Baby will have on maternity deserts as the program continues to grow.

"Several women who would otherwise have limited to no prenatal care now have access to the care they need," said Kinderman. "Additional touchpoints for individuals with providers means that potential complications can be caught early, women can get into



# My Healthy Baby

Connecting Indiana Families  
to Pregnancy & Infant Support

prenatal care earlier, and they can be seen quicker when needed. Overall, this opportunity is intended to improve pregnant women's health and well-being, as well as reduce poor birth outcomes and infant mortality."

Grantees for the infrastructure grants include eight Healthy Families programs, four nonprofit sites (Goodwill of Central and Southern Indiana, Goodwill of Michiana, Fort Wayne Medical Society and IU Bloomington Hospital), St. Joseph Regional Medical Center, Memorial Hospital of South Bend, the Indiana Rural Health Association, Early Childhood Alliance's Parents as Teachers Program, Raphael Health Center in Indianapolis, and the Marion County Public Health Department.

McKeown said she is ecstatic about the program's success so far, pointing out that it was only possible through the dedicated efforts of an interagency team whose members come from the Indiana Department of Health, FSSA, and the Department of Child Services, as well as from leadership at every level from all three agencies. It took the combined expertise and hard work of all three agencies to help My Healthy Baby grow and succeed despite a year riddled with challenges. Still, she keeps her eyes on the potential for the program's future growth.

"We are excited to see how this campaign can help us reach even more women," she said.

For more information on My Healthy Baby, visit <https://www.in.gov/isdh/28233.htm>. To subscribe to automatic updates about the program, visit <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/INSDHB5/signup/16028>.

## Call Center crucial to COVID-19 efforts

As COVID-19 cases have begun to spike again, traffic at the call center is increasing in kind. The call center continues to look for volunteers so it can continue to meet the needs of providers, schools and Hoosiers everywhere.

"We get a lot of call about test results, finding test sites, and helping people get access to providers," said Call Center Supervisor Carrie Bennett.

The last few weeks have seen a surge in call traffic. Some days bring in more than 1,500 calls—some of the highest-volume days since the pandemic began.

There are actually three call centers currently. They include a General Public call center, a Provider call center and a Back to School help line.

The latter is specifically for school nurses and administrators so they can get the latest information about when people should quarantine, how students and staff can get tested and learn about safety protocols for schools.

The general call center is manned by Maximus, an organization contracted through the state. IDOH handles the Back to School helpline in-house.

"The call center operation has evolved so much since the pandemic first began," said Chief of Staff Shane Hatchett. "So many organizations throw around the term 'customer service' like a catchphrase. These volunteers have really exemplified the term."

Hatchett credited the success of the call center to flexibility and a willingness to take on unfamiliar challenges.

"What our folks have accomplished, really, is to give Hoosiers a credible point of contact in scary times," Hatchett said. "It's gone such a long way in helping us establish credibility with the public during this

*"What our folks have accomplished, really, is to give Hoosiers a credible point of contact in scary times."*

**- Chief of Staff Shane Hatchett**



Carrie Bennett, Call Center Supervisor, helps volunteers in the call center. Her hard work, along with the hard work of countless volunteers from every corner of the Indiana Department of Health, has been integral to Indiana's COVID-19 response.

pandemic."

Early on, there was only a single hotline, run by the Epidemiology Resource Center. As the pandemic evolved, the HIV division stepped up and became the core group running the call center. Over time, the two additional call centers were added.

"Since she has taken over, Carrie has really knocked it out of the park," Hatchett said.

Bennett credits the success of the call

center to the volunteers. "They are up here every day, working really hard to make sure people have the information they need to make good decisions during this pandemic. Without them, none of this would work."

The call center is still looking for volunteers as call traffic continues. To volunteer for the public and provider call centers, click [here](#). To volunteer for the Back to School Helpline, click [here](#). Everyone is welcome!



### Biometric Screenings and Health Assessments

ActiveHealth will facilitate biometric screenings and health assessments. Complete a health assessment through [ActiveHealth](#), and you will earn a \$50 electronic gift card! [Get a biometric screening](#), and you will receive a \$100 electronic gift card.

Check out courses to aid in your professional development!

Have you accessed LinkedIn Learning yet?

If not check out this easy to follow [login guide](#).



## MediaLab and Department of Health Policies

The Office of Public Health Performance Management (OPHPM) Team would like to thank all of those who have taken MediaLab training and are using the system to maintain agency-wide, division, and program documents. MediaLab allows us to easily search and find current and up-to-date documents, maintain appropriate security, automate document approval processes, and stay on top of important review dates.

MediaLab is used to track the full lifecycle of documents and to demonstrate regulatory and Public Health Accreditation Board compliance. While not everyone has or needs "User" rights within the system, final and approved documents are made available through links to PDF copies that can be publicly shared. Make sure you check out The Nerve Center for easy access to the MediaLab login portal and links to the current policies. Contact Barb Killian for information on how you can have one-on-one or group user training.

In particular, you should also check out IDOH's newest Policy, Agency Policy Management, on The Nerve Center and



### Policies and Procedures

at the following link: <https://www.medialab.com/dv/dl.aspx?d=1185865&dh=86125&u=95194&uh=670d6>

This policy, effective October 1, 2020, applies to everyone in the agency. It describes the process for initiating, approving, and maintaining policies and other key IDOH documents and is aligned with our new [IDOH Branding Guidelines](#). The policy requires a regular review schedule for policies and will help make us all more accountable when it comes to document maintenance. Please take a few moments to review the policy, share it with your teams, and direct any questions you may have to [Barb Killian](#), our regulatory and compliance coordinator. You may be hearing from her soon if you have policies that need to be updated or reviewed. Our next major policy project will be reviewing the health equity policy in conjunction with the Health Equity Council.



### Nicole Stone

**GUESS WHO I MET ON THE ELEVATOR?**



**Title:** Senior enteric epidemiologist

**Brief Job Description:** Nicole provides supervision and leadership to the enteric team. She establishes and monitors new surveillance projects for enteric diseases and applies up-to-date methods of epidemiological analysis in order to rapidly respond to enteric and foodborne outbreaks. She also manages the Indiana University-Student Emergency Response Team, whose work was highlighted at a national level for utilizing student interview teams.

**Time at IDOH:** Four years

**What do you like most about working at IDOH?**

"I enjoy working with so many fantastic public health-minded people. We work hard but support one another in the ERC."

**Other information:** "I'm a puzzle master. I routinely beat my gamer husband at Tetris and enjoy Sudoku and other puzzle games."

## Staffing updates

Welcome to the following staff members who joined the Indiana Department of Health in September and October:

Snezhanna Rubino, chemist, Laboratories; Chelsea Saalfrank, surveyor, Long Term Care (LTC); Carol Combes, chief nurse consultant, Chronic Disease; Robert Davis, chief data officer, Office of the Commissioner; Rachel Weeks, public health nurse Surveyor, LTC; Joseph Ryan, WIC Commodities Program coordinator, WIC; Alondra Galvan, enteric disease epidemiologist, Epidemiology Resource Center (ERC); Kathryn Ortiz, diabetes program coordinator, Chronic Disease; Lisa Guynn, clerical assistant, Vital Records; Holly Caughey, public health nurse surveyor, LTC; Rachel Maxey, public health administrator, HIV/STD; Michael Schmitt, local emergency site coordinator, Emergency Preparedness; Conor Strain, local emergency site coordinator, Emergency Preparedness; Biak Chinpar, epidemiologist, ERC; Fereshteh Gholipour, epidemiologist, Vital Records; Ashley Brennan, medical surveyor, Acute Care.

Aziza Mazitova transferred from the Department of Workforce Development to be a Ryan White programs specialist, HIV/STD.

Marlena Ratchford was promoted to program director, Ryan White services manager, HIV/STD.



[Click here for information on Winter Break Camp opportunities for your children!](#)