Public health at its finest

I was reminded recently that it has been two years since we first heard about a mysterious pneumonia that was sickening people in China. It didn’t have a name, and we didn’t know what it was, or when – or if – it would make it to the United States. None of us could have predicted the days that were to come, or that we would have lost more than 18,000 Hoosiers and still be dealing with this pandemic more than 700 days later.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 is still here, and its impact on our lives has been undeniable. We have all had difficult days, both personally and professionally, and continue to battle the mental and physical exhaustion this response has brought. But I also know that this response, and many other events this year, have shown once again just how vital public health is to the wellbeing of our state.

As we close out the year, I want to celebrate that work. For COVID, that means focusing on the more than 3.5 million Hoosiers who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and the 16 million tests that have been administered. None of that would have been possible without the help of this incredible team.

Our ERC, Environmental Public Health and laboratory teams have stepped up to help the Indiana Department of Correction identify the source of a legionella outbreak at the Pendleton Correctional Facility, providing invaluable support and knowledge.

And our HIV/STD/Viral Hepatitis team has had boots on the ground in southwestern Indiana for weeks, going door to door to provide education, testing and treatment for a significant syphilis outbreak.

These are just a few examples of public health at its finest. There are so many more within this agency, and we will continue to celebrate them. This team steps up time and time again to put the health of Hoosiers first. You are testaments to the impact of public service and sacrifice. My wish for our entire team is that you take time to celebrate the moments that matter as the year draws to a close and that, regardless of the ongoing challenges, you find joy in this season. What you do matters to so many, and we are incredibly grateful for your heart and dedication.

Yours in health,

Kris

December 2021

Creating Positive Conversations

What do you do when faced with a customer who’s fuming over a delay, cancellation, or objection to a policy? How can you adequately address their issue when your interaction starts off on a sour note? In this course, Myra Golden shares approaches that can help you reframe such conversations and use your words and actions to put a positive slant on an otherwise negative situation. Learn how to use empathy and pacing to foster a sense of connection with customers. Discover the words and phrases to avoid in customer service, how to use partnership language to leave people feeling heard and satisfied, and how to properly apologize. Plus, learn how to approach real-world situations, such as billing issues. Click here to watch the 30-minute presentation.
Seasonal help: IDOH employees share how they give back during the holidays — and all year long

Andrew Pappas, Environmental Public Health

“This Thanksgiving my family and I volunteered to deliver meals for Salvation Army in urban Michigan City. It is a family tradition for us to help prepare meals and deliver food for those in the community lacking mobility or the means to provide a hot turkey dinner for themselves or family.

“2021 was special, as it was my son’s first time participating. We had a great day serving others first, meeting like-minded volunteers, and celebrating the things for which we are most thankful.”

Paul Krievins, Lead and Healthy Homes

“I serve on the Board of Early Learning Indiana and get the opportunity throughout the year to work closely with their Day Early Learning daycare centers around Indiana. One of the most special ways I get to interact with these centers is by supporting some of the Early Head Start families during the holidays.

“A couple years back, the director of the Early Head Start Program reached out saying they had some families who, for whatever reason, weren’t able to get their names in early enough for programs like Salvation Army’s Angel Tree. She asked if my wife, Stefanie, and I might be interested in sponsoring the kids from one of those families. We happily did and were able, through the support of willing friends, to provide some really wonderful gifts (including bikes!) to the entire family.

“That involvement has grown over the past three years as more friends have reached out wanting to help. We’re now up to helping five families each year and couldn’t be more grateful to be able to do it.”

Carla Cly-Williams, Immunizations

“I am new to the IDOH team, but I would like to share what my husband, Richard, and I enjoy doing — and not just during the holidays.

“My husband’s father was a decorated Korean War vet. He served 22 years in the military before being injured in the Korean War. Unfortunately, his head injury caused him to not be a good father - to put it very mildly. My husband and his four siblings were split up at a very young age and were either adopted or, in my husband’s case, fostered by a very loving minister and his wife.

“My husband does not condone the actions of his father in any way, but instead realizes that veterans are in need and it may just be as simple as a listening ear or a warm meal.

“We spend a lot of our time at the VFW. Sometimes we ride on our motorcycle to raise money for a specific cause. We may cook breakfast on a Saturday morning or have a steak night on a Friday, or enjoy karaoke one evening. We just try to be there for our vets.

“My father, who fortunately never had to face war, also was a vet, so I like to honor him as well.”

Epidemiology Resource Center and Office of Data and Analytics

The Epidemiology Resource Center (ERC) and Office of Data and Analytics (ODA) participated in a fundraiser event for the entire month of November, which we called “Feaster Fundraiser Fridays!”

Embodying Epidemiologist Director Tina Feaster’s giving spirit, borrowing her name for alliteration purposes, and making a brand out of her adorable kitty Scrappy Doo, the Feaster Fundraiser Fridays raised money toward hunger relief in greater Indianapolis while having fun!

Each Friday in November, we had a specific themed attire (dress up to show your support), and we collected donations that 100 percent went to the Second Helpings organization. We ended up raising $400 for the Second Helpings organization!

Tina Feaster’s cat, Scrappy-Doo, was the inspiration for ERC and ODA as they raised $400 for Second Helpings.

Supporting veterans is important for Carla Cly-Williams and her husband, Richard.
Holiday giving (continued)

The Pappas family’s work to feed others each Thanksgiving was commemorated in a recent newspaper story about the Salvation Army’s charitable program.

Kira Richardson, Zoonotic & Vector-borne Disease

“The holiday season is one of my favorite times of the year to give back to the community.

“I am fortunate to be able to spend the holidays with my family, and gift exchanges are a fun tradition for us. I would be remiss if I did not recognize that this is a privilege that many families across our state do not have. For that reason, I choose to give back through gift donation drives, adopt a family, and other forms of charitable giving.

“This year, I participated in a couple initiatives, including the Indianapolis Colts Women’s Organization Holiday Program benefiting Hands of Hope. Hands of Hope is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit whose mission is to ‘uniquely and deeply love vulnerable children.’ They connect organizations, individuals and faith communities with practical opportunities to make a difference in the lives of children in foster care. Through this initiative, I was able to purchase gifts from a wish list for a family in need, provide their holiday meal, and purchase a gift for the foster parent.

“Another initiative that is near and dear to my heart is the Diversity Toy and Book Drive sponsored by Indiana University’s Neal Marshall Black Culture Center. The goal is to collect books written by diverse authors highlighting diverse characters, along with new toys, for donation to the Banneker Center, a historic entity that serves local youth and their families in the Bloomington community. As a mother of two young Black children, I understand that representation is important in every setting and that it can be a great influence on our children to see characters in books that look like them. I donated six of my favorite diversity-focused children’s books to this drive.”

Finally, on Giving Tuesday I selected two charitable organizations to donate $50 to. The organizations I selected this year are Bloom Project Inc. and Positive Link. The Bloom Project, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization that offers group mentoring, college preparation, service learning, character development, and career exploration opportunities. They currently serve in Indianapolis and Fort Wayne, and their mission is to prepare young males, ages 12 – 18, for secondary education and their knowledge within a career pathway. Positive Link provides comprehensive prevention and holistic social services for those impacted by HIV in Indiana.

Office of Public Affairs

For the past four years, the Office of Public Affairs has adopted children from the Salvation Army’s Angel Tree program, which provides gifts to children in need.

Gifts typically include necessities such as warm clothing and winter boots and gloves, as well as toys.

“One year, we were able to adopt a little girl who said she wanted a ‘diabetes doll,’” said Media Relations Coordinator Megan Wade-Taxter. “We were so happy to be able to provide a gift that was not only a toy, but also educational about an important health issue.”

Dr. Liu, Labs team to present at 2022 infectious disease conference

The Indiana Department of Health’s COVID-19 testing data hub will be the focus of a presentation at the 2022 International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (ICEID).

Assistant Commissioner and State Lab director Dr. Lixia Liu plans to present “An Unprecedented Approach in Unprecedented Time” at the event, which is slated to take place from March 6 to 9 at the Hyatt Regency in Atlanta.

“An Unprecedented Approach” will examine “the rapid establishment of SARS-CoV-2 testing capacity.” The resulting prompt pandemic response stemmed from sharing test orders and results via a centralized data hub, according to information submitted to the ICEID.

The abstract is co-authored by Office of Technology and Compliance senior IT program manager Carl Rothenbacher.

Dr. Liu was enthusiastic when she learned the team’s presentation had been added to the schedule earlier this month. She directed much of the praise toward her team.

State Health Commissioner Dr. Kris Box also complimented the work of Dr. Liu, the IDOH Labs staff, and others involved in helping make this unique type of outreach possible.

“Wow! Congrats, Lixia,” said Dr. Box. “Kudos to you and the team.”
Public feedback guiding PHAB’s updated standards & measures

We are closing in on another year of great work, which includes becoming an accredited health department!

As discussed in earlier articles, the Public Health Accreditation Board (PHAB) is working to release updated standards and measures in 2022.

During the development of the new standards and measures, PHAB solicited feedback from several think tanks, expert panels and workgroups in addition to reviewing commission papers and lessons learned throughout the years. This feedback is reflected in the draft of the 2022 Standards and Measures.

PHAB has provided summaries of those recommendations in several areas of public health. Please note that the 2022 Standards and Measures are still in draft form and are being updated based on additional feedback from the public.

Below are the topics covered within the summaries, which you can review here.

- Administration, management and governance
- Authentic community engagement
- Behavioral health
- Chronic disease
- Communication science
- Data, surveillance and informatics
- Emergency preparedness
- Environmental health
- Health equity
- Healthy aging
- Inclusive health for individuals with intellectual disabilities
- Public health laboratories
- Public health law
- Public health research
- Public health workforce development
- Systems for equitable access to care
- Tribal workgroup
- Quality improvement/performance management

DNPA: There are many options for staying active this winter

When winter blows in, you can pull the blankets over your head and go back to sleep – or you can suit up and head out for an outdoor adventure. The American Heart Association offers these tips for working out in the cold of winter:

**Tips to keep in mind:**

- Since there is no heat and humidity to deal with, winter’s chill might make you feel awake and invigorated.
- You may be able to work out longer in cold weather, which means you can burn even more calories.
- It’s a great way to take in the sunlight (in small doses). Not only can light improve many people’s moods, it also helps you get more vitamin D.

Exercise boosts your immunity during cold and flu season. Just a few minutes a day can help prevent simple bacteria and viral infections, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

**Try these outdoor activities:**

- Brisk walking or hiking or jogging or running
- Raking leaves
- Shoveling snow
- Ice skating
- Sledding
- Cross-country skiing
- Snowshoeing

**Stay warm, stay safe**

Staying warm and dry when heading out to be active in cold weather is all about layers. A little preparation can keep you safe from cold weather hazards like hypothermia and frostbite.

Cold temperatures, strong winds and damp conditions (like rain and snow) steal your body heat. For example, according to the National Weather Service, a 30-degree day with 30-mile-per-hour winds feels like about 15 degrees. And if you get wet from rain, snow or perspiration, that effect is magnified. That’s why layers of clothing are so important. They help trap heat and form a kind of insulation against the elements.

Resist your instinct to start layering with cotton. Once cotton becomes wet with sweat or snow, the moisture is trapped and will make you feel colder (and heavier). For your first layer, you want something that pulls moisture away from your skin, like moisture-wicking fabric used in high-performance athletic wear. Next, add a layer of fleece; finally, top with a thin waterproof layer.

Close out 2021 with free jeans days!

Did you know?
Free jeans days will be offered to all Indiana Department of Health employees through the end of the year.

This includes all work dates from Friday, Dec. 17, through Friday, Dec. 31. Remember to follow any of your division or section’s dress code requirements, as well as those of a given day’s specific work commitments.

Time to get organized for the new year

The end of the year is the perfect time to get organized for the next.

As the calendar gets set to turn to 2022, make plans to clean out unnecessary items from your workstation. Tidying up now can help you get a fresh start on the new year.
Training camp: WIC team provides aid to Afghan evacuees

Thousands of Afghanistan evacuees were welcomed to Camp Atterbury earlier this year in the aftermath of the Taliban taking control of the capital city of Kabul and the end of U.S. military operations in the country.

Beginning in August, entire families, including thousands of children, left behind their home country to resettle in the United States. With the help of the Indiana National Guard, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross and others, the Hoosier State was able to accommodate thousands of people via Operation Allies Welcome.

Indiana Women, Infants and Children program (WIC) Director Laura Chavez saw the developing situation and wanted to help. Thanks to an Indiana Department of Health team she calls “brilliant, creative and innovative,” the group was able to make an impact its hopes will be a lasting one.

Chavez estimated there were around 1,800 toddlers and as many as 500 infants among the myriad Afghan families who were relocated to Camp Atterbury late last summer. Some of the evacuees gave birth during their stay at the National Guard training post, and those helping wanted to make certain the youngest guests received the best care possible.

Chavez and her team soon discovered their expertise could be valuable, particularly when it came to helping with infant and newborn feeding. The WIC team created and distributed physical materials on baby formula preparation, breastfeeding and other important topics, alongside educational videos that were translated into Dari and Pashto, the two Persian language dialects predominantly used by the Afghan evacuees. In some cases, WIC employees translated existing material, and in others they created brand new content designed to help the Afghan guests, as well as the Camp Atterbury staff.

Video tutorials show how to measure the proper amount of powdered formula for a baby bottle (a critical step in ensuring the infant receives the proper nutrition) and cover important topics like proper breastfeeding techniques and baby bottle sanitation. Some are designed specifically for the Afghan guests, while others are utilized by onsite staff.

The WIC team’s work at Camp Atterbury was celebrated with certificates.

The WIC team was able to visit Camp Atterbury for about eight days, and during that time the staff was “all-in” on helping the guests.

“They are endless wells of love and compassion,” Chavez said of the WIC team, which included less than a dozen employees in total helping at the Edinburg camp.

Nevertheless, the team members made the most of their time and drew on their creativity and passion for helping others to address some pressing needs.

“They poured themselves into this work,” said Chavez. “They saw this as an opportunity to really, really make an impact. They have such beautiful hearts and are true public servants.”

Much of the effort was coordinated by D.J. McCord, the WIC project manager. His prior work experiences, as well as his status as a veteran, helped “free up the team to do their regular work,” Chavez said.

McCord said his work with the WIC division and the Indiana Department of Child Services gave him “a deep appreciation for the needs of children and families throughout the state.”

The collaborative effort helped the group determine what steps to take, which were coordinated with teams in charge of assisting the Afghan guests at Camp Atterbury, as well as the Operation Allies Welcome task force.

McCord said he leaned on some sage advice to help make it all go as smoothly as possible.

“Perhaps the most helpful guidance for me came from the advice I received years ago from previous post commander for Camp Atterbury, for how to function when you don’t have nearly the people or resources you feel you need,” he said. “Col. Barry Richmond’s advice (paraphrased) was to ‘think like a poor, smart, focused person.’”

With planning down to a “T,” the WIC team was able to come up with a holistic approach that melded documents, videos and in-person presentations that detailed the many ways WIC could assist the Afghan families. The warm welcome by the Camp Atterbury crew was a big help in making it all possible.

“They knocked down walls for us to help,” Chavez said.

The team included state breastfeeding coordinator Jana Gach, nutrition and clinic services manager Carol Raney, special projects coordinator Monica DuHack and nutrition consultants Tonya Long, Amanda Cox, Rachel Hopkins, Rachel Miller and Kaitlyn Best.

When the state team returned to its regular duties, WIC representatives with the Marion and Johnson County health departments continued the in-person programming. Chavez explained that WIC teams throughout the state can use the framework created by the IDOH team to further assist Afghan families as they begin to move into communities that will become their new homes.

McCord is helping lead the way with that by contacting resettlement agencies and making sure the families have access to any materials the WIC office can provide. It’s been a complicated task from the beginning, but one that has been altogether rewarding for staff who have had the rare opportunity to see for themselves how their work can make a difference.

“Much of the work we do in our division, while tremendously important and impactful, does not afford us the opportunity to interact directly with the people we are serving,” McCord explained. “Our work with the Afghan guests at Camp Atterbury did just that.”

McCord found that working with multiple agencies and organizations was Continued on next page
Share your story with the Pulse!

Do you have a story to share for an upcoming edition of Pulse? Tell us! Contact us at bre-brown@isdh.in.gov to share your story ideas and photos.

Let us know about the great things your division/commission is doing each day to help keep the Hoosier State a great place to live, work, and play!

WIC team (continued)

Continued from page 5

both advantageous and a challenge, particularly in how to coordinate. There is also the fact that the camp is set up to feed and house military personnel, but not entire families, children, or infants.

There was plenty of will on the side of the WIC team, however, so they found a way to make it all work.

The state WIC team’s hard work was recognized with a “Certificate of Participation” in October, which acknowledged the team’s efforts to support Operation Allies Welcome. All team members who participated in the effort received the certificate.

“Your dedication to duty reflects great credit upon you, Task Force CAIN, and the United States Army,” the certificate reads.

Chavez feels her team deserves the lion’s share of recognition.

“I’m so proud of my team,” she said. “I have an amazing group of human beings that work with me. It’s humbling every day.”

Deadline nears to redeem ActiveHealth e-gift cards

The new year is almost here, and that means time is running out to redeem your ActiveHealth e-gift cards!

If you earned a $25 e-gift card by completing a health assessment and/or a $100 e-gift card for a wellness visit, you have until midnight on Dec. 31 to log into your ActiveHealth account and redeem your cards. Otherwise, they’re gone forever.

If you still haven’t redeemed your rewards, you could start 2022 with up to $125 in gift cards – and that’s definitely not a bad way to kick-off any new year.

Log in to your ActiveHealth account to redeem your rewards and stay up to date with ActiveHealth rewards (and so much more) at InvestInYourHealthIndiana.com.

New EAP vendor in 2022

The Employee Assistance Program (EAP) is a confidential program designed to help and provide support to you and your family members with personal challenges.

Under the EAP, you can get help navigating life’s stresses 24/7.

Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, Optum will be the new EAP vendor. Optum has a broad network of licensed providers that can help you by phone, virtually, or face-to-face.

Look for more information about the new program and how to access services soon.

In the meantime, you still have access to Anthem EAP and up to eight free face-to-face counseling sessions per issue, per year.

To access Anthem EAP, call 1-800-223-7723.

Staffing updates

Please welcome the following new Indiana Department of Health staff members:

Carla Cly-Williams—Immunization
Timothy Conley—Tobacco Prevention
Erika Casso—Public Health Performance Management
Lina Thrasher—Chief Nurse Consultant, Chronic Disease
Karolina Perschbacher—Laboratories
Kayla Stratford—Vital Records
Nicole Wafford—Complaint and Incident
Robin Olbrich—HIV/STD

Blaire Viehweg—Deputy Legislative & External Affairs director
Amber Schwipps—Emergency Preparedness
Louis Hurle—Finance
Theresa Schott—Vital Records
Dawson Groves—HIV/STD
Amy Miller—Long-Term Care
Cynthia Calhoun—Acute Care
Kyle Snyder—Long-Term Care
Jacinda Peek—Finance
Rocky Reed—HIV/STD
Enterprise data catalog brings many improvements

The Indiana Department of Health relies heavily on data to accomplish its mission.

The volume and range of data available to the agency provides many opportunities to transform data into a strategic asset and drive change. Such effective data utilization is built upon a deep understanding of the data, and that quickly becomes a challenge with increasing volume and diversity of data. To better empower data users, IDOH, through Project DARTT, is implementing an enterprise data catalog (EDC) program aimed at enhancing the context and insights IDOH employees can gain about the data assets maintained by the agency.

A data catalog is a tool that provides a central location for collecting, defining and sharing knowledge about data assets. It provides information about the data available, definitions, location of the data, and the data owners and experts. When used properly, a data catalog speeds up the data discovery and access process and promotes data sharing and collaboration by breaking down knowledge silos for data across the agency. This empowers data analytics and enables self-service business intelligence while adhering to regulations and policies regarding privacy and security.

A data catalog will also help improve data quality and create a foundation for interoperability of data systems across the agency. It can identify notable gaps in data and, working with data governance best practices, assist in creating a plan to resolve those gaps. For example, a data catalog can identify whether fields such as race and gender are sufficiently populated in a dataset or whether a dataset contains duplicate information. If adjustments need to be made, a data catalog can help to perform an impact analysis, providing a greater understanding of how changing data could affect downstream processes, such as reports and dashboards, and identify opportunities for alignment across datasets.

Over the coming months, the DARTT project team will be reaching out to various divisions across the agency to gain a better understanding of IDOH systems and data assets. From there, an approach for prioritizing and cataloging those systems can be set. In the meantime, please reach out to the Data Catalog Lead, Carol Torres (ctorres@isdh.in.gov), with any questions or concerns.

Governor’s Fellow Flick learning, contributing at IDOH

Taylor University grad Marissa Flick is spending part of her Governor’s Fellowship tenure with the Indiana Department of Health.

The Brownsburg native said she’s always been interested in science and healthcare and “had a general love for learning” growing up. She parlayed that passion into B.A. in Public Health and Spanish.

“Various research opportunities, internships, and studying abroad for a semester in Sevilla, Spain, deeply shaped the kind of work I want to do,” she said. “I love that public health offers endless opportunities to learn and serve others.”

Read on to learn more about Marissa’s work and goals for the future.

Flick: The fellowship is set up for quarterly rotations throughout our year as a fellow. My first rotation was in the governor’s office, where I worked on various research projects, script writing, photography and legislative affairs. My second rotation has been here at IDOH, where I am working primarily with TB/refugee health for data entry for Camp Atterbury guests and learning about refugee resettlement and health screenings.

Pulse: What has been the most rewarding part of this experience so far?

Flick: I have had ample opportunities to meet people from nearly all state agencies, all of whom have been so willing to share about themselves and their experiences working in state government. I am also overwhelmed by their desire to help connect me with anyone they may know in fields that I am interested in pursuing a career in after the fellowship.

Another rewarding part of this experience, though, is the opportunity that the fellows have to travel each month and learn about an organization that is greatly contributing to the state’s success. It has been amazing to visit, for example, our state parks and the Indianapolis airport and be able to ask questions about the spaces. Being able to hear directly from those who work to serve Hoosiers there every day is a really unique opportunity!

Pulse: What skills do you feel you have obtained and/or improved through the fellowship?

Flick: Given that the rotations of the fellowship are only three months, I have been challenged to jump right into any opportunity I am given. I am now even more comfortable working independently and taking initiative in any project that I may be interested in, rather than hesitating to ask to participate. I am more confident going in to networking situations and reaching out to individuals I want to learn from.

Pulse: What are your goals for the future? Are you considering a career working in state government?

Flick: I am interested in further work in community health and development, as well as emergency response. I look forward to continuing to learn about refugee health and resettlement, as I find it is an area that brings my interests of language, culture and health together to serve many different populations. I am open to working in state government, as I am truly enjoying the work that I am getting to do now at IDOH, but am also interested in non-profit work at the community/neighborhood level. I would like to further my education and get my MPH in health behaviors, epidemiology, or global health!
Lee Green joined IDOH in 2006. The state’s senior entomologist, Green is director of the ERC’s Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease section.

“We do spend a lot of time outdoors and that really appealed to me,” Green said of his career choice. “I’ve been to almost every state park, and every county.”

Staying on the move is a must because the types of insects the team studies, with the possible exception of the recently resurgent bed bug, aren’t known to be homebodies.

“If you’re doing your job correctly, every day you’ll be out in the field,” said Green.

“Field,” in this case, can often be taken literally. For example, to study ticks, the team will “drag” for the tiny pests in a wooded location. This involves maneuvering a cloth along the ground, which the parasitic arachnids mistake for a potential host. The ticks attach themselves to the cloth, and this allows Green and his team to collect them so that they can then be tested for Lyme disease and other illnesses they can transmit.

Mosquitoes are among the worst vectors, as they can spread illnesses such as the potentially fatal eastern equine encephalitis virus (EEE). Horses and humans can contract EEE if they are bitten by an infected mosquito. Some species of mosquito can travel as far as five miles, so it’s up to Green and his colleagues to locate the problem insects and eliminate them.

“Being able to pinpoint where a very serious outbreak could occur and to be able to step in and prevent that before it happens, that’s one of the coolest things about the job,” Green said.

The team’s work throughout the last couple of years has had a dramatic effect on public health, with only one human case of EEE reported last year. That’s a trend Green hopes will continue.

The state’s senior entomologist also believes the team’s work mapping the location of problem ticks is another recent development that has been vital for public health.

“In just the past five years, we’ve collected and tested over 5,000 ticks,” said Green. He described the process as “a ton of work,” but the resulting tick infection maps, which display data on the number of ticks found in each county that carried the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, allow the public to see at a glance any threats to their community.

With the expertise of Green and his team, coupled with the work of LHDs across the state, the threat of potentially serious vector-borne illnesses can be squashed before the culprits can rear their ugly head-capsules. That’s a guiding force every time he and his colleagues venture out to “enemy” territory – and they’re not a bit “bugged” about it.

“Being able to go out into the environment to detect a disease before it ever affects the human population – that’s by far the best thing,” Green said. “That’s definitely what I like best about this job.”
Deyda Salazar

**Title:** Assessment Administrative Assistant at Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education (CDHHE)

**Brief Job Description:** Contact families; receive, review, save, print and file documents. Make calls and send emails and faxes to schools and providers to obtain all information needed by the assessment team to do a review of a child’s file, and get the family prepared for the assessment evaluation at the Center.

**Time at IDOH:** It will be three years now in December.

**What do you like most about working at IDOH?** The people I work with! I could not have asked for a better team to be part of.

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**Children’s Special Health Care Services brings down the (gingerbread) house**

The Children’s Special Health Care Services “fun committee” got into the holiday spirit with a gingerbread house contest and yuletide decorations that cast some team members as elves in a snowy village. Kristi Linson said the committee is working on a calendar of “fun things to do to involve the team throughout the year.”

**April Stevens’ cube looks like a cozy spot, but we think the snow people should steer clear of the fire. (Left)** Gloria Hill and Jessica Pinyerd work on the winning gingerbread house creation.

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**On the Money: Finance updates**

Feedback from IDOH leadership and staff is driving exciting new changes to the Office of Finance.

First, the Finance team recently released its new IDOH Finance Reference Manual. The document is meant to be the agency’s primary source -- and first stop -- for information about financial processes, guidelines and timelines, Chief Financial Officer Adam Novotney said.

The Finance Reference Manual can be found here: [K:\GRANTS_SHARE\2) Resources for Program Staff\IDOH Finance Reference Manual For Program Staff Dec 2021.pdf](#).

That link is in the folder found here: [K:\GRANTS_SHARE\2) Resources for Program Staff](#).

**Note:** If you do not have access, submit an IOT ticket.

The Finance Reference Manual will be added into Medialab soon. Additionally, trainings to supplement written guidance will be revived in the next quarter.

The Office of Finance has a few other projects in the works as well.

- Finance plans to roll out a new combined tracking spreadsheet for procurement and grants and contracts. This will include requisition and purchase order numbers, grant and contract agreement numbers, dates for submissions and status changes, and an overall status available at the touch of a button, on any given day. This will be accessible by program staff so that teams can view their information ad hoc and stay updated as frequently as necessary. Novotney explained the team is working on a draft version of the tracking spreadsheet with several divisions to “ensure that the final product meets everyone’s needs.”

- A Finance Helpdesk ticketing process is coming soon. This will create a one-stop procedure to get questions or concerns addressed by the appropriate staff member.

- The Finance team is also working to develop a new process for invoice entry and approval so that invoices can be entered, have program approval (including correct funding), and be processed and paid in a timely manner.

Have questions? Email Adam Novotney at anovotney1@isdh.in.gov.
Shield Spotlight: Perigo, Harris honored for response after lightning strikes facility

After lightning struck Meadows Manor North and subsequently started a fire at the Terre Haute long-term care facility, two Indiana Department of Health employees sprang into action to help.

The incident occurred in the late evening of Aug. 14 and prompted Kim Perigo, an area supervisor for IDOH’s Division of Long-term Care, to contact the area supervisor for the retirement home. Kim, a registered nurse, happened to be near the facility, which had evacuated its residents to safety when the fire began. Perigo headed to Meadows Manor North to lend a hand and to help move equipment.

Kim’s colleague, public health nurse surveyor Geoff Harris, also responded to the scene.

Brenda Buroker, LTC Survey director, said Harris went to the scene “to provide additional support and assistance.” She noted that Geoff “stayed to ensure residents felt safe and had what they needed for the night.”

Thankfully, everything turned out okay for the approximately two dozen residents of the facility, as well as the staff. The fire was contained to a single location and promptly extinguished by firefighters.

Not long after the incident, Brenda nominated Kim and Geoff for Shield Spotlight Team Player Awards due to their actions, which were also lauded by emergency workers who responded to the scene.

"Following the event, the fire department complimented the staff and surveyors who arrived to assist in their emergency response," said Buroker. "The facility was appreciative of the helpful actions of the survey staff."

Spot bonus program recognizes exceptional effort

The Spot Bonus program is a great way to recognize exceptional work efforts.

Employees who demonstrate exemplary service that results in a tangible and measurable cost savings or achievement for the Indiana Department of Health (IDOH) may be nominated for a Spot Bonus Recognition Award.

Formal nominations via the Recognition Request Form must be submitted by a supervisor or manager in the employee’s chain of command. A spot bonus is a one-time lump sum payment on an employee’s paycheck (subject to taxes and other deductions) following approval.

An employee may receive up to three spot bonuses per calendar year. IDOH is approved to spend $81,800 per fiscal year on this! This does NOT come out of a program budget.

To date, IDOH employees have been awarded $14,800! More information and the application can be found here.

Tea party time!

The Indiana Department of Health’s annual year-end celebration brought an air of the yuletide to 2 North on Dec. 10.

Juice, baked goods, fruit and other snacks were provided to employees as thanks for working to improve the health of Hoosiers throughout another challenging year.

Dr. Box and Dr. Weaver greet staff at the year-end afternoon tea, above. At right, Kristy Holzhausen serves cider and punch.

Let your light shine!

Do you know someone like Kim or Geoff who deserves special recognition? Head to the Shield Spotlight form and nominate someone today!