



The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

February, 2021

Gov. Holcomb's fifth State of the State invests in education, economic growth



Governor Eric J. Holcomb delivered his 2021 State of the State address virtually to the Indiana General Assembly in January.

The Governor focused on how to seize the challenges presented by the pandemic and turn them into opportunities.

"Hoosiers have risen to meet these unprecedented challenges, realizing much more work is to be done in this historic moment of opportunity," Gov. Holcomb said. "The state of our state is resilient and growing. Our foundation has held strong."

Because of the strong fiscal position Indiana was in before the pandemic and the swift, responsible cuts to the budget as COVID-19 spread, the state is now able to restore many state agency budgets, restore higher education funding and increase it in each of the next two years, increase K-12 funding by \$377 million, make new investments in our state parks and Indiana State Fairgrounds, and build a new Indiana State Police lab and new Indiana National Guard armory.

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The Torch is published monthly by the Indiana State Personnel Department and is available online at <https://www.in.gov/spd/employee-resources/the-torch/>

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Gov. Holcomb's fifth State of the State invests in education, economic growth

Additionally, the Governor recommends paying off \$400 million in teacher pension debt, the outstanding bonds on I-69 and the mortgages for three state hospitals. By eliminating these reoccurring costs, the state frees up money to provide flexibility in the budget for priorities such as increasing education funding.

As a part of the Governor's ongoing effort to help the state's economy recover from the financial impact of COVID-19, he announced the creation of the Next Level Regional Recovery program. If the state's financial position remains strong, the initiative will be designed to invest in regions that collaborate around an economic development strategy that is designed to attract, retain and develop talent. The Indiana Economic Development Corporation will lead the effort, partnering with communities that collaborate to develop projects that improve quality of place, advance industry sector development and grow workforce development initiatives among regions, educators, employers and our state's workforce.

"Our decisions, our discipline, now enable us to do things that many other states won't be able to do for years to come," Gov. Holcomb said. "For Indiana, the future is now, and the world continues to hear Indiana's engines roar."

Gov. Holcomb also celebrated accomplishments and focused on next steps for each of the five pillars outlined in his Next Level Agenda.

Cultivate a strong and diverse economy: Pass the state's ninth straight balanced budget, expand Manufacturing Readiness Grants to enable companies to modernize their operations and triple federal defense investment in the state.

Maintain and build the state's infrastructure: Invest an additional \$100 million to connect Hoosiers and businesses to high speed internet. Restart the \$90 million Next Level Trails program. Complete I-69 three years ahead of schedule and continue with future plans to upgrade U.S. 30 and 31.

Education, training and workforce development: Invest in all Hoosiers to ensure access to meaningful work and careers. Ensure K-12

schools receive 100 percent of their funding for the second half of the school year. Prioritize finding long-term, sustainable solutions to improve teacher compensation. Recruit veterans and service members who are concluding their military service to enroll in Indiana training opportunities and become public safety officers and first responders.

Public health: Continue the "It's Our Shot, Hoosiers" COVID-19 vaccination plan. Protect pregnant workers by providing reasonable workplace accommodations. Expand the OB navigator program to 25 additional counties this year.

Deliver great government service: Increase telehealth services. Provide businesses and schools with coronavirus liability protections. Outfit Indiana State Police officers with body cameras. Launch a Diversity Data Dashboard. Complete and share the outside review of the state's law enforcement academy and agencies. Plant one million trees throughout the state.

Full text of Gov. Holcomb's 2021 State of the State address can be read by [clicking here](#).

File your taxes for free!

Was your adjusted gross income \$72,000 or less in 2020?

If so, you may be eligible to file your state and federal taxes for free with Indiana freefile (*INfreefile*) from the Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR).

INfreefile provides faster refunds, free easy-to-use software and a secure way to file your taxes. Did you know that filing electronically has a 98 percent accuracy rate? DOR's certified vendors can also help you find deductions and credits you qualify for, increasing the amount of your refund or decreasing the amount you owe.

See if you qualify at freefile.dor.in.gov.

Did you know you may qualify for a **NO COST FILING** for state and federal taxes?

Indiana Department of Revenue
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DOR

The advertisement features a silhouette of a person jumping joyfully, a hand holding a smartphone displaying the freefile website, and social media icons for Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter. The DOR logo is also present.

Art and history meet nature in new Indiana State Museum exhibit

[State of Nature: Picturing Indiana Biodiversity](#), a fine art/natural history exhibit featuring artifacts from Indiana's prehistory alongside visual art documenting biodiversity in Indiana and looking at humans' impact on the environment, will open Feb. 13 in the Indiana State Museum's NiSource Gallery.

Visitors will encounter wolf specimens from the museum's collection and a reproduction sloth skeleton, as well as two paintings by Indiana Dunes plein air artist Frank Dudley and contemporary art from 15 artists with Hoosier connections including Lucinda Devlin, Casey Roberts, Bonnie Sklarski, David Morrison, and Dornith Doherty.

This experience also will feature activities for children and families to build their own bird nest and sloth claw, and to get



them thinking about how the environment and people are connected. There will even be a soundtrack featuring music from composers whose works are inspired by scientific data and nature.

State of Nature runs through Sept. 19. The museum, located at 650

W. Washington St. in Indianapolis, is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Wednesdays through Sundays. Admission is \$17 for adults, \$16 for those 60 and older, \$15 for students with a valid ID from any Indiana college or university, and \$12 for youth ages 3 to 17.

DHPA announces Preservation Month photo contest

Get out your cameras and find your favorite historic destination because DHPA's annual Preservation Month photo contest has begun.

The annual contest, run by the DNR Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology (DHPA), has been held since 2005 to promote Indiana's historic resources. All subjects of photos must be at least 50 years old, in Indiana, and must include man-made or designed elements. Photos of exclusively natural elements will not be accepted.

Photos can be black and white or color and must have been taken within the last two years. Each

photographer may enter up to three images, and an entry form is required for each photo. Images should be emailed to aborland@dnr.IN.gov and must be JPEG files that are 10mb or smaller. Participants will only be able to send one photo and one entry form per email.

For complete rules and guidelines and for the required entry form, see dnr.IN.gov/historic/2800.htm. The contest deadline is April 2.

Follow the [DNR Instagram account](#) (@indianadnr) in May. DHPA will be taking over for a week and featuring selected photos along with contest winners.



Complete a wellness visit and earn a \$100 e-gift card

Show yourself – and your wallet – some love this month by scheduling a wellness visit!

Earn a \$100 e-gift card for completing a wellness visit! A [wellness visit](#) (sometimes referred to as an annual physical or yearly check-up) with your primary care provider is an opportunity to assess your current health, identify any necessary preventive care, and review health changes over time. A wellness visit checks the same health indicators as a biometric screening plus your medical history, medication needs, and current diet, exercise, and other routines. During a wellness visit, your provider can also order additional lab work based on your health history, and work with you to create a plan to improve your overall health.

Check out this [comparison chart](#) to see a more in depth look at the differences between a biometric screening and a wellness visit.

There are two options available to complete your [wellness visit](#) and earn your \$100 e-gift card. **One**

ACTIVEHEALTH WELLNESS REWARDS

Earn \$100 for completing a wellness visit.

[Tell me more](#)



option is to schedule an annual physical with your primary care physician. Make sure to print the Annual Physical Results form from your [ActiveHealth](#) Rewards Center and take it to your appointment.

Your second option is to visit a [CVS MinuteClinic](#) for a wellness visit. You need to print the MinuteClinic voucher from your [ActiveHealth](#) Rewards Center and take it to your appointment. The wellness visit at the MinuteClinic is free with the voucher.

If you need help finding a provider, try the [Sydney app](#) or call the Anthem Health Guide at 877-814-9709.

Both employees and spouses eligible for the ActiveHealth program can earn a \$100 e-gift card for completing their wellness visit. Results must be visible in the ActiveHealth portal by Nov.

30, 2021 to earn the e-gift card. For annual physical results forms, processing time is up to four weeks from the date the form is accepted to when the results are visible in the ActiveHealth portal. For CVS MinuteClinic wellness visits data takes two to four weeks from the date of the visit to be loaded and visible in the ActiveHealth portal.

Those resources are all lovely ways to get to the heart of your health in February, but 2021 is bursting at the seams with other ways to improve your well-being AND save money on future healthcare costs. Check out the [ActiveHealth page](#) at [InvestInYourHealthIndiana.com](#) to learn how to earn the 2022 Premium Discount, what you need to do to complete a health assessment (and earn a \$25 e-gift card!), sign up for important health webinars, and so much more!

Walking for your heart

So, you want to stay fit, but you're not sure how to add more physical activity to your day?

One simple answer may be to start walking!

Like any physical activity, walking is good for your heart. It increases your heart rate, builds heart muscle, and gets the blood flowing through your body. It also lowers blood pressure and helps reduce body fat and cholesterol.

You may want to get a check-up before you start walking. If you have heart problems, your doctor can tell you how much activity is safe for you.

Ready to walk?

1. Start out slowly. Do a warm-up first, then pick up the pace in the middle. Finish with a cool-down at the end.
2. Try walking with friends, coworkers, or pets— and set goals that you can reach.



3. Use a pedometer or fitness device or app to keep track of your steps. The first time you use it, count how many steps you normally take in a day. Try to increase this number each day or week.
4. Try to walk at least two and a half hours (150 minutes) each

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Walking for your heart

week. You can reach that mark by walking 30 minutes a day, five days a week.

A few other tips to help you get started:

1. Schedule walks on your business calendar with a coworker.
2. Try walking to work, school, the grocery store or a restaurant.
3. Think about walking before or after work or on your lunch break.

4. Maybe set a goal to take part in a planned fitness walk.
5. Try to plan family outings around walks together.
6. Take your dog on a walk. It's good for them too!

If you're looking for more information to help you on your health journey, be sure to visit MyActiveHealth. There is a wealth of information on this website regarding many different health and wellness topics. Other resources:

Health Coaching

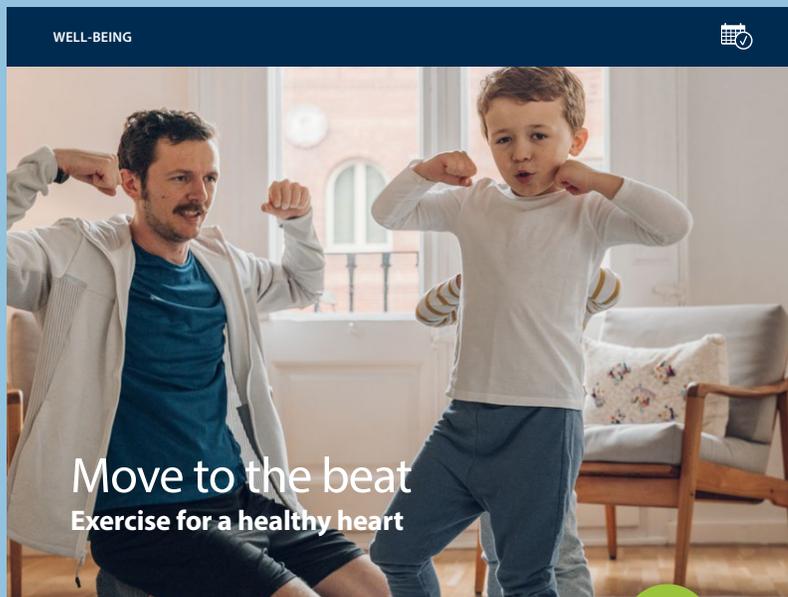
- Call to schedule: 855-202-4219

Login to MyActiveHealth Engagement Platform

- www.myactivehealth.com/StateofIndiana

Download the ActiveHealth Mobile App

- Located in the app store and Google Play



One of the most important things you can do for your heart is increase your physical activity. It may seem obvious, but doing so can lower your risk for heart disease. It can also help you think, feel and sleep better, and perform daily tasks more easily.¹

Best of all, you can find ways to stay active almost anywhere — for free.



Talk to your doctor about safe ways for you to be physically active.

Find ways to be active every day

Whether you're indoors or outdoors, now's your chance to get creative!



REMEMBER TO STRETCH

Stretch all the major muscle groups regularly, including your arms, back, hips, thighs and calves. Try to hold each stretch for 15 to 30 seconds.



BUILD YOUR STRENGTH

Do basic muscle toning exercises such as push-ups and leg lifts. Or try weight lifting using objects around the house.



DO AEROBIC EXERCISES

Aim to do moderate activity for at least 2½ hours a week.

- Dance to your favorite songs.
- Sweep or vacuum the house.
- Work in your yard.

Or try vigorous activity for at least 1¼ hours a week.

- Join an online fitness class.
- Go for a jog.
- Hike an outdoor trail.



1 American Heart Association. American Heart Association recommendations for physical activity in adults and kids. April 18, 2018. Available at: Heart.org/en/healthy-living/fitness/fitness-basics/aha-recs-for-physical-activity-in-adults. Accessed September 28, 2020.

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How state agencies use state tax dollars to serve Hoosiers

DOR's Indiana's Tax Dollars at Work campaign enters second year

For the second consecutive year, the Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR) is demonstrating how the work of 12 state agencies is supported by state tax dollars via the Indiana's Tax Dollars at Work campaign.

- Secretary of State
- State Personnel Department
- Treasurer of State

DOR's campaign will be promoted on the agency's social media platforms — [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), and [Twitter](#). Individuals can also follow the campaign by subscribing to DOR's [Tax Talk](#) blog.

To kick off the new year, DOR featured the Indiana Civil Rights Commission (ICRC) in January. Did you know they only have a team of 30? With such a small team, you'd be surprised at how much work they do! From honoring Dr. Martin Luther

King Jr. and Holocaust survivors to investigating discrimination claims, ICRC's work is more than extensive. Learn more in [this blog](#).

Next up was the Department of Workforce Development (DWD), which seemed fitting considering their continued efforts to help Hoosiers get through the financial hardships brought on by COVID-19. For example, did you know they have specific programs geared toward keeping teens on track with their education efforts or how they provide assistance to unemployed veterans? Find out more [here](#).

Stay tuned! In March, DOR will explore the Management Performance Hub.

For more information, including which agencies will be featured each month, visit DOR's [Indiana's Tax Dollars at Work](#) webpage and subscribe for updates.

Indiana's Tax Dollars at Work



From helping Hoosiers find lasting employment to fighting for citizens' civil rights and ensuring safety at home, you'll learn just how those tax dollars help Hoosiers every day.

Agencies to be highlighted this year include:

- Auditor of State
- Board of Animal Health
- Department of Child Services
- Department of Workforce Development
- Indiana Civil Rights Commission
- Indiana Economic Development Corporation
- Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority
- Indiana War Memorial
- Management Performance Hub

Stay up to date with COVID-19 news

- [2019 Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Indiana Department of Health](#)
- [Governor Eric J. Holcomb](#)

Helpful resources

Anthem Resources

- [Anthem Employee Assistance Program \(EAP\)](#)
- [Anthem NurseLine](#)
- [LiveHealth Online](#)
- [211.org](#)

General Resources

- IDOH COVID-19 Call Center— 877-826-0011
- Contact the INSPD Benefits Hotline – 317-232-1167 (Indianapolis area), 1-877-248-0007 (toll- free outside Indianapolis)
- Disaster Distress Helpline – 800-985-5990, or text “TalkWithUs” or “Hablanos” to/al 66746.
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Helpline – 800-662-HELP
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline - 800-273-TALK or 888-628-9454 (español)



Artwork by Jerry Williams

Grant allows State Museum to offer virtual version of award-winning exhibit

The Indiana State Museum and Historic Sites (ISMHS) will create a virtual version of its groundbreaking exhibit *FIX: Heartbreak and Hope Inside Our Opioid Crisis*, thanks to a \$331,000 grant from the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration's Division of Mental Health and Addiction via the State Opioid Response Grant.

The grant will be used to write and produce a series of videos that can be used in the classroom or virtually, engaging students in this crisis that has impacted families and communities across Indiana.

"We will work with the video team that helped bring *FIX* to life in the gallery and will use this talent to move elements of *FIX* online," Chief Officer of Engagement Brian Mancuso said. "While this will be a somewhat different experience than seeing the full *FIX* exhibit in-person, school groups will have the ability to see an exhibit overview video. Once they see the introductory video, they can select one of five modules, each with an activity and three videos that will feature personal stories, experts in the field, and topics that bring the opioid epidemic to life and build empathy."

For educators who want a more interactive *FIX* virtual experience, a member of the museum staff will host, engage and guide classrooms in an interactive, 45-60 minute video-program that interweaves art, science, stories from individuals affected by opioid use disorder, and stories of recovery. All programs will follow Indiana academic standards. (There will be a fee for the programs, but scholarships are available.)

Grant money also will be used to fund staff positions for the extended run of *FIX: Heartbreak and Hope Inside Our Opioid Crisis* through August 1, 2021. This supports visitors who would like to experience the exhibit in-person and allows ISMHS to reach out to more than 50 community partners and incorporate those organizations into daily and special programs.

FIX opened in February 2020. In the six weeks before the COVID-19 pandemic hit, the museum welcomed more than 15,000 visitors. The museum was closed for three months in response to Indiana's shelter-in-place orders.

While the museum is now open and welcoming visitors, field trips have all but stopped. But the museum has seen significant interest in digital information about *FIX*. Nearly 15,000 individuals have engaged with the *FIX* page on indianamuseum.org/FIX.

Meanwhile, Douglas Huntsinger, Indiana's executive director for drug prevention, treatment, and enforcement, reported a 67 percent increase in Naloxone administration by EMS in October 2020 compared to previous year-to-date, indicating

a strong correlation between the coronavirus pandemic and opioid use during isolation and quarantine.

"It is clear that ISMHS must continue its efforts to give audiences statewide, especially youth, access to *FIX*, even if we must do it differently than originally planned," Mancuso said. "We will create modules that reflect students' interests and varied entry points by capitalizing on the work we have done with our partners.

"We are able to provide a mix of art, science, multi-media and inspiring artwork that will help students gain a better understanding of the science and biology behind opioid use disorder. They will also learn about our nation's history with other health crises, paths to recovery, and experience personal stories from impacted Hoosiers and stories of hope."

FIX is supported by Next Level Recovery; Ball Brothers Foundation; George and Frances Ball Foundation; Efroymsen Family Fund, A CICF Fund; CVS Health; JSI; Indiana Family and Social Services Administration; and Barnes & Thornburg LLC.



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| | |
|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Undergraduate programs..... | \$3,225–\$3,550* |
| Graduate programs..... | \$3,240–\$4,180* |

Some programs have per-term or one-time fees specific to that program's costs.
*As of January 2020

Need-based financial aid is available.

\$4,000

Apply for the Resiliency Grant.

The grant will be credited to your account in the amount of \$2,500 for the first term and \$750 per term for up to two additional terms.



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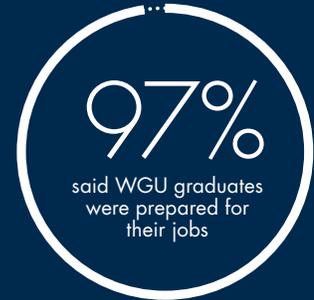
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The Teachers College at Western Governors University is granted Accreditation at the initial-licensure level from CAEP, the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation, 1140 19th St NW, Suite 400 Washington, DC 20036 (202) 223-0077. CAEP is the only recognized national accreditor for educator preparation. WGU is the first competency-based online university to receive CAEP accreditation for its degree programs that lead to teacher licensure.

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Indiana Department of Revenue recognized nationally as ‘Top Workplace’

Employee engagement survey lands DOR on prestigious national list for 2021

The Indiana Department of Revenue (DOR), a two-time winner of the IndyStar Top Workplaces award, has now been recognized at the national level as a Top Workplace USA for 2021.

This national recognition was announced Jan. 28 by Energage™.

This prestigious award is based solely on an anonymous survey of DOR employees that measures several aspects of employee engagement and workplace culture. Eighty-five percent of DOR employees voluntarily completed the scientific 26-question survey, which included questions in areas of organizational culture, commitment, communication and leadership. The results were analyzed and benchmarked by Energage against similar organizations.

“This national recognition of our team’s passionate commitment to our work environment, culture and to each other is simply amazing,”

shared DOR Commissioner Bob Grennes. “Being recognized again, and now nationally, for what we live everyday makes us smile. And we all need smiles during these challenging times.”

DOR is comprised of more than 650 dedicated team members who skillfully operate all tax administration functions, including processing in excess of \$20 billion annually from 65 active Indiana tax types. The DOR team annually serves millions of Hoosiers, businesses, corporations and stakeholders – helping all customers accurately and effectively meet their Indiana tax obligations.

“In a year that introduced challenges that could have never been anticipated, the DOR team doubled down on positive connection, communication and engagement activities,” Commissioner Grennes added. “While effectively dealing with every challenge presented in 2020, we also increased our engagement. That is pretty special.”



DOR was first recognized as a Top Workplace by the IndyStar in 2019—making DOR the first state agency to ever receive this employee-driven award in Indiana. In 2020, DOR was awarded the distinction again, recognizing the team’s continued passion for positive engagement, leadership and culture.

DOR’s mission, to serve Indiana by administering tax laws in a fair, secure and efficient manner, along with its vision, to be recognized as the premier tax administrator in the nation and a great place to work, serves as DOR’s guiding lights – but it is the wonderful work by the DOR team that brings these to life.

To see a complete list of the USA’s Top Workplaces, click [here](#). To learn more about DOR, visit the agency’s [About Us webpage](#).



Governor Eric J. Holcomb lauded the Indiana Department of Revenue in a [video statement](#) following the agency’s announcement that it had been honored as [one of the nation’s top workplaces](#). “Your dedication and commitment to service continues to positively impact your fellow leaders all across our state,” Gov. Holcomb said.

Canstruction Competition collects nearly 11,000 canned goods for food pantries

The 2021 Canstruction Competition saw 19 total entrants get creative while collecting canned goods for a great cause: Hoosier food pantries.

Photos of the Canstructions were being submitted to judges to determine the winner of the vaunted “Best Structure” award, but numerous Indiana Department of Child Services teams made predicting the “Most Cans” category a snap.

DCS participants collected more than 6,700 total cans. In all, the final combined can count from all teams was 10, 871.

The cans they collected will benefit Hoosier food banks throughout the state, helping those in need.

Check back next month for an in-depth look at the 2021 competition, and watch your email for an announcement of the winners. Early this month, you’ll find a gallery of all entrants on



“The Great Outdoors” used 596 cans (and a few furry friends) to create their 2021 Canstruction entry. The team represents the Indiana Department of Natural Resources.



This entry from the Indiana Department of Health’s “Crazy Chemists” is a COVID-19 molecule embellished with the words “IN this together.” The Canstruction took 692 cans and was created by a team of IDOH Labs employees.

the [State of Indiana Employees/ Invest in Your Health Facebook page](#) as well.

Thanks to all who participated in this year’s Canstruction Competition which, due to the ongoing battle against COVID-19, took on a special meaning. It was another case of Hoosiers helping Hoosiers during an uncertain time.

Bringing home the Beacon

State employees honored for blood drive contributions

State of Indiana employees were among those honored recently by [Versiti Blood Center of Indiana](#) during its donor recognition program, the Beacon Club.

One full blood donation can save up to three lives, according to [this video](#) posted on Vimeo in celebration of those who contributed significantly in 2019. The video highlights students and individuals as well as medical facilities and other employers, noting the amount of blood donated by each. State of Indiana employees rolled up their sleeves

to donate a total of 488 units in 2019. In spite of the COVID-19 pandemic, 259 units were donated by state employees last year. Donors honored as part of the Beacon Club reside in Indiana as well as Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin.

The honor was announced in January, which is National Blood Donor Month. Since 1970, the month has been used to “honor donors and inspire new ones,” according to Versiti Blood Center.

“We are endlessly grateful for our Beacon Club donors and hosts, and their unwavering dedication to saving lives,” reads a slide at

the end of the video. “Thank you for sharing your story and your passion with us.”

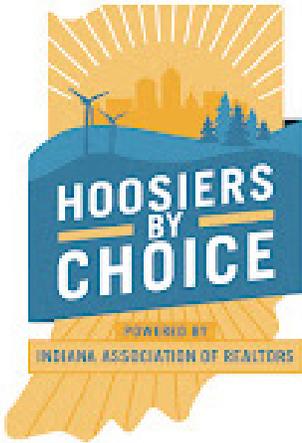
The next chance for state employees to contribute is Feb. 3 in the Indiana Government Center. [Click here to sign up](#) and learn more.



Indiana Destination Development Corporation launches 'Hoosiers by Choice' campaign

[Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch](#) and the [Indiana Destination Development Corporation](#) (IDDC) recently announced the launch of a new quality of life initiative called [Hoosiers by Choice](#) powered by the [Indiana Association of Realtors](#).

The campaign features people who have moved to Indiana and chosen to make the Hoosier State their permanent home. The campaign will run throughout 2021, showcasing what makes Indiana a great place to live and why people from other places have chosen to stay.



Hoosiers by Choice and its accompanying website will display authentic Hoosier stories of people living in northern, central, and southern Indiana in the form of short videos. The videos will explain why these Hoosiers by Choice chose to move and, ultimately, stay in Indiana.

“We are extremely proud to launch a campaign that will clearly demonstrate Indiana’s strong

quality of life and show what makes living in Indiana so special,” Crouch said. “The website will not only serve as the main hub for our Hoosiers by Choice stories, but also as a great resource for people considering moving to Indiana.”

In recent years, the amount of people choosing to call Indiana home has increased. The 2018 National Movers Study found 51.3 percent of state-to-state moves involving Indiana were in-bound, with more people moving into the state than out. Indiana also consistently serves as the top destination for people leaving Illinois, with Indiana drawing nearly 9 percent of residents departing Illinois in 2017, according to information taken from the U.S. Census Bureau American Community Survey.

“As Hoosiers, we know we have incredible stories to tell, and the Hoosiers by Choice campaign will allow us to be intentional about sharing those stories,” said Elaine Bedel, Secretary and CEO of IDDC. “We are hopeful that the campaign will instill a sense of pride in current Hoosiers and show prospective Hoosiers what makes Indiana a great place for anyone to call home.”

Meet the first Hoosiers by Choice:

[Tamika Catchings](#)

Recently selected for the Naismith Basketball Hall of Fame, Tamika Catchings made a name for

herself on the hardwood for the Tennessee Volunteers and Indiana Fever. After getting drafted by the Fever, Tamika quickly fell in love with the people and culture of Indianapolis and Indiana and has never looked back. Tamika Catchings is a Hoosier by Choice!



[Ayse Mathies](#)

Born in Turkey, Ayse Mathies has found her home in Evansville. From support for minority business owners to the pace of a small Midwestern city, Ayse feels free to be herself in the Hoosier State.



(continued on page 13)

Indiana Destination Development Corporation launches ‘Hoosiers by Choice’ campaign

[Chelsea Boulrisse](#)

Born and raised in Massachusetts, Chelsea Boulrisse had never heard of Wabash. A job opportunity



brought her to the Hoosier State upon graduation from college, and now she can't imagine leaving.

[Neelay Bhatt](#)

Working for Disney in Orlando, Neelay Bhatt decided to apply for a job in Indiana and his friends scoffed, but his grandmother noted that Indiana sounds a lot like India, so it must be a special place. He made the move to Indianapolis and has fallen in love with life in Indiana.



For more information or to submit your own Hoosiers by Choice video story, visit HoosiersbyChoice.com.

To follow the campaign via social media, check it out on [Facebook](#), [YouTube](#), and [Instagram](#).

ABLE accounts help people with disabilities save money

ABLE accounts allow individuals with disabilities to save money without affecting eligibility for assistance programs, such as Medicaid or SSI.

In 2017 Indiana proudly launched its own ABLE plan, INvestABLE Indiana. Since its inception, INvestABLE Indiana has provided eligible Hoosier account owners the ability to save well beyond the \$2,000 resource limit, with an average account balance of over \$7,000.

To be eligible for an ABLE account one must have the onset of disability or blindness prior to age 26 and be receiving SSI or SSDI. If they are not receiving SSI or SSDI they may still be eligible for an account if they have a doctor's diagnosis of significant functional impairment.

Either the eligible Individual can open the account on their own,



or an Authorized Individual (such as a parent, guardian or Power of Attorney) can open one on their behalf. There is only one account allowed per person and anyone can contribute to the account.

The program allows annual contributions of up to \$15,000 (individuals who work can contribute more). Individuals receiving SSI can save up to \$100,000 total. For those not receiving SSI, they can save in excess of \$100,000.

INvestABLE Indiana offers a variety of savings and investment options, ranging from conservative to more aggressive options. Participants even have access to a fully FDIC insured checking option with a debit card.

Earnings in an INvestABLE Indiana account are not subject to federal

or state income tax if spent on qualified expenses, similar to a 529 college savings account. Contributions are made with post-tax dollars.

The money in an ABLE account has rather flexible usage in that a qualified expense is anything that can be connected to living with a disability and can improve one's health, wellness or quality of life. Qualified expenses include but are not limited to, housing, education, food and other basic living expenses. The expense does not have to be a medical necessity and does not have to be for the sole benefit of the beneficiary. To learn more about INvestABLE Indiana and ABLE accounts visit <http://in.savewithable.com>.

Pop life

Hoosier transplant, BMV employee is a musician, podcaster on the side

When legendary singer/songwriter Prince died in 2016, he left behind a literal vault's worth of unreleased recordings that might put the entire catalogs of other mainstream artists to shame.

Enigmatic, esoteric and an unabashed perfectionist, "His Royal Badness" reportedly left enough music behind that he could have released an album every year or so for the next century.

But it was not to be.

The shocking death of Prince Rogers Nelson due to an accidental fentanyl overdose silenced forever one of the most creative and dynamic musical forces of his generation, and those who remain could only take stock of the loss and mine the musical remnants – like thieves in the temple—of another auteur gone far too soon.

James Ledesma was one of those who mourned the passing of the *Purple Rain* singer on that gray April day.

"Prince is hands down my favorite all-time artist, as well as my biggest influence," said Ledesma, himself a versatile musician. "His death was a shock and I still can't believe he is gone."

Let's work

Making it in the music industry is no picnic in the (Paisley) park, as anyone who ever picked up a guitar with dreams of performing in front of sold-out crowds can attest. It's a brutal, dog-eat-dog industry that can exact a hefty physical and mental toll on even the most talented—and driven. But that hasn't stopped many from

trying, and you'd be hard pressed to find any among them that didn't make the effort out of a genuine affinity for sharing with the world their contribution to humanity's one common language: music.

James, a Carmel resident who's worked for the Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles for the last three years, is one such artist, having shared his talents in multiple bands and solo pursuits from his earlier days in his native California to his current projects with two different Indiana churches. In many ways, he's been around the musical world (though certainly not in a day), and it's been quite a journey all along the way.

It's one that takes a lot of heart—and perseverance.

"The best advice is 'do it because you love it,'" Ledesma said of pursuing music as a hobby or a career. "I have known very few successful musicians in my time, and if they didn't love music then they wouldn't even bother because the industry is so destructive and soul-deadening."

James believed his musical aspirations had gone as far as they might before moving to Indiana a decade ago.

"Frankly, I didn't ever think I'd make music or do creative things ever again when I came out to Indiana," he said. "I was married with a child and my studio was packed up in boxes. It never crossed my mind that I could expand upon what I'd been doing in L.A."

But since then, he's backed up several bands with his skills on the bass and, more recently, has started to become known for his own work.



James Ledesma primarily plays bass, but he enjoys multiple genres of music and has experience with several other instruments. His favorite musician is the late Prince.

"As for myself, I have only begun to make any money off of my music or skills in production after nearly three decades of sweating it out," he said. "The move to Indiana in 2010 marked the beginning of a new phase where I was good enough to make money here and there, without having to do things free 'for exposure.'"

The Vault: Old Friends 4 Sale

Like his late idol Prince, Ledesma plays multiple instruments including guitar, drums, and keyboard. Ledesma also has an archive of his own compositions he's compiled throughout the years, and similar to his all-time favorite artist's expansive breadth of work, James prefers to dabble in multiple musical genres. He also cites David Bowie, The Beatles, Wu-Tang Clan, and Pink Floyd (among several others) as influences.

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Pop life

That said, James is content with his work at BMV and isn't necessarily planning to take on any music gigs full time.

"I don't have any hope for a career," he said. "I am doing this for fun."

But the prospects for collaborating and creating are perhaps sunnier than ever for the former Los Angeles resident. Whether that's as a bass player for another band ("It allows me to get out and play without having to spearhead anything," he said) or continuing to find his way in solo pursuits, Ledesma is happy with the way his musical side projects are developing.

He has plenty of good stuff in the pipeline, too.

"I am working on several things always," James said. "Right now, Chromata 4 is an electronic prog-rock duo consisting of me and a drummer friend. We have projects on Bandlab that will be finished soon. Also on Bandlab, I started a new collaboration with an old musician friend named Nick Culp, a jazz pianist based out of California. It's called Hippie Funk, and we've started to trade back and forth using the Bandlab program. Then of course, I always work on The Magic Christians when I'm not working on church material or indulging in projects."

The Magic Christians is Ledesma's primary focus at the moment. He's a paid performer in a Christian praise band at Faith Presbyterian Church (located on Hague Rd. in Indianapolis), and he volunteers his talents at his own place of worship, Faith Church. The latter is located on College Ave. in Indianapolis.

In spite of his musical resume, Ledesma said he remains most known for his work behind the scenes as a producer and as a podcaster.

Some of that work dates back to his childhood.

"I was actually more of an aspiring recording engineer at first," James recalled. "In my preteens I used to play with tape recorders and make skits and fake radio stations with family and friends. As I got more into music I realized that (1) I can get paid to record music, and (2) I can learn to play and record myself in the process. By the time I was 16, I started playing guitar regularly; but it was years in the making, probably dating back as early as 10-years-old."

Ledesma's podcast is called MPS (Mixtape Preservation Society/ Music Podcast Series) and can be found on almost all podcast platforms. A video version can be seen on this [YouTube channel](#).

MPS focuses mostly on Ledesma's own music these days, delving into a decades-deep back catalog.

"I have a large wealth of music that I have personally worked on, so I will probably never run out of material," said James. "The trick is to find the time to do it."

Rave Un2 the Joy Fantastic

James has a 12-year-old son from his previous marriage, and he's helping raise his fiancée's teenage daughter while balancing his work for the state with his creative projects. So time is certainly at a

premium these days for the 47-year-old. Finding that balance is helping James better enjoy every aspect of it all, though, and that can only lead to good things down the road—musically and otherwise.

"If I didn't love being creative and working with others, I would've stopped playing/recording years ago," James remarked.

Thankfully, he didn't, and now Ledesma has reached a point where his passion projects can come to fruition in due time-- emphasis on *time*.



BMV employee James Ledesma is a musician, podcaster, and writer. He currently performs for two different church bands and is working on a variety of creative projects.

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Pop life

"I guess I just have a lot of energy," James said of how he manages to keep his busy life in balance. "Yesterday (Jan. 27), I did an eight hour shift at work then rehearsed with one church group, then drove to another rehearsal after that, got home around 8 p.m., and still stayed up until almost midnight! I've always been like that. Once I get motivated, it is hard to stop me."

Having a job he enjoys has proven itself to be a boon to his musical pursuits as well. The creative process behind his music, his podcast, and even his long-in-the-making novel is complemented by his work for BMV rather than being complicated by it.

"I like helping people with their transactions and gaining knowledge about the ins and outs of motor vehicle laws," James said of his BMV career. "I like the benefits and the fact that I can

leave the job at the office and not bring it home with me. I like the people I work with and they seem to like me."

Prior to working with BMV, Ledesma worked for seven years at a major book retailer. It was a bit more labor intensive than some of his other work, and he joked that he didn't want to stick around the store with little more to show for it than a bad back.

As is the case with his church band gigs, James' work at the bookstore dovetailed with another of his creative projects -- a novel he's been writing off and on for the last two decades. Like some of his music, it's anything but conventional.

"During the quarantine last year I decided to start transcribing [the novel] to an online format," said Ledesma. "It is about two-thirds of the way finished. I don't know

if I will pursue publication, seeing as it may very well have a life as a digital book when all is said and done."

James describes the book as "a post-post-post-modern *bildungsroman* with intertextual hyperlinks that serve as footnotes." It's told from the point of view of a fictional character named Fabian Rourke that utilizes first and third-person perspectives.

But music is James' first creative love, and now that he feels free to commit the time to his craft, he's finding new opportunities to share it with the world.

Those kind of cars don't pass you every day.

"The lesson there is that sometimes the more you chase after something, the more elusive it gets," James said. "The minute you stop chasing, it comes to you."

Story by Brent Brown, INSPD

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