



The Torch

The official newsletter for State of Indiana employees

NOV
2024

2024 Governor's Public Service Achievement Awards Issue

On Wednesday, October 30, outstanding State of Indiana employees were recognized at the Governor's Public Service Achievement Awards. These awards honor individuals and teams whose dedication and innovation have made a measurable, positive impact on their agency's finances, operations, or the communities they serve between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2024. In this special edition of the Torch, we highlight summaries of their remarkable achievements. We extend our gratitude to all public servants who continue to support Hoosiers through their work.



County/Local Records & Information Management Team

Nominated by the Archives and Records Administration

The County/Local Records and Information Management Team implemented new Records and Information Management Task Forces to improve county records management. They collaborated with local experts to overhaul six records retention schedules, and their initiative emphasized teamwork, project management, and user education through webinars that equipped all government employees to manage data effectively. This project improved transparency and accessibility for Hoosiers across the state.



Amy Christiansen

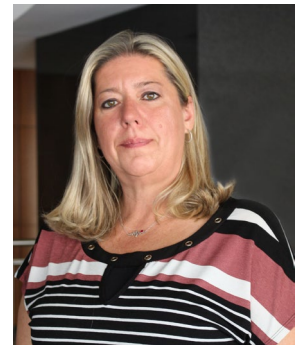


Madison Young

Angela Droeger

Nominated by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles

Angela Droeger has been a dedicated BMV team member for 27 years and currently serves as Director of Central Processing. Her collaborative approach has streamlined operations and significantly improved overall efficiency, such as increasing title production by over 50,000 titles in 2023, despite challenges like staffing shortages and high mail volume. She also fosters a supportive environment, implementing an incentive program that promoted five team members and shows appreciation for the hardworking employees of the BMV. Her work embodies the core values of the State of Indiana and prioritizes great government service.



Branch Hours Team

Nominated by the Bureau of Motor Vehicles

The Branch Hours Team successfully implemented new branch hours across the state after conducting a pilot program that gathered customer feedback and analyzed transaction patterns. Their work resulted in branches being open an additional 1.5 hours weekly and a 13% increase in knowledge testing capacity. The team prioritized employee input, ensuring the changes met community needs while enhancing work-life balance for staff. This multi-year project exemplifies exceptional leadership and commitment to efficient public service.



Holly Alber



Erin Bennett



Kevin Garvey



Terri Holaday



Brittainy Hubble



Kalab Leslie



Brandy Logan



Courtney Meeks



Sandra Pancer



James Paul



Shannon Polk



Nicole Reynolds



Linda Riggers



Holly Sample



Amanda Slusher



Karla Winkler

Not pictured:
Jessica Gray

Intake Division Team

Nominated by the Civil Rights Commission

The ICRC Intake Division Team acts as the frontline for individuals facing discrimination. Under Director Christiana Afuwape, the division has had great success in improving retention and efficiency. They've managed approximately 10,000 calls in 2023—doubling the previous year's volume. The team also formalized 980 complaints in 2023 and they're on track to formalize over 1,000 for 2024. This team's exceptional service not only aids individual Hoosiers but also secured over \$1 million in federal funding, advancing ICRC's mission to combat discrimination in Indiana.



Christiana Afuwape



Valerie Chambliss



Sara Hafyane



Mackenzie Slone

Not pictured:
Andrea Contreras

Carl Brown

Nominated by the Department of Administration

Carl Brown's leadership was pivotal in addressing a backlog of deferred maintenance projects within the Department of Natural Resources. He oversaw a three-phase plan to tackle 134 projects with \$100 million in funding from Governor Holcomb's Next Level Agenda. Carl's efforts enhanced safety and accessibility at state parks, resulting in improved public experiences and positive feedback from both visitors and staff. His exceptional work has made Indiana's natural assets more enjoyable for residents and visitors alike.



Elliot Anderson

Nominated by the Department of Correction

Elliot Anderson has focused on job equity, workspace improvements, aligning pay with responsibilities, and enhancing staff morale in his role as Chief of Staff. He initiated vital facility upgrades that included micro-markets with healthy choices for employees and developed a new pay structure for custody staff. His efforts have helped to improve employee retention and create a positive workplace that embodies exceptional government service. His efforts will have a lasting positive impact on the Indiana Department of Correction for years to come.



James Chruszczyk

Nominated by the Department of Correction

James Chruszczyk serves as the Operations Manager at Indiana Correctional Industries and has transformed the Industries Metal Shop at Indiana State Prison through exceptional leadership and innovative strategies. Under his guidance, production of grease cans doubled from 25 to 50 daily, while optimizing their transport for significant cost savings and decreased shipping traffic. Jim also implemented small but impactful changes, such as switching from spools to drums for welding wire, saving 5 hours of production weekly. His initiatives have improved productivity, reduced costs, and enhanced job training for incarcerated workers.



Wabash Valley Community Garden Team

Nominated by the Department of Correction

The Wabash Valley Community Garden Team empowers maximum security individuals to develop skills for successful re-entry while giving back to local communities. The Community Garden project has expanded from a small patch to 2 acres, producing nearly 25,000 pounds of vegetables annually and donating over 81,000 pounds in four years to local food banks and soup kitchens. The garden also fosters a sense of purpose and community engagement, creating a positive culture for everyone involved in this project.



Eddie Gilbert



Jackie Storm



Terri Booker

Family Health Data & Fatality Prevention Team

Nominated by the Department of Health

The Family Health Data and Fatality Prevention Team works to avoid preventable deaths among mothers, infants, children, and individuals dying by overdose or suicide. With their statewide fatality review teams, they've identified prevention opportunities and worked to implement new initiatives like the Fetal Infant Mortality Review, which identifies gaps and recommendations to improve health outcomes. Their Lactation After Loss program also supports grieving families by providing lactation guidance and bereavement kits. These efforts have an immeasurable impact on the health of Hoosier families.



Linzi Horsley

Ann Marie Neeley

Cameron Willett

One Million Tree Team

Nominated by the Department of Natural Resources

The DNR One Million Tree Team successfully completed the state's largest tree planting initiative in nearly a century, planting one million native trees as of the spring of 2024. The project began as the result of a 2020 directive from Governor Holcomb and saved taxpayers \$900,000 by managing the initiative in-house. The team engaged communities through partnerships with schools and corporations while promoting conservation education. Their exceptional leadership also inspired a regional initiative to plant 250 million trees across the Great Lakes. This initiative will benefit Indiana's environment for generations to come.



Darren Bridges

Phillip Jones

Brad Schneck

John Seifert

Steve Siscoe

Jeff Raney

Nominated by the Department of Revenue

Jeff Raney has nearly 25 years of experience and is renowned for his exceptional knowledge of tax law and policy, earning the 2018 Employee of the Year award. Jeff has made significant contributions that have benefitted colleagues and stakeholders across Indiana in the past year and throughout his career. His collaborative, empathetic approach encourages teamwork and fosters a positive environment and his unwavering commitment to public service truly sets him apart.



Suzanne Manning

Nominated by the Department of Workforce Development

Suzanne Manning led the Appeals team through a challenging budget situation as federal funding was drastically reduced after the pandemic. She managed the transition of staff from Appeals to the Office of Administrative Law Proceedings, which reduced the budget by \$2.2 million dollars and created new opportunities for many employees. She also supported the team as they worked through a backlog of appeals cases and stepped into the Benefits Director role in October 2023 as a result of her success. Her leadership has had a lasting, positive impact on her team and the State.



Adult Education Team

Nominated by the Department of Workforce Development

The Adult Education Team manages programs that offer instruction in math, reading, and writing at no cost. These programs help Hoosiers obtain a high school equivalency diploma, pursue higher education, and more. With a presence in all 92 counties of the state, there are more than 250 adult education class locations available and in the last program year, enrollment numbers increased by 11% with over 25,000 students enrolling. The team's "Programs of Excellence" initiative also earned them national recognition with a State Innovation Award from the Coalition on Adult Basic Education in the spring of 2024. Their work continues to increase access to essential adult education resources across the state.



Jerry Haffner



Megan Hibbard



Donna Lovelady



Joetta Mayfield

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Adult Education Team cont.



Roy Melton



Nickie Nolting



Lara Pastore



Marilyn Pitzulo

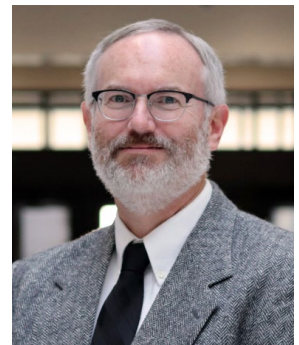


Amy Ramer

UI Modernization Team

Nominated by the Department of Workforce Development

The UI Modernization Team implemented best practices for their Uplink application, changing from a monolith software development approach to a microservices approach. They essentially broke up the application into smaller pieces so that when software changes are implemented, they're more seamless and less likely to cause large-scale issues or breaks in service. This project was an extensive undertaking and required exceptional leadership, innovation, and creativity. Their work continues to ensure that the Department of Workforce Development provides exceptional service.



Rick Bedel



Joseph Fewell



Ryan Hoffman



Mark Koehl



Paul McDaniel



Scott O'Mara

Indiana 988 Team

Nominated by the Family & Social Services Administration

The Indiana 988 Team has transformed the state’s mental health crisis response system, significantly enhancing access to vital services. Under Kara Biro’s leadership, the team transitioned to the 988 hotline, improving answer rates to over 95% within a year. They not only implemented internal processes to ensure the transition was smooth but also launched a statewide marketing campaign to raise awareness. The team is also developing mobile behavioral health teams and crisis centers, positioning Indiana as a leader in mental health care.



Kara Biro



Rebecca Buhner



Amy Duke



Lindsay Potts

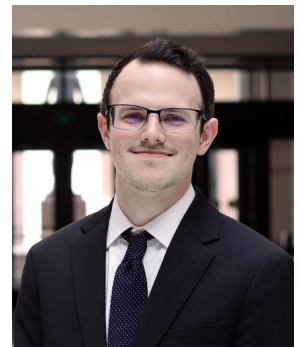


Jim Rose

Indiana Pregnancy Promise Team

Nominated by the Family & Social Services Administration

The Indiana Pregnancy Promise Team has made remarkable progress in addressing opioid use among pregnant women and reducing infant and maternal mortality. The program has enrolled nearly 1,000 mothers across 87 counties, achieving a 99.8% survival rate for participants. With a focus on holistic support, the program also addresses transportation, housing, and other factors that limit access to health services and has led to amazing outcomes, including 92% of children born with normal birth weights. With a recent \$2.7 million grant, the team is motivated to continue improving health outcomes statewide.



Matthew Dukeshire



Maria Finnell



Cristian Guandique



Carey Michels



Andrea Vermeulen



Elizabeth Wahl

Public Health Emergency Unwind Team

Nominated by the Family & Social Services Administration

The Public Health Emergency Unwind Team embarked on a monumental project this year. During the COVID-19 federal public health emergency, states were directed to suspend Medicaid redeterminations and Indiana’s enrollment grew by over 800,000. In April of 2023, the team began the task of re-determining eligibility for over 50% more members than before the pandemic. The 12-month plan involved a public service campaign, sending renewal materials to 1.2 million members, answering 3 million phone calls, and more. FSSA tackled this challenge with enthusiasm, ensured that eligible members had continuous health insurance, and provided exceptional government service.



Brian Arrowood



Sunshine Beam



Michele Holtkamp



Katie Hunter



CJ Schroeder



Nonis Spinner

Investigations Team

Nominated by the Indiana Disability Rights Commission

The Investigations Team conducted site visits to Private Secure Facilities to ensure children’s rights and safety. Through their collaboration with the Department of Child Services, they made improvements to facility quality and child well-being. One of their projects was the creation of the “Know Your Rights” coloring book, educating children about their rights in facilities through engaging activities. This innovative resource has been adopted by twenty other states and is used by DCS for children entering care, showcasing Indiana’s commitment to its vulnerable citizens.



Tash Crespo



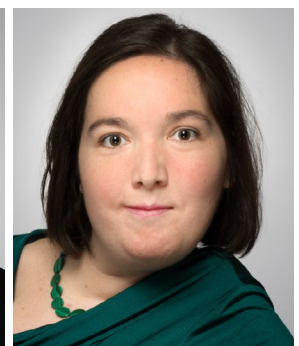
Christian Ewoldt



Tina Frayer



Natasha Henry



Emily Munson

Field Services Team

Nominated by the Integrated Public Safety Commission

The Field Services Team supports Hoosier first responders by ensuring the radio and microwave systems are reliable, even during emergencies like power outages or natural disasters. As their Director of Operations, Venisha Warren has empowered her team to take on additional responsibilities, enhancing efficiency and quality while saving costs. Their team managed critical infrastructure across 192 radio towers and 54 microwave sites and saved hundreds of thousands of dollars in costs. Their work continues to ensure the public safety of Hoosiers.



Eric DeVoe



Javier Estupinan



Matthew Noonan



Venisha Warren

Communications Team

Nominated by the Management Performance Hub

The MPH Communications Team created the Data Proficiency Program, which enhances data literacy among state employees and improves decision-making and community support. This free training covers essential topics like data types, data sources, and analysis techniques. With over 3,800 badges awarded, over 2,000 employees have completed the initial training series. The program, which was launched as a standalone initiative, has been adopted by INDOT with plans to expand to all state employees. With this project, MPH is fostering a culture of data proficiency across Indiana state agencies.



**Ashley Emsweller
Hungate**



Jeff Mullins



Stephanie Ramos

Atlantis Richter

Nominated by the Office of Management and Budget

Atlantis Richter spearheads the Distressed Unit Appeal board which receives petitions from school corporations in need of relief and monitors their financial state. With her strong analytical skills, Atlantis efficiently tracks revenues and expenditures for 290 districts. Despite the challenges of overseeing distressed districts, Atlantis fosters rapport with K-12 leaders as she helps them to regain financial stability. Her efforts have helped dozens of school districts stay on track and prevented one school from running out of funds for their current school year. Her work has a lasting impact on school districts and the students they serve across Indiana.



IT Team

Nominated by the Professional Licensing Agency

The Professional Licensing Agency IT Team has been hard at work in streamlining the licensure process for Indiana's workforce. Supporting 23 divisions across eight agencies, they created an automated API for quick license verifications, transitioning 234 license types online for easier access. The new MyLicenseOne platform is expected to be fully integrated by December 2024. This improvement in service demonstrates their commitment to innovation and accessibility for the workers of Indiana.



Eric Burton



Rick Davenport



Matt Doades



Jennifer Freeman



Victoria Giang



Terry Huynh



Jatin Patel



Keri Reed



Dibya Regmi



Tucker Walden

Grants Management Team

Nominated by the State Budget Agency

The Grants Management Team successfully developed the NextLevel Grants Management system, a standardized statewide solution for executive branch agencies. Over the past year, a newly hired team implemented extensive training and communication strategies, engaging 37 state agencies and 434 users. Since its launch over 1,600 grants have been entered into the system, managing over \$61 billion in funding. The initiative has also significantly reduced grant approval times and demonstrates exceptional public service.



Alex Brown



Luke Kenworthy



Mark O'Malley



David Schilling



Dan Schmidt



Chapin Schnick



Jessica Mehrlich
(Office of Management & Budget)

Indiana Manager Central Team

Nominated by the State Personnel Department

The Indiana Manager Central Team created a program to address state agency needs for manager training, enhancing workforce education and training. Indiana Manager Central standardizes professional development for managers, equipping them with essential skills to support their teams. Featuring a website, monthly newsletter and workshops on core HR topics, the program has engaged over 2,000 attendees from 55 agencies. With a recent program refresh and a menu of offerings for tailored workshops, IMC aims to continue fostering a skilled and effective workforce across Indiana agencies.



Mackenzie Breneman



Sara Holmes



Zachery Mackramer



Amelia Shull

**Congratulations and
thank you for your
service to the State
of Indiana!**

