The Torch

The official newsletter for State of Indiana employees

Governor's Public Service Achievement Awards Edition

2026 Governor's Public Service Achievement Awards

On Tuesday, Oct. 20, outstanding State of Indiana employees were recognized at the Governor's Public Service Achievement Awards Ceremony. These awards honor individuals and teams who have made significant, measurable contributions in support of Governor Braun's agenda between July 1, 2025 and June 30, 2026. Specifically, they honor employees who have supported one or more of Governor Braun's priorities—affordability, jobs and wages, education, public safety, and improving quality of life. This special edition of The Torch highlights summaries of their remarkable achievements. Thank you to all public servants who continue to support Hoosiers through their work.

2026 Governor's
Public Service
Achievement Award







Doug Harter

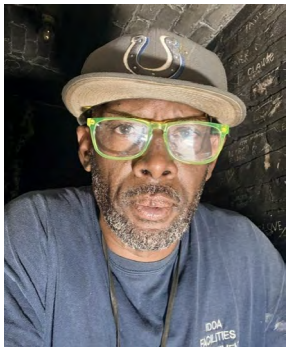
Nominated by the Commission for Higher Education



Doug Harter helped expand affordable pathways from high school to college. Working with six private colleges, he supported the launch of the Indiana Professional Pathway Credential, allowing students at participating faith-based high schools to earn 30 college credit hours. He also helped additional private colleges join Indiana's credit-transfer programs, enabling students to carry completed coursework toward a degree. Through collaboration and practical guidance, Doug created more opportunities for families to choose an educational path that fits their goals. His work advances college affordability, educational choice, and a stronger future for Hoosier students.

Tony Brooks

Nominated by the Department of Administration



Tony Brooks demonstrates the pride and vigilance that keep Indiana's public properties safe and welcoming. As a member of the Grounds team, he helps care for the Government Center campus and other State facilities. For more than a decade, he has also climbed 238 steps to maintain the flags atop the Statehouse. When he detected smoke while arriving for an early shift, Tony immediately called 911 and alerted staff, helping first responders contain a fire and protect State assets. His daily dedication and decisive action exemplify public safety, responsible stewardship, and service to Indiana.

Field Regional Directors

Nominated by the Department of Child Services

The DCS Field Regional Directors helped children and families build safer, more stable futures. Through community partnerships, support for kinship care, and focused leadership, they strengthened pathways to reunification, adoption, and other permanent homes. Results in one region included 556 reunifications and 165 adoptions. Their work also supported employee retention and helped children spend less time in care. By keeping child safety and family stability at the center of their decisions, these leaders demonstrated how strong partnerships and thoughtful stewardship can improve the lives of Hoosier children.



Barb Bowling



Vickie Jones



Jessica Richardson



Erin Shidler



Twan Stokes

Engineering & Application Development Team

Nominated by the Department of Education

The Engineering and Application Development Team used technology to strengthen annual oversight of special education transition plans across Indiana. Their artificial intelligence-assisted tool conducts preliminary reviews of sampled Individualized Education Programs in seconds, helping specialists identify potential compliance concerns. Paired with local self-assessments and targeted human review, the process supports annual review of transition plans in every local education agency. Professional judgment remains central, with staff resolving discrepancies and making final compliance determinations. Their innovation helps specialists focus their expertise where it is needed most, supporting consistent oversight and educational opportunity for students with disabilities.



Rajini Govindarajan



Ian Ragains

Emergency Management Division

Nominated by the Department of Homeland Security

The Emergency Management Division strengthened Indiana's readiness and helped communities respond to and recover from severe weather. The team coordinated emergency operations, completed damage assessments for seven events, and supported a relief program processing more than 4,000 disaster survivor applications. They also completed emergency and continuity plans and helped bring grant funding to local preparedness and resilience projects. Working with local, state, federal, and volunteer partners, they connected planning with practical assistance. Their dedication advances public safety and helps Hoosier families and communities prepare, recover, and build resilience.



Mike Burns



Larry Cassagne



Mark Michael



Mary Moran



Cassie Parker



Grace Walker

Christie Worden

Nominated by the Department of Revenue



Christie Worden brought nearly 46 years of experience to the implementation of Indiana's 2026 Tax Amnesty program. Her careful analysis of tax laws, eligibility requirements, and business processes helped give eligible taxpayers a clear path to resolve tax obligations without interest or penalties. Christie shaped system requirements, tested changes, and strengthened the accuracy of financial reporting. She also shared her extensive knowledge with colleagues to support the program's continued administration. Her work combined taxpayer service with careful financial stewardship, advancing affordability, voluntary compliance, and accountable management of state resources.

Thomas Brummett

Nominated by the Department of Transportation



Thomas Brummett put engineering innovation to work for safer infrastructure and better value for taxpayers. His use of advanced foundation testing on the Newberry River Bridge supported a more efficient design and saved tax-payers more than $2 million. He also championed testing technologies that improved data accuracy, strengthened quality assurance, and supported reliable bridge construction. Tom shared that expertise by training engineers and construction staff across Indiana and mentoring colleagues. His work demonstrates how technical excellence and careful stewardship can deliver durable transportation infrastructure while making the most of the public's investment.

Contact Center Digital Transformation Team

Nominated by the Department of Workforce Development

The Contact Center Digital Transformation Team made it easier for Hoosiers to connect with a live person for unemployment assistance. The team helped launch and expand web chat, giving customers an additional service option that connects them with an agent in about one minute. More than 22,000 customers used chat during the first half of 2026. They also developed training materials and refined standard responses to help agents provide clear, consistent assistance. Their work puts practical technology in service of people, expanding access and delivering more responsive government support to Hoosiers statewide.



Steven Smith



Kylie Wright

DFR Smart SNAP Team

Nominated by the Family & Social Services Administration



Marcus Barlow

The Division of Family Resources Smart SNAP Team put Governor Braun's Make Indiana Healthy Again initiative into action through Indiana's new nutrition-focused SNAP purchasing policy. The team coordinated guidance for approximately 4,000 retailers, and outreach for more than 500,000 Hoosiers receiving benefits, helping them understand the changes involving sugary drinks and candy. Retailer webinars, practical toolkits, and community partnerships supported consistent implementation statewide. The team also established surveys to evaluate awareness and food choices. Their work paired clear public communication with coordinated policy implementation in support of healthier choices for Hoosier families.



Sunshine Beam



Alan Inkenbrandt



Tyson Runkle



David Smalley



Suzanne Tryan

Alison Martin

Nominated by the Indiana Finance Authority



Alison Martin helped communities move forward with essential drinking water and wastewater infrastructure. She guided a team that processed more than $736 million in disbursements during fiscal year 2026 while reducing average payment processing time by 25% and maintaining positive federal audit results. Alison also helped implement a project management system that strengthened tracking and communication with borrower communities. Drawing on nearly 24 years of experience, she combined efficient service with careful oversight. Her leadership supports dependable infrastructure, responsible financing, and better service for the Hoosier communities these programs serve.

FSSA Appeals Legal Support Team

Nominated by the Indiana Office of Administrative Law Proceedings

The FSSA Appeals Legal Support Team strengthened access to fair, timely hearings for thousands of Hoosiers. The team streamlined intake procedures, accurately prepared filings, and coordinated scheduling for appeals involving Medicaid and other essential programs. Through clear, compassionate communication, they helped individuals and families understand the process and provide the information needed to move their cases forward. Their teamwork pairs responsive customer service with responsible use of state resources, supporting due process, program accountability, and respectful service for the Hoosiers who turn to them for help.



Amber Brackett



Bryce Carlton



Stacey Cochran



Rachel Lewis



Kellis Rose



Paul Salazar



Jody Shell



Kavonna Tiggs



Debra Weber



Qiana Wright

Not pictured:
Kevin Fisher

Jason Honan

Nominated by the Indiana Office of Administrative Law Proceedings

Jason Honan brought a practical, service-focused approach to making government more responsive. As Deputy Chief Operations Officer, he developed reporting tools that helped leaders track public inquiries and direct resources where they were needed. He also strengthened secure document sharing for appeals, supported employee use of agency systems, and helped safeguard sensitive personal information as Data Privacy Officer. His advocacy for defibrillators near hearing rooms further supported public safety. Jason's work brings efficiency, privacy, and dependable customer service together, helping Hoosiers access fair hearings with greater confidence.



PeopleSoft OCI Migration Team

Nominated by the Indiana Office of Technology

The PeopleSoft OCI Migration Team delivered a major technology upgrade supporting procurement, accounting, and personnel operations across state government. Working with dozens of agencies, the team moved more than 200 servers to the cloud before the fiscal year-end deadline while minimizing downtime. Careful project planning also secured a vendor discount of nearly 50% on migration costs. Their collaboration established a more resilient platform that can grow with the state's needs, demonstrating how practical innovation and responsible stewardship can strengthen the government operations Hoosiers depend on.



Wayne Adamopoulos



Keenan Criss



Vernon Evans



Joel Gibbons



Lynne Lewis



Stephanie Nichols



Jason Reid



Alex Sasser



Katelynn Wiggins

Not pictured: Donmond Morrison

ISP Alerts Team

Nominated by the Indiana Office of Technology & the Indiana State Police

The ISP Alerts Team strengthened public safety by automating the publication of critical alerts on state police webpages. Their solution publishes approved AMBER, Silver, Blue, and Green alerts online in approximately one to two minutes and automatically updates cancellations, keeping public information timely and consistent. Built using existing state technology, the system eliminates duplicate data entry and allows personnel to focus on incident response and coordination. This partnership demonstrates how efficient use of technology can support first responders and deliver important information to Hoosiers when it matters most.

Not pictured: Caleb Long (ISP)



Jacob Burbrink (IOT)



Angela Meacham (ISP)

Modernized Screening & Enforcement Team

Nominated by the Office of the Inspector General

The Modernized Screening and Enforcement Team strengthened government accountability through faster, more focused complaint review. During the first half of 2026, the team reduced complaint screening time by 78%, freeing staff time valued at more than $48,000 for higher-priority oversight work. They also streamlined referrals to agencies best positioned to respond and supported early intervention through caution letters. By connecting concerns with the right expertise sooner, the team made more effective use of public resources while strengthening oversight. Their work reflects a clear commitment to efficient, accountable government.



Cassie Doss



Teresa Henson



Jon McDonald

Not pictured:
Adam Garrigus
Elaine Vullmahn

Indiana Board of Nursing Staff

Nominated by the Professional Licensing Agency

The Indiana Board of Nursing Staff helped nursing graduates move toward their careers sooner through a streamlined certification process that reduced processing times by more than 60 days. Since January 2026, the team has completed more than 158,000 licensing-related transactions, including applications, document reviews, and license updates. They also partnered with nursing schools and developed educational webinars to make the new process clear and accessible. Their work connects efficient government with a stronger healthcare workforce, supporting professional opportunities and the communities Indiana's nurses serve.



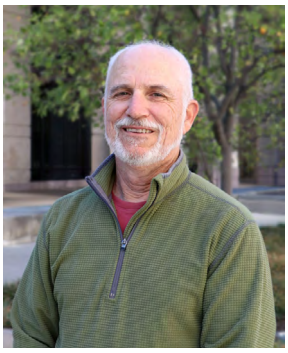
William Bader



Dora Cheers



Aimee Colvin



Jeffrey Frownfelter



Victoria Giang



Toni Herron

Continued on page 9

Indiana Board of Nursing Staff continued



Anna Howe



Shawn Keep



Kayla Perkins



Lorrie Ruble



Gabriel Scorsone



Paula Staton



Michael Sweany



Audrea Weir

Special Investigations Unit

Nominated by the State Board of Accounts

The Special Investigations Unit demonstrated the value of rigorous oversight in protecting taxpayer interests. Their examination of local township finances documented more than $1 million in personal spending with public funds and provided key evidence in a successful prosecution. The case resulted in court-ordered restitution of approximately $1.12 million. Through detailed financial analysis and careful verification, the team established an evidentiary record that supported accountability for the misuse. Their work reinforces a clear standard for public service: taxpayer dollars must serve the public, and those entrusted with them must be accountable.



Matt Black



Jennifer Gauger



Vivian Hendricksen



Beth Kelley



Cole Wesley



Ed Wheele

Centralized Accounting Division

Nominated by the State Budget Agency

Stan Judson and Eric Klinefelter have demonstrated exceptional dedication and service through their work in the Centralized Accounting Division. As long-serving state employees, they have consistently provided expert guidance, professionalism, and sound judgment that support the work of agencies across state government. Their extensive knowledge and commitment to excellence have helped strengthen financial operations, improve efficiencies, and identify cost-saving opportunities that protect taxpayer resources while maintaining high-quality service. Through their reliability, collaboration, and steadfast public service, Eric and Stan have made a lasting impact on Indiana government. Their work advances responsible stewardship, operational excellence, and effective service to Hoosiers.



Stan Judson



Eric Klinefelter

Absence Management Team

Nominated by the State Personnel Department

The Absence Management Team helped deliver Governor Braun's Families First Initiative by making expanded paid leave work for state employees and their families. The team updated and tested timekeeping systems, clarified guidance, and supported accurate leave payments. From March 2025 through June 2026, their work supported 965 employees using New Parent Leave and 428 using Childbirth Recovery Leave. They also implemented changes extending New Parent Leave to eligible foster placements. Their precision and dedication turned family-focused policy into practical support, helping employees welcome a child while maintaining dependable payroll operations.



TiAta Chance



Sylvia Williams

Not pictured:
Lavenia Haskett