



The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

December 2019

SECC extended as campaign nears \$1.6 million goal!



Setting a brand new fundraising record only a year removed from establishing a new high-water mark in charitable giving is no easy task, but it

was clear from the first moments of the 2019-20 Indiana SECC campaign that state employees would be up to the challenge.

From the late-September kickoff that brought a dunk tank and pie-in-the-face station, to the second iterations of a three-on-three basketball tournament and an uproarious lip sync battle, this year's slate of events proved state employees left no stone unturned in fundraising – or having fun along the way.

Aiming for a goal of \$1.6 million, agencies conducted bake sales, silent auctions, chili cook-offs and much more on a regular basis from September through November.

These smaller events complemented

giving on a larger scale.

Nine state of Indiana agency leaders served as SECC chairpersons for each of the nine weeks, championing as many Hoosier charities in the same span of time.

As Thanksgiving approached, the annual fundraising effort was only about \$29,000 short of the goal. It was announced in late November that the campaign would be extended an additional two weeks with First Dog Henry Holcomb and Lt. Gov. Suzanne Crouch serving as week 10 and 11 SECC chairs, respectively.

If you're ready to help us reach this monumental goal, there's good news: making a contribution is easy! Just head to indianasecc.org, choose your charity, and make a donation.

Look for a full recap of this year's fun-filled Indiana SECC in the January edition of The Torch.

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Got a story?

Submit your story ideas to: spdcommunications@spd.in.gov

Social media



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Follow [State of Indiana Employees](https://www.youtube.com/StateofIndianaEmployees)

FUNDRAISING UPDATE

\$29,556 from reaching our goal!

Visit www.IndianaSECC.org to make a donation.

Creating stronger relationships



Whether it's your family, your coworkers or your significant other, maintaining good relationships takes some work! Your EASY Program can help by showing you how to positively communicate and address conflicts. For example, if money is stressing your relationship, you may want to get help from a financial guide. Or if your relationship is suffering because you don't have enough time in your life, you can tap into referrals for everything from housekeepers to dog walkers.



Log on to AnthemEAP.com (Company Code: State of Indiana) to read these feature articles:

- Building social bonds
- Caring and making connections
- Do social ties affect your health?
- Building a strong relationship: finding time

Visit anthemEAP.com or call 1-800-223-7723 for free, confidential help from Anthem's team of EASY Program experts.

You earned it, don't lose it!

December 31, 2019 is the absolute last day to redeem e-gift cards earned through the ActiveHealth program in 2019.

All you need to do is [log in to the ActiveHealth Portal](#), click on the Rewards Center, select the e-gift card you wish to receive, and verify which email address the e-gift card should be sent to. If you have questions, view the [Guide to Redeeming E-gift Cards](#), or call ActiveHealth at 855-202-4219.

The ActiveHealth program resets on Jan. 1 for the 2020 program year. Watch your email and InvestInYourHealthIndiana.com for information on the rewards you can earn in 2020!



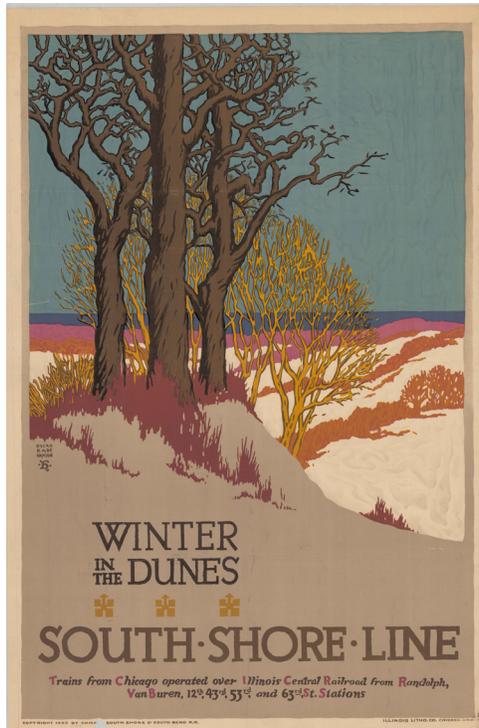
Happy Holidays from: **Invest In Your Health**

Fall & Winter along the South Shore Line

Out of the vault and on display, come view “Fall & Winter along the South Shore Line” at the Indiana State Library.

The exhibition includes 10 of the library’s collection of colorful large-scale Chicago South Shore & South Bend Railroad posters. The South Shore Line commissioned artists in the late 1920s and early 1930s to design their eye-catching advertising posters. The posters on display were designed by artists Ivan V. Beard, Emil Biorn, Otto Brennehan, Oscar Rabe Hanson, and Leslie Ragan.

Featured with the poster exhibit is a display of Hoosier artists’ holiday cards depicting vibrant and festive scenes. The cards, designed by such notable artists as Wayman Adams, Gustave Bauman, and Floyd D. Hopper, were given



to their friends and family for Christmas and New Year’s during the 1920s and 1930s.

The South Shore posters, and many

others in the library’s collection, are being digitized for online access through the [Indiana State Library Broadsides Collection](#).

The “Fall & Winter along the South Shore Line” exhibit is free and open to the public during regular business hours and will remain on display in the Exhibition Hall through January 2020. The Indiana State Library is located at 315 W. Ohio St. in downtown Indianapolis. For hours of operation, directions and parking information, [click here](#).

The South Shore Line continues providing service as an electrically powered interurban commuter rail line under the authority of the Northern Indiana Commuter Transportation District between Millennium Station in downtown Chicago and South Bend International Airport.

State Parks and Inns gift pack now available

Attention all nature lovers!

The Indiana Department of Natural Resources has once again bundled some of the most popular Indiana State Parks and Inns items into the perfect holiday gift!

The Indiana State Parks and Inns Holiday Gift Pack has returned and is available for purchase until Dec. 31. This year’s packs include a 2020 Indiana State Park pass (which admits a carload of people into the park), your choice of a camping gift card or State Park Inn lodging gift card, and a one-year subscription to Outdoor Indiana Magazine.



The gift packs are available now in the DNR Customer Service Center located on the first floor of IGC-S.

For additional information, or to purchase your packs online visit [www.InnsGifts.com](#).

Hoosier Lottery celebrates 30th anniversary



On Oct. 13, 1989, the [Hoosier Lottery](#) sold its first scratch-off ticket as Indiana became the 32nd state in the nation (including the District of Columbia) to launch a lottery.

After a 1988 referendum during which 62 percent of voters approved a state lottery, the Indiana legislature created the Hoosier Lottery as a new source of revenue for the state. Its mission: to “maximize revenue to the state of Indiana, in a socially responsible manner.”

Throughout the past 30 years, Hoosiers have won more than \$13.9 billion in prizes while purchasing \$23 billion of scratch-off games and draw games like Powerball, Mega Millions and Hoosier Lotto.

They also won prizes on the Hoosier Millionaire TV show and at other special events throughout the state. Lottery products are sold at more than 4,300 retailers in big cities and small towns in every county of Indiana.

The Hoosier Lottery continues to fulfill its mission by providing revenue to the state for important purposes. After paying prizes

to players and commissions to retailers and covering operating costs, the Hoosier Lottery has transferred more than \$6 billion of surplus revenue to the state of Indiana. Since the beginning, the legislature has used surplus revenue from the lottery to support the Teachers’ Retirement Fund and pensions for local police and firefighters.

Each of those funds annually receives \$30 million from the Lottery Surplus Fund. Beginning in 1996, a large portion of lottery surplus revenue has been used to reduce auto excise taxes by as much as 50 percent for Hoosier vehicle owners.

Sarah M. Taylor, executive director of the Hoosier Lottery since 2013, noted, “For the past 30 years the Hoosier Lottery has fulfilled its mission of providing important revenue to the State while allowing millions of Hoosiers to enjoy a variety of lottery games and win billions of dollars.”

“We operate the Hoosier Lottery in a socially responsible manner, incorporating world-class processes and messaging to encourage responsible gaming,” she continued. “Our team continues to explore ways to keep our products fresh and conveniently accessible to our customers so that for the next 30 years our players and the state of Indiana can continue to be Lottery winners!”

Discounts



Dec. 22: Colts vs. Panthers
State of Indiana employees can save on the upcoming Colts vs. Panthers game on Sunday, Dec. 22, at Lucas Oil Stadium.

[Click here](#) for details and discount info.



Kings Island WinterFest

Did you know you can enjoy all the fun of Kings Island throughout the holidays as well? Check out [this flyer](#) for Indiana State Employee discount details. For details about Kings Island WinterFest, [click here](#).

More discounts

For a full list of all discounts available to state employees, [click here](#).



Artwork by
Jerry Williams

Creativity key in providing reasonable accommodations

“Diversity is being invited to the party, inclusion is being asked to dance.”

-Verna Myers

When employees request an accommodation for their job, supervisors can often become frustrated and give up. This generally leads to supervisors simply removing the task in question from the employee’s responsibilities. But is this really a good solution to the problem? No!

The ADA Amendments Act (“ADAAA”) gives employees with disabilities the right to reasonable accommodations to enable them to perform the essential functions of their job. In other words, employers are required to provide tools and job aides for employees to assist them and allow them to do the job for which they were hired. By removing tasks, a valuable employee may feel less than

capable of performing the job. This is not the intent of the ADAAA.

Under the ADAAA, employers are required to provide reasonable accommodations to qualified employees with disabilities, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. A reasonable accommodation is assistance or changes to a position or workplace that will enable an employee to do his or her job in spite of a disability.

So how do we provide such accommodations without creating undue hardships for the employer? We have to get creative and think outside the box! The easiest answer is to start by seeing what has worked in the past in similar situations, narrowing down what works and what doesn’t.

Next, we get creative. How do we get creative? The possibilities are limited only imagination, but we start by looking for simple and obvious solutions. Examples might include purchasing an antiglare screen for a person with an eye disorder where the glare on the computer screen causes

fatigue, providing a tripod for a photographer who has lost the use of their hand and is having difficulty holding the camera, or purchasing and installing an indicator light for a lab technician who is deaf and cannot hear the buzz of the timer when conducting specific tests.

If you have a disability, here are some things to think about and do:

- Write down precisely what job-related limitations your condition imposes and note how they can be overcome by accommodations.
- Identify potential accommodations and assess how effective each would be in allowing you to perform the job.
- Provide documentation of the condition(s) to Human Resources (“HR”).
- Engage in discussions with your supervisor and HR

When looking at accommodation options, the simplest solution is often the best solution. The key is always communication.

By Rebecca Walters, Indiana State Personnel Department

SAP SuccessFactors transforming the employee experience

SuccessFactors, the state employee’s online talent management system, is part of the Monarch project that is transforming the employee experience for state of Indiana employees!

Scheduled Outage

Please be aware that SuccessFactors has scheduled quarterly maintenance planned for midnight to 7 a.m. Sat., Dec. 7. During this time, SuccessFactors will experience brief interruptions in service that will impact state of Indiana employees.

Users attempting to access SuccessFactors during this period will receive a scheduled maintenance notification page if the system is unavailable.

This scheduled maintenance includes a number of updates to the system:

- Header Bell Icon – Notifications (changes to personal, organizational, employment, and other information) older than 30 days will be purged.
- For Hiring Managers, HR staff and Analysts: Candidate display options

have been upgraded. You will now be able to customize display options to freeze the first column that contains candidate names or the table header. New fields are also available in filter options.

- A notable fix: the fix being implemented will keep users from seeing blank reporting tiles on their home screen.

If you want to know more about SuccessFactors and the Monarch project, ask your Human Resources director.

Children of state employees encouraged to enter ‘Letters About Literature’ writing contest

A popular statewide writing contest could open the doors for students to win cash prizes and have their work published for the first time.

Entries for the annual [Indiana Letters About Literature](#) program are being accepted until Jan. 13. The long-running contest is open to Hoosier kids in grades four through 12 and tasks them with drafting a “letter” to an author of their choice.

So, if Kurt Vonnegut’s Slaughterhouse-Five made an impression, a student could send a letter to the legendary Hoosier novelist explaining how the seminal work affected him or her. Or, if the pen and poetry of Maya Angelou inspired a young reader to write prose of his or her own, this contest allows those future laureates to drop her a line.

Never mind that Vonnegut and Angelou have each passed on; contest entrants can write to any author – currently living, or alive today only through the pages of their works -- allowing for a spark of imagination to go along with the inspiration.

“Polish up your reflective writing skills and write a letter to an author – living or deceased – explaining how their work changed your view of yourself or your world,” reads the official contest entry page. Kids choose a book, poem, or essay, read it, reflect upon it, and then compose a letter to its author.

[Click here to learn more about entering the contest.](#)

Sponsored by the [Indiana Center for the Book](#), a division of the Indiana State Library and an affiliate of the Center for the Book in the Library of Congress, the contest is divided into three different grade levels, with cash prizes available to winners in each.

All first place winners earn a \$100 cash award, while second and third place entries win \$50 or \$25 awards, respectively. The highest-

let them know their student had won and she made me repeat the name of the student and then burst into tears,” said Suzanne Walker, Indiana Center for the Book director. “The student won first place and she said that the student had never been recognized for anything positive before and how much it would mean to him. She called back 20 minutes later to say that the principal, the student, and the student’s grandmother all



Student Miguel Sebastian was Level One First Place winner in last year’s Letters About Literature contest. Journalist and author A’Leia Bundles, the great-great granddaughter of Madam C.J. Walker, served as guest speaker at a ceremony honoring the top entrants earlier this year.

placing letter written to an Indiana author will earn a \$50 award as well. That distinction is called the “Indiana Author Letter Prize.”

While monetary prizes are always a draw, there’s much to be said about the effect the recognition can have on young writers.

“My favorite story comes from the time that I called a teacher to

cried at the news. The student and 10 of his family members traveled about 150 miles to attend the ceremony.”

The annual awards ceremony (The Indiana Youth Literary Day & Award Ceremony) takes place in the spring and offers free books and writing workshops to more than 100 Hoosier kids.

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Children of state employees encouraged to enter ‘Letters About Literature’ writing contest

The workshops are conducted by Indiana writers – a rare opportunity for any future novelist.

The winning students as well as a smattering of honorable mentions have their letters published in an annual anthology that marks, for most if not all of the entrants, their first chance to see their name in print. For anyone who’s ever dreamt of seeing their book on a shelf in a library or a bookstore, that accomplishment can be a major motivation for budding writers.

Throughout its nearly three decade-long history, educators have raved about the program as well.

“Letters About Literature is a great way for my students to gain recognition for their writing,” Greensburg Community Junior High School teacher Matt Slaven said of the contest in 2017. “It allows students to also be reflective about their lives and their world while engaging with characters and authors of their favorite books, short stories, and poems. Our students really enjoy this writing contest every year.” Finding a subject can be part of the fun.

Walker said J.K. Rowling (Harry Potter series) and Rick Riordan (Percy Jackson series) are two of the mainstay authors who regularly have contest letters addressed to them. That says a lot about what types of books appeal to children today, but the fact that students feel strongly enough about the worlds created by those mega-selling contemporary writers to think deeply about the stories and



Andrew Roets, a Letters About Literature First Place winner in the Level Three category, has his book signed by A’Lelia Bundles.

share their thoughts (rhetorically, of course) with the authors, is proof enough that the best outlet for the human imagination will always be within the pages of a good book.

Leave it to those same kids to inspire adults with their heartfelt assessments of life seen through the eyes of literary characters facing situations that mirror issues faced by the children in their own lives.

Wonder, a popular book by R.J. Palacio that was turned into a hit movie in 2017, showed one student how hurtful bullying can be. Through her inaction during a bullying incident, the young reader learned a valuable lesson.

“While I was reading [Wonder], a realization hit me,” the student wrote. “I had never tried to be friends with someone that was different or stand up for someone that everyone bullied. I didn’t want to lose my friends by helping someone else. I avoided talking to people that were different. I was selfish.”

Walker said the young writers often learn about who they are when they take time to seriously think about something they read, and it can affect them in a profound way.

“Many times students discover painful truths about themselves through reading and reflecting on reading and that is very powerful,” Walker observed.

Some of the topics touched on by the young writers include adoption, anxiety, immigration, religion, death, race, social media, and other heady societal issues and debates.

Walker believes the contest reaffirms for Hoosier youth the special place literature will always have, throughout every generation of humankind.

“Literature has the power to change people,” she wrote in the 2019 [Letters About Literature anthology](#). “It can teach. It can develop understanding and empathy. It can give courage where once there was none. It can befriend the lonely and even help the friendless find a friend. It can help us see others more clearly, and (maybe more importantly) help us to better understand the facets in ourselves. It’s good to learn this young so that later in life we humans know that we can turn to literature to help us continue to grow and change. That’s what this contest is all about.”

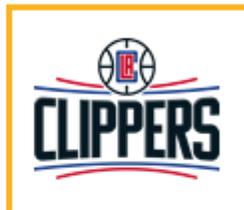
Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department



INDIANA STATE EMPLOYEES

DISCOUNTED TICKETS TO UPCOMING PACERS GAMES

GAMES



DEC. 9
7:00PM



DEC. 11
7:00PM

DETAILS

BALCONY LEVEL ROWS 1-14 : **ONLY \$25**
PLANET FITNESS LOUNGE** : **ONLY \$99**
LOWER LEVEL SIDELINE: **ONLY \$150**

BUY

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION:

- Ticket processing fee added at time of purchase. Tickets are limited and subject to availability.
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Questions? Contact Jake Springer at (317) 917-2753 or email jspringer@pacers.com

WGU honors Public Service Recognition Scholarship winners



Several state of Indiana employees were honored during a special scholarship ceremony by WGU Indiana Nov. 22 at the Indiana Statehouse. Seen here are (left to right) BMV clerical assistant Lucie Nader, WGU Indiana strategic partnerships manager Lindsay Taylor, WGU Indiana Chancellor Alison Bell, Indiana State Personnel Department deputy director of Talent Management Mikka Jackson, IHCD IT director Chris Henderson, and Integrated Public Safety Commission communications analyst Anthony Hedge.

WGU Indiana awarded more than \$29,000 to state employees via a second round of scholarships intended to help working adults explore new educational opportunities.

Seven state employees were selected as this year's recipients of Public Service Recognition Scholarships, which offered monetary rewards of \$2,400 or \$6,500 for graduate and undergraduate students.

WGU staff including Chancellor Alison Bell and strategic partnerships manager Lindsay Taylor organized a special presentation for the scholarship winners which was held Nov. 22 in the Indiana Statehouse. The ceremony served to shine a light on this year's winners, who serve their fellow Hoosiers as exemplary employees of state of Indiana agencies.

"I love what we do, but this may be one of my favorite things," said Chancellor Bell. "It's so rewarding to me to celebrate you and your accomplishments, and to watch where you go with this opportunity."

Lucie Nader, an Indiana Bureau

of Motor Vehicles clerical assistant, was one of this year's \$6,500 scholarship winners. She started taking online classes in September in pursuit of her MBA with the goals of "enhancing [her] leadership skills and gaining confidence."

Lucie was accompanied by her parents, Bassam and Randa, at the event, who smiled and snapped photos from their cell phones as she shook hands with Chancellor Bell. Lucie beamed as she received her official scholarship award document denoting her accomplishment.

Lucie previously said she felt "exhilarated and grateful" upon learning she'd been selected for the scholarship. The scholarship gave her a financial boost that helped her start her MBA program in September.

Lucie was joined by fellow state employees Christopher Henderson and Anthony "A.J." Hedge, both of whom are seeking MBA's in the field of Information Technology (IT).

Anthony recently completed his bachelor's degree in IT from WGU Indiana, and is now in the process of pursuing his M.S. in IT at the

online university. He earned a \$2,400 scholarship this fall to continue his studies. Anthony's full-time work is for the Integrated Public Safety Commission.

Chris currently serves as IT director for the Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority. He is pursuing an MBA in IT management, which began in October. Chris' studies are going well, thanks in part to the convenience of WGU's online courses which allow him to advance at a pace that suits him.

"I can take more time on subjects that are new or unfamiliar to me, and I also have the opportunity to demonstrate competence quickly and move on from subjects that I've already mastered," he said.

Chris also said he enjoyed getting to meet WGU staff and his colleagues and fellow students during the reception. He called the event "humbling and exciting."

"I was thankful to be able to share that moment with my wife, Rachael," said Chris. "Meeting Chancellor Bell, the other honorees, and the past awardees and WGU graduates was a great

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WGU honors Public Service Recognition Scholarship winners

experience. We're a small cohort, but getting to meet awesome people, like Anthony Hedge with IPSC and Lucie Nader with BMV, was inspiring. We might be in different phases of our careers and our journeys through life, but we share a commonality in our pursuit of education and balancing that with our service to Hoosiers. I hope to be able to serve as a resource to my fellow students, if they should need any assistance, and I know that I won't be afraid to reach out to my new friends when I need a helping hand."

Indiana State Personnel Department deputy director of Talent Management Mikka Jackson was also on-hand to ceremonially accept the \$29,100 awarded to state employees. This year marked the second consecutive in which WGU Indiana offered scholarships specifically for state of Indiana

employees. In 2018, 10 employees were each awarded \$5,000 scholarships. Two of those winners were in attendance to support their state employee colleagues at this year's reception.

Diana Augustine commuted from Terre Haute to be part of the presentation at the Statehouse. She's continuing her program at WGU Indiana while working with the FSSA Bureau of Developmental Disabilities. She expressed gratitude at the new educational opportunities the scholarship has provided her.

Another of last year's scholarship winners, Tamara Havics, has since completed her MBA. Tamara works as an environmental engineer for the Indiana Department of Environmental Management's Office of Air Quality.

The full list of 2019 Public Service Recognition Scholarship winners:

- Anthony Hedge, Integrated Public Safety Commission (\$2,400)
- Lucie Nader, Indiana Bureau of Motor Vehicles (\$6,500)
- Chris Henderson, Indiana Housing and Community Development Authority (\$2,400)
- Kristina Govert, Family and Social Services Administration – Division of Family Resources (\$2,400)
- Terry Bryant, Office of the Attorney General (\$2,400)
- Gayle Turner, Family and Social Services Administration – Office of General Counsel (\$6,500)
- Amy Holeman, Indiana State Police (\$6,500)

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department

Being a kind kind of person

With its plural meanings, kind is a four letter word that packs a punch.

It also lends itself to introspective questions like, what do we have in common with being kind? What kind of person are you? What kind of person am I? How do we show kindness?

On World Kindness Day (Nov. 13) many around the world found ways to be kind-- either through random acts or pre-planned events. World Kindness Day is dedicated to being a beacon of light for society.

How can we shine this light at work? What kind of coworkers,

managers and supervisors can we be on this day and beyond?

Fret not if you're short on ideas, I have a few suggestions.

How about we say "hello" to someone to whom we normally don't speak? Or maybe we can ask how someone is doing before we ask them if they saw our meeting requests? It's these small moments of contact that add up to impactful interactions and meaningful conversations.

World Kindness Day isn't just about spurts of niceness; it is about defining the kind of person

you are. How we show up in the world matters. I don't mean our appearance, but how we interact with those around us-- how we show the people we work with that they are valued and they matter.

This is kindness that permeates work cultures, invites diversity, and cultivates inclusion. So I ask, what kind of words would you want to be used to describe you, your work culture, your management style?

Whatever those words are, be that kind of person. Find a way to be kind each day.

By Shayla Pulliam, Indiana State Personnel Department

Time, love, and 'Tenderness'

FSSA-BDDS employee completes last long-distance wheelchair tour for slain children

Richard Propes completed his 571st (and final) lap around downtown Indianapolis' Monument Circle in the early morning hours of Oct. 5 with a sense of finality and, even, a bit of sadness.

With mixed emotions Propes put the finishing touches on a three-decade-long charitable endeavor that began as a simple search for kindness in the world. Letting go of something that had become so dear was far more difficult than he imagined, but the fact he'd made it to this point at all was something of a miracle for Richard who, about 30 years prior, wasn't even sure he believed he could succeed.

Proving people wrong – himself included – has become a habit for Richard Propes, who reflected on charity work that, throughout the years, has helped raise nearly \$1 million, primarily for services and organizations dedicated to child abuse and domestic violence prevention.

"I always experience a little bit of a letdown after a Tenderness Tour event, but this year I think it could best be described as grief," Richard reflected, days after wheeling night and day in tribute to young Hoosier lives lost to violence. "While I have no doubt it's the right choice to close this chapter of my life, the Tenderness Tour has been part of my life for over half my life, and I've experienced so many wonderful changes in those 30 years that I find myself having difficulty imagining life without a Tenderness Tour event, and without planning for the next event."



Richard Propes (center), seen here with students from Bishop Chatard High School, recently finished his final long-distance "Tenderness Tour." Propes began the project in October 1989 as a way to raise money for child abuse prevention.

What ended up becoming "[The Tenderness Tour](#)," an effort now as closely tied to Richard as his name, had its genesis in some of Propes' darkest days. But when he set out in his wheelchair with only \$20 to his name in the fall of 1989, Propes, a then-homeless double amputee, perhaps unexpectedly found in abundance the kindness he sought. Through it all, he discovered a new direction and a new purpose: helping mend broken hearts and inspiring hope in those who have faced some of life's most difficult challenges.

A perfect circle

As difficult as it may have been to start The Tenderness Tour, leaving it behind has been anything but easy for Propes.

There is a measure of closure for Richard, however, and it comes in the wake of 30 years of travel that forged new friendships and created a legacy of kindness and

compassion that, in Propes' earlier years, might have seemed little more than a pipe dream.

Propes, who has spina bifida, was living on disability benefits after developing an infection that resulted in the amputation of his lower legs. Richard was also grieving the then-recent deaths of his wife and child. The losses dropped Richard into to what he called "a really low point, personally." Anger and sorrow were consuming him, and he at times wondered whether or not he had a reason to live at all. But rather than sink further into despair, Propes found a goal – and a willingness to pursue it.

"The Tenderness Tour was really started out of my own desperation to break my own cycles and my desire to find good people," Richard, who is also a survivor of child abuse, said.

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FSSA-BDDS employee completes last long-distance wheelchair tour for slain children

Without any sort of a solid plan, Propes said he left Indianapolis in his wheelchair intending to wheel himself throughout the state in order to raise money for the nonprofit Prevent Child Abuse Indiana. The hope was that his actions would bring attention to child abuse, potentially stopping other children from experiencing what he did in his youth. And, hopeless as he felt at the time, there was another reason Richard took on a task he knew would thoroughly test him mentally and physically. He had to know if kindness was really out there – or was the world, in fact, as unkind and bleak as it had so often seemed?

A thousand miles from nowhere

Richard's first Tenderness Tour took 41 days and led him across about 1,000 miles of the Hoosier State. But he didn't have to travel long or far to find the answer to his burning question.

"Thirty years later I can still barely think about that experience without tears," Propes said. "I never went without a place to stay -- or a meal, or water, or even just words of kindness. I made friends on that first tour who remain friends to this day. I returned home realizing that there were good people in the world and that I was far more capable than I'd ever realized."

His faith in humanity restored and a new sense of his place in the world alive within him, Richard began to turn around his life.

He started classes at Martin University where he later graduated as valedictorian. He got a job in the healthcare industry and bought a house. He looked at how he could continue making

a positive impact in the lives of children and families, and he kept on wheeling at least once per year, making the Tenderness Tour a more than annual activity.

"I came back motivated to change my life for the better, which over time I did, and to help empower others to do the same... which hopefully I do," Richard said. The Tenderness Tour was now very much a thing, and after raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for child abuse prevention and traveling by wheelchair to locales as far as Cincinnati, Chicago, and Lexington, Kentucky, it's easy to see why closing the door on long distance events is emotional for Propes. The Tenderness Tour is very much a part of him.

Still, he's at peace with the decision to leave behind some of the grueling physical challenges involved with the completion of the long distance tours.

"This last Tenderness Tour was a perfect way to close the chapter, though," Propes said. "I was able to accomplish my task physically despite it being a tremendous physical challenge, and I was able to reach my financial goal. However it was hard enough to do physically that it also did really affirm that it's time to explore new ways to make a difference in the world that are less physically demanding."

If indeed the 2019 Tenderness Tour is Richard's last long distance wheeling event, he closed out the program on a very high note: the event raised in excess of \$10,000, placing it among Propes' highest fundraising tallies.

In all, Richard wheeled more than 5,000 miles and has assisted dozens of different charities. For that work, he's received a litany of accolades and honors, including being named a Sagamore of the Wabash, a Kentucky Colonel, an Indiana Pacers Community Hero, an Indianapolis Colts Community Quarterback, and a recipient of WRTV-6's Leadership Award, to name only a few.

More to come

As Richard leaves behind some of the more physically-demanding Tenderness Tour activities, he's resolute that, when it comes to raising awareness of child abuse and domestic violence, he's far from finished.

"While I don't plan any more long distance events, I've openly said I would consider a short memorial Tenderness Tour event," remarked Richard. "Wheeling across the country is still on my bucket list, but for now that's not on my radar. While I don't see that happening, I've learned to never say never because I so strongly believe in what I do. And with the right team behind me, anything is possible."

Richard's enduring team of volunteers, which seems only to grow in number by the year, remains one of his brightest guiding lights, and with that support always at the ready, he knows he can accomplish whatever task lies ahead.

"I have an amazing group of volunteers," said Propes, "I have people who are really supportive, really empowering." Richard

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FSSA-BDDS employee completes last long-distance wheelchair tour for slain children

described his crew of helpers as “a wonderful village of people who truly care.”

Those volunteers will certainly play an expanded role in some of Richard’s ongoing activities, far from the least of which is his continued participation in a 5k intended to benefit domestic violence survivors.

Propes originated Indy’s Race Away from Domestic Violence as a Tenderness Tour. The annual event will see its 17th iteration in July 2020, and it remains an accomplishment of which Richard is most proud. Proceeds from the 5k benefit the [Indiana Coalition Against Domestic Violence](#).

He also continues to research and catalog the names of murdered children and teens in the hopes he can share their stories and pay homage to those who never got the chance to grow up.

“I track the names of child victims of violence because I do believe it’s so important that these children be remembered,” said Propes. Called “[One Million Acres](#),” this additional

project was part of the inspiration behind Richard’s final Tenderness Tour, and he hopes one day to build a fitting memorial for those young lives lost. Of special note: One Million Acres includes names of children from every state, and Richard is working to collect data on child homicide from every country as well.

Breaking the cycle

Thirty years of wheeling have left Richard Propes with countless happy memories, innumerable new friends, and even more motivation than he had one October day in 1989 when he put into action his goal of breaking his own cycle of despair.

But to get there he knew he had to overcome the circumstances of his life that were beyond his control. It’s a lesson he shares with those dealing with any number of challenges, and it’s at the forefront of his work with the Family and Social Services Administration’s Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services.

“The trauma happened to you; it doesn’t define you,” stated Richard.

“That’s what we have to let go of. That’s what I had to let go of.”

Richard has worked for the state of Indiana for 13 years, and his position as a waiver support community liaison with FSSA-BDDS allows him to directly impact the lives of fellow Hoosiers by helping connect them to helpful resources.

“The great thing about this job is I can directly impact the system by making it friendlier, more personable,” Propes said.

Remembering that help and support is available, no matter how difficult one’s challenges may appear, is vital in overcoming those obstacles, Richard believes. And it takes what he called “a commitment to healing” to shine that light through the darkness.

Seeing the hope he’s inspired in those who’ve lost loved ones to violence continues to motivate Richard Propes, who, 30 years ago, never dreamt his fledgling charity work might one day give so much hope to so many of his fellow Hoosiers. There’s a word for that.

“While I’m less naïve than I was,” said Propes. “I’m also infinitely more optimistic. I’ve experienced so much goodness and hope over the past 30 years, and time after time I’ve seen the power of informed and inspired people to make a difference in the world. Thirty years ago I didn’t believe in love. Today, I do.”

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana State Personnel Department



FSSA BDDS employee Richard Propes credits an enormous team of volunteers, friends, and supporters for helping him complete numerous long-distance events in his wheelchair for the last 30 years. Propes recently completed 571 laps around Indianapolis’ Monument Circle in memory of slain children.

Ready, quilling, and able: DWD administrative assistant's paper crafts bring smiles, boost SECC

Ten years ago Cynthia Woltjer happened upon an image online that she found so strikingly beautiful she instantly had to know more.

"I thought it was the most fascinating thing," Cynthia said of a colorful paper craft credited to a designer named Erin Casner.

Though it had caught her eye, the design itself was rather simple in concept, featuring only the word "imagine" centered within a kaleidoscope of bursting colors. But the piece was arranged so that it seemed as if every meticulously designed element had rocketed forth from the wellspring of creativity we call imagination, landing in perfect order on a plain white background. The art was modeled entirely out of paper, though at a quick glance it could be mistaken as a composition from any number of paints, beads, or other art supplies.

To say Cynthia was intrigued is a bit of an understatement.

"It took me a dozen or so questions on Google before I discovered [the art] was called quilling," said Woltjer, an administrative assistant for the Indiana Department of Workforce Development (DWD). "YouTube wasn't as popular 10 years ago so I just Googled 'quilling' in images and saw amazing art! Then I found a beginner's kit, ordered it and went to work."

A decade later, Woltjer is a seasoned quiller with more than 100 designs to her credit that range in theme from college logos

to Indiana's first dog. Cynthia's work is a perennial hit at DWD's annual Indiana State Employees Community Campaign (SECC) silent auction, and for the last two years she's donated her framed paper crafts to the Indiana Statehouse Tour Office and Education Center's "Hoosier Handmade" silent auction, also for SECC.

You gotta know when to fold 'em

So what is quilling?

Cynthia describes it as folding paper into various shapes and sizes, and gluing it all together to make a larger image. The type of adhesive can vary among projects, and there's really no limit to the size or scope. Maybe Erin Casner was onto something; the artist's imagination is really the only barrier to any project.

Woltjer suggests using paper of a thickness between card stock and notebook paper for most projects as you'll want something that is malleable yet sufficiently moldable. Images can be flat or even three-dimensional (with holiday ornaments and the types of things you might see hanging from a rearview mirror accounting for the bulk of Cynthia's work there), but one also has to keep in mind that gluing it all together is critical – and time consuming. Cynthia said potential quillers should prepare to spend some time with each project, though planning may



DWD administrative assistant Cynthia Woltjer started quilling in 2009. Since then, she's created more than 100 paper crafts and has donated many to silent auctions.

account for a large portion of it.

"Most of the time, it takes longer to think about how I want it to look than actually doing it," she said. "Typically, I would give myself a month, since it's just a hobby and I can only work on them in the evenings or weekends."

And that's about it! From there, it's up to the artist to bring to life just about anything they can imagine.

Paper cuts

One of Cynthia's favorites, is a recreation of a vaguely Van Gogh-esque design she saw on a needlepoint pillow. Inspiration can come from almost anywhere, and the longtime administrative assistant is more than happy to put in the hours needed to craft just the right piece – for any occasion.

She's also given out her works as

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DWD administrative assistant's paper crafts bring smiles, boost SECC

holiday gifts for friends and family and is always ready for a new subject – or challenge. Cynthia has even combined quilling with painting and other forms of art. In one case, she put together a spot-on painting/quilling portrait of Ariel and Prince Eric from Disney's *The Little Mermaid* for a one-of-a-kind wedding gift. A Celtic knot she crafted based on a drawing by her cousin is one of her personal favorites as is her craft of Indiana with the signature torch and stars of the state flag. That distinctly Hoosier craft helped increase the tally of the Nov. 13 Hoosier Handmade silent auction. It was one of three pieces she created and donated to this year's SECC.

Her quilling talents have allowed her to help out the annual SECC campaign in unique ways. After all, how many other handmade, paper portraits of the Indiana governor and first lady's beloved schnauzer can there possibly be?

Cynthia receives a steady stream of requests with college and sports logos always at or near the top of the list. Indiana University's logo typically leads the pack, but she's also crafted works based on Butler and Purdue. Her work is just the



This Celtic knot is among Cynthia's favorite creations. One of her cousins drew the symbol, then Cynthia created the craft seen here entirely out of paper.

thing to brighten up any student, alum, or fan's dorm room, "man cave," or "she shed," of course, but the range of subjects displayed in Cynthia's work goes far beyond the sports world – and even some of the state's most recognizable people, places, and, um, dogs.

Just imagine

Many of Cynthia's most inspired pieces stem from collaboration. Someone will come to her with a basic idea of the item they'd like Cynthia to make, then, after some discussion (and quite a bit of paper curling), the vision jumps from the mind's eye and into reality. "They'll come to me with an idea and I'll work with them on creating that vision," said Cynthia.

That's often the most rewarding part of Woltjer's favorite hobby: seeing how it all comes together. Sometimes it happens faster than one might expect. Once, she was able to turn around an item requested for a wedding in only six days. It was a paper craft heart that ended up being very well-received

by the couple and their family. Cynthia's greatest reward was how positively everyone reacted to it. That reaction seems to be a theme for Woltjer's work, which has received likes from First Lady Janet Holcomb and the account of First Dog Henry, among other state employees and dignitaries, on Instagram. Cynthia's account is currently a repository for photos of her works. Go to [Instagram.com/cwquilling](https://www.instagram.com/cwquilling) to check it out.

But she's not keeping all this fun to herself. You can learn all about quilling now, thanks to websites such as YouTube and organizations like the North American Quilling Guild.

"These days there are hundreds of tutorials out there to learn how," Woltjer said. Beginner's kits can also be purchased from some major retailers online. "Both are less than \$20 and include everything you would need: the paper strips, tools, patterns, and instructions for simple shapes," said Cynthia. "That's a wonderful place to start."

With all those resources at hand, Cynthia is encouraging others to dive in. Just pace yourself – and don't forget to enjoy it. "Just be patient to start," said Cynthia. "Quilling is easy to learn."

It appears there's no limit to the creativity one can pour into quilling. All it takes is just the right spark to craft something as unique as the artist behind it.

Imagine that.

Story by Brent Brown, INSPD



Cynthia's "flat Henry" paper craft of First Dog Henry Holcomb is among her most popular creations. It received a paws-up from First Lady Janet Holcomb when the piece was entered in the 2018 Hoosier Handmade Silent Auction.

ActiveYou

ActiveHealth® Management: Tips for well-being
December 2019



Self-care isn't selfish

Taking care of your body is the key to good health at every age. It can help slow down or even prevent problems.

Self-care involves making informed decisions about any health issues. And getting preventive care. Awareness, prevention and early detection can keep you healthy!

Self-care can mean:

- Getting daily physical activity
- Making healthy food and drink choices
- Keeping a healthy weight
- Having routine preventive care
- Knowing your health numbers
- Getting good quality sleep
- Managing stress
- Quitting tobacco

Make an appointment for a check up with your health care provider today!

What is self-care?

Self-care is what you do to take care of our mental, emotional and physical health.

It's so simple. But many of us may overlook this important aspect of life.

Good self-care:

- Can improve your mood
- Can reduce anxiety
- Is important for a good relationship with others and with ourselves



Upcoming events

Wellness Webinar Series

The Gift of Health

December 10, 2019

10:00 am, 12:30 pm and 4:30 pm ET

<http://go.activehealth.com/wellness-webinars2.html>

Stop stress!

When you're feeling stressed out you may feel physical or emotional tension.



Stress is often related to negative events, like losing a job. But it can also come from something positive, like planning a wedding.

The best way to deal with stress is through self-care! Try these tips when you're feeling stressed.

- **Avoid drugs and alcohol.** In the long run, they create more problems and add to your stress instead of taking it away.
- **Find support.** Having someone to listen can really lighten your load.
- **Connect socially.** Make sure you spend time with loved ones.
- **Take care of yourself.** Eat well, get plenty of sleep and exercise regularly.
- **Stay active.** Take your mind off problems by seeing friends, helping a neighbor or volunteering.

Coach's corner

Meet Claude. He's a Health Coach for ActiveHealth. He enjoys helping members create a culture of health at work that supports well-being, productivity, and happiness.



Claude's tips for reducing holiday stress:

- **Don't expect perfection.** Accept that things might be different than they used to be. Being with family and friends is the main thing. Don't sweat the details!
- **Don't overspend on gifts.** It really is the thought that counts. The best gift to give is a happy, unstressed you!
- **Plan ahead to reduce stress.** Make a checklist. Get some things out of the way early, like cleaning or cooking.
- **Make time for yourself.** Read or listen to music. Get a massage or go to the gym. No one will mind if you take some all-important "me" time.



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