



The Torch

The official newsletter for Indiana state employees

January 2022

A message from Dr. Box

As we start a new year, I want to celebrate the work that the State of Indiana has done together during the COVID-19 pandemic. That means focusing on the more than 3.5 million Hoosiers who are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 and the 16.8 million tests that have been administered. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

With the Omicron variant reaching the Hoosier state, please be sure to start the new year safely. If you haven't already, please get vaccinated or get your booster dose if you are eligible. Wear a mask in public indoor settings to help protect yourself and others, especially children too young to get the vaccine and others who can't get immunized. Consider getting tested before you see friends and family who are not in your household, and don't host or attend a gathering if you are sick or have any [symptoms of COVID-19](#).

Remember that employees who are close contacts but fully vaccinated and not symptomatic do not need to quarantine and can continue to work onsite as long as they are masked during their quarantine. There are also options



to work remotely if you have a child who is required to quarantine or isolate at home or if you are fully vaccinated and required to isolate at home yourself. Visit the [Indiana State Personnel Department website](#) for more details.

COVID-19 continues to challenge our state, but our team has risen to every new opportunity, and I am grateful for all of your hard work and dedication.

Yours in health,
Kris Box, M.D.,
FACOG
State Health Commissioner

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The Torch is published monthly by the Indiana State Personnel Department and is available online at on.in.gov/TheTorch.

Got a story?

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

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Registration is NOW OPEN for the 2022 Canstruction competition!

WHAT IS CANSTRUCTION?

Canstruction is a structural design competition and a canned food drive in one! We pit agency against agency looking for the most creative design made entirely of donated cans. And most importantly, it's a fun and creative way to help food pantries restock their shelves after the holidays! With a little bit of creativity — and a lot of canned goods — state employees CAN make a difference in their communities.



The DCS team from Madison County had the highest single-team tally in 2021 with 2,526 canned goods collected. They used those cans to create a tribute to the state's "Mask-Up, Hoosiers" initiative.

WHEN IS THE COMPETITION?

- Jan. 14 | Deadline to register your team
- Jan. 18 - 31 | Teams collect cans and create their construction
- Jan. 31 | Deadline to submit photos of construction and deliver canned food to team's charity of choice
- Feb. 3 | Winners announced

Teams will compete for two awards: Most Cans Donated and Best Structure.

The judges who will participate on the State of Indiana Canstruction Competition Panel are: Governor Eric J. Holcomb's Office, Matt Brown (Director, Indiana State Personnel Department), and a special guest judge from a local food pantry.

At the end of the competition, the structures will be dismantled, and all food will be donated to a local food bank or other charity chosen by the participating team.

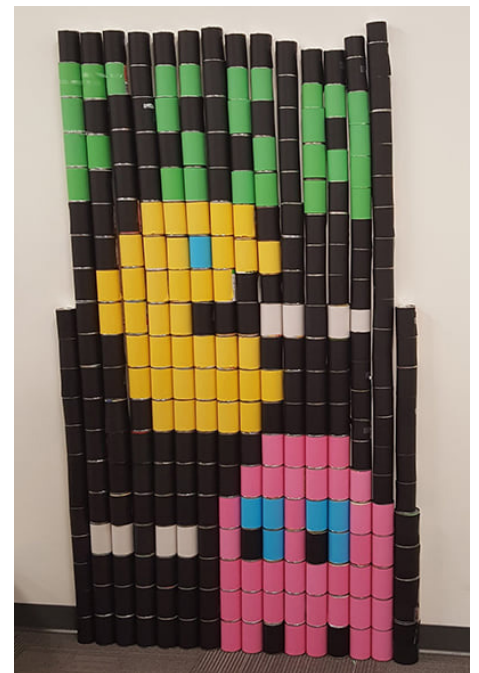
[Click here](#) for complete rules and additional details.

[Register here](#)



Noble County DCS won Best Structure by creating an enormous beehive that highlighted the Indiana Foster Care program. It utilized 559 canned goods, which were later donated by the team to the Central Noble Food Pantry.

All state agencies are invited to participate, and there is no limit to the number of teams per agency. Participating teams of state employees will build a structure of their choice entirely from cans of donated food. Teams can build their structures in any work location where they won't create safety issues or impact ordinary agency operations. The structures must be completed between Jan. 18 and Jan. 31. Photos with descriptions and total number of cans should be sent to spdccommunications@spd.in.gov by Jan. 31.



2022 ActiveHealth Program & Rewards

The ActiveHealth program has reset for the 2022 program year. This year there are four separate rewards available including a health premium discount and \$175 in gift cards.

2023 Premium Discount

Once again, you can save on your health plan in 2023 by earning a premium discount. NEW for this year - You now have four options to earn a premium discount. Choose the option that's best for you, and make sure to finish by Sept. 30, 2022!

1. **Health Coaching:** Complete four individual health coaching sessions (in-person or virtually) through ActiveHealth. Call (855) 202-4219 to schedule a health coaching session.
2. **NEW! Health Education + Health Coaching:** Complete two individual health coaching sessions (in-person or virtually) through ActiveHealth, PLUS, reach Level 3 through online education and challenges through the [ActiveHealth portal](#).
3. **Fitness Tracking:** Record 200 days of physical activity fitness

2023 PREMIUM DISCOUNT

Complete one activity to earn your discount.

Get started



Health Coaching



Fitness Tracking



Health Education + Health Coaching



Group Coaching

ActiveHealth
MANAGEMENT

tracking through a device synced to the [ActiveHealth portal](#). Any day with 10,000 steps or 30 minutes of physical activity counts toward the 200 day goal.

4. **NEW! Group Coaching:** Complete four group coaching sessions in the same series through ActiveHealth. A schedule of group coaching sessions can be found on the "Coaching" page of your ActiveHealth portal.

Remember: If you're enrolled in a family health plan, you and your spouse must complete one of the activities to qualify for the premium discount.

2022 Gift Card Rewards

- **\$25 for completed Health Assessment** - Log in to the [ActiveHealth portal](#) and complete a health assessment by Nov. 30, 2022. The process only takes about 10 minutes and is entirely confidential.

- **NEW! \$50 for completed Dental Cleaning** - Your dental cleaning visit must be loaded in the portal by Nov. 30, 2022. It can take up to 30 days to process visits. Submit your form by Oct. 31, 2022 to make sure it is processed in time.
- **\$100 for completed Wellness Visit** - Earn your wellness visit incentive by completing a physical with your primary care provider or by completing a comprehensive wellness visit at a CVS MinuteClinic. The results of your wellness visit must be visible in the portal by Nov. 30, 2022. It can take up to 30 days to process completed forms. Submit your form by Oct. 31, 2022 to make sure it is processed in time.

Check out the [ActiveHealth FAQs](#) for answers to common questions.



2022 ActiveHealth program overview webinars

Do you have questions about the how to use the ActiveHealth portal, want more info about the premium discount activity options, do you need more details about the rewards you can earn? If so, ActiveHealth is conducting a series of overview webinars in January to help answer your questions.

- Tuesday, Jan. 11 | 12:30 to 1 p.m. ET
- Tuesday, Jan. 18 | 12:30 to 1 p.m. ET
- Tuesday, Jan. 25 | 12:30 to 1 p.m. ET

Register here

Optum is your new EAP provider

The [Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP) is getting a refresh in 2022! Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, Optum will be the Employee Assistance Program provider for State of Indiana employees.

What does this mean for you?

You will still have access to the same great EAP benefits for you and your family. Beginning Jan. 1, 2022, you can connect with an Optum EAP consultant for online support at liveandworkwell.com (access code: Indiana), or by phone at 800-886-9747.

Note: Eight authorized counseling sessions started prior to Dec. 2021 can be completed in 2022 if necessary.

What is the Optum EAP?

The Optum Employee Assistance Program is a free, confidential service to help you and your family navigate life's challenges. Any member of your household, including children living away from home, can access the interactive website or contact a consultant.

Optum's team of experienced consultants is available by phone or online 24/7 to provide help with a range of life concerns and stressors, including:

- Relationship problems
- Workplace conflicts and changes
- Parenting and family issues
- Stress, anxiety, and depression
- Elder care support
- Legal and financial concerns

When you speak to a consultant, you'll receive immediate help or be directed to one of Optum's network* providers. EAP provides up to eight sessions with an experienced consultant for each issue or problem at no cost to you, and the benefit renews each calendar year. All conversations are confidential, and they never share your personal records with your employer or anyone else without your permission.

*Anthem EAP providers may not be in the Optum EAP network. Optum will help find a provider if your Anthem EAP provider is not in the Optum EAP network

Connect with Optum EAP



Call for personal support
800-886-9747



Log in to liveandworkwell.com for online support
Access code: Indiana



Connect through the myLiveandworkwell app
Available in the App Store and Google Play.
Log into the app and enter your company access code: Indiana



Living Well Monthly Webinars



Healthy habits: keep the change | January 25, 2022

We all have habits – both good and bad. And we don't even think about most of them. How did we get them? How can we change them if we want to? In this session we'll talk about the science behind creating positive habits. And how small changes can lead to big results.

Webinars are 45 minutes long, and you can choose from three start times, 10 a.m., 12:30 p.m., or 4:30 p.m. (ET). Don't miss out, registration is required.

[Register Here](#)



Artwork by Jerry Williams



5 healthy habits for the New Year

Some of the most popular New Year's resolutions are to exercise more, lose weight and eat healthier. Here are 5 healthy habits you can do to start the New Year off on the right foot:¹

Move more. Get at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity aerobic activity every week. That's just 20 minutes every day.

Eat healthier. Choose fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean meats, and low-fat dairy products.

Rethink your drink. Substitute water for sugary drinks to reduce calories.

Get enough sleep. Adults need at least 7-9 hours of sleep at night.

Take care of your oral health. Get regular dental checkups and brush and floss twice a day.



Wellness Webinar Series

Healthy habits. Learn about the science behind creating good habits and sticking with them.

January 25, 2022 | 10:00 AM, 12:30 PM and 4:30 PM, ET

<http://go.activehealth.com/wellness-webinars>

1. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), "How You Can Prevent Chronic Diseases", April 28, 2021, <https://www.cdc.gov/chronicdisease/about/prevent/index.htm>



Coach Chelsey
MPH



Coach's corner

Chelsey is passionate about encouraging people to take small, daily steps to improve their lives.

Chelsey's well-being tips:

Very often a resolution can be hard to keep because it's too vague. Be sure to set a **SMART** goal instead:

- **Specific** - focus on one key change.
- **Measurable** - easy to track.
- **Attainable** - a change you can make right now.
- **Realistic** - a reasonable goal to achieve.
- **Time-bound** - when you'll begin and end your goal.



Hot Artichoke Dip

Make our healthier version of the party favorite. Get more delicious recipes at:

[MyActiveHealth.com](https://www.myactivehealth.com) > [Resources](#) > [Learning Center](#).

How to keep your New Year resolutions

Set yourself up for success with these tips:

Focus on one goal at a time.

Having too many goals at once can spread yourself too thin.

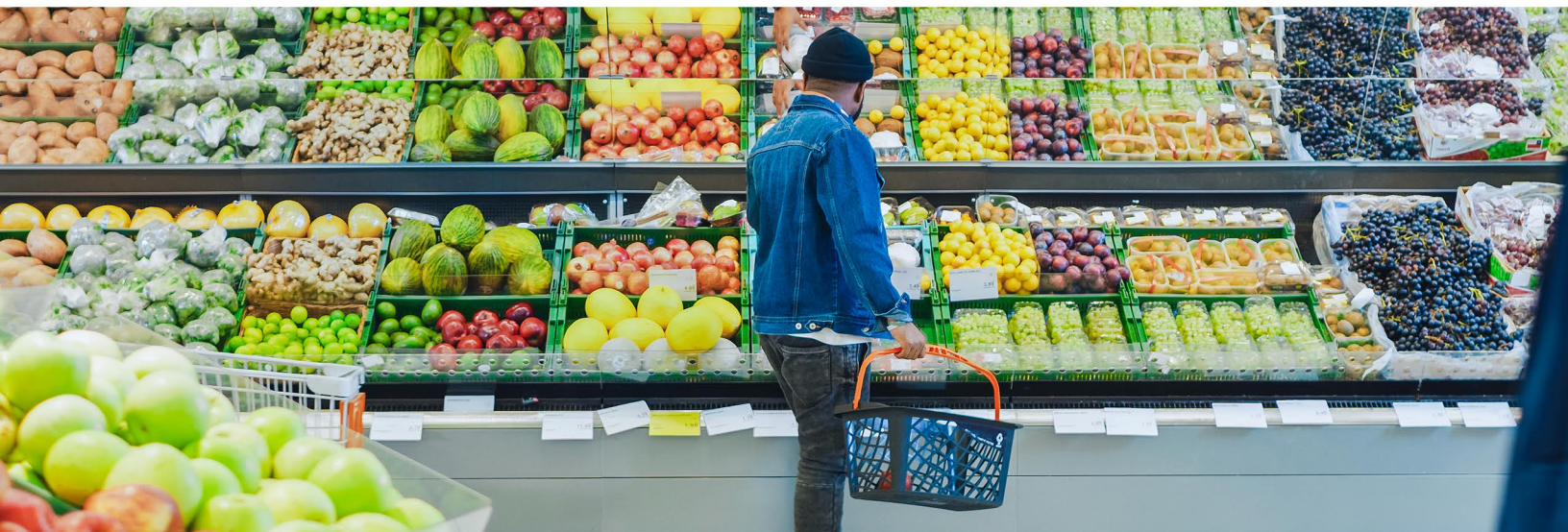
Start with small steps.

For example, if you are trying to eat healthier, start small and work your way up to stay motivated and have better success:

- Begin by replacing some of your favorite less healthy foods with more nutritious foods.
- Then, tackle another element of your diet, such as adding in a greater variety of vegetables.
- Finally, try reducing portion size, or cutting back on eating out.

Get support.

Let your family and friends know your goals and how they can help you reach them.



For more tips on how to manage your well-being, visit [MyActiveHealth.com](https://www.myactivehealth.com)



Training camp: WIC team aids Afghan Camp Atterbury guests

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

Beginning in August 2020, entire families, including thousands of children, left behind their home country to resettle in the United States. With the help of the Indiana National Guard, Indiana Department of Homeland Security, American Red Cross, and others, the Hoosier State was able to accommodate thousands of people they deemed (and very much treated as) “guests” via [Operation Allies Welcome](#).

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

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

Chavez and her team soon discovered their expertise could



The Indiana Department of Health’s WIC team received certificates for helping assist Afghan guests at Camp Atterbury.

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

Video tutorials show how to measure the proper amount of powdered formula for a baby bottle (a critical step in ensuring the infant receives the proper nutrition) and cover important topics like proper breastfeeding techniques and baby bottle sanitization. Some are designed

specifically for the Afghan guests while others are utilized by onsite staff.

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

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

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

“They poured themselves into this work,” said Chavez. “They saw this as an opportunity to really, really make an impact. They have

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Training camps: WIC team aids Afghan Camp Atterbury guests

such beautiful hearts and are true public servants.”

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

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

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

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

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

With planning down to a “T,” the WIC team was able to come up with a holistic approach that melded documents, videos, and in-person presentations that detailed the many ways WIC could assist

the Afghan families. The warm reception by the Camp Atterbury crew was a big help in making it all possible. Chavez described the Camp Atterbury crew as “incredibly welcoming.”

“They knocked down walls for us to help,” she added.

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

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

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

“Much of the work we do in our division, while tremendously

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

McCord found that working with multiple agencies and organizations was both advantageous and a challenge, particularly in how to coordinate efforts. There is also the fact that the camp is designed to feed and house military personnel, and due to that it was less equipped to handle entire families, children, or infants. There was plenty of will on the side of the WIC team, however, so they found a way to make it all work.

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

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

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

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

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana Department of Health

A ‘bug guy’s’ life: Green, team swat vector-borne diseases

When much of your day involves keeping a close eye on the creepiest of creepy-crawlies, it’s safe to say that your daily work life is anything but ordinary.

But that’s exactly why Lee Green was drawn to a career that requires him to monitor and even capture and test suspect insects capable of transmitting serious illnesses with a single bite: the randomness of any given day is unlikely to be replicated, and the nature of his on-the-go, often outdoors work means he and his team play critical roles in helping Hoosiers avoid all the things that go “buzz” in the night... or day.

That type of intervention is what Green calls “public health at its finest,” and it’s another unique aspect of a job that can include everything from aerial spraying of mosquitoes to collecting ticks to building a color-coded map of disease-carrying insects.

No matter the task, it’s all in a day’s work for Green, who once considered a medical career before an IU internship opened the doors to studying and preventing vector-borne illnesses.

“I was pre-med.,” Green, a Converse native, recalled. “That internship changed the entire path of my life.”

That course of events caused him to “get the bug,” as it were, for studying some of the state’s tiniest health nuisances as a medical entomologist. Fifteen years on the job and recently having taken the director’s position of the Indiana Department of Health’s [Zoonotic and Vector-Borne Illness](#) section (within the [Epidemiology Resource Center](#)), Green is just as committed to combating the spread of sometimes-deadly diseases today as he was when he joined the state at the age of 23, fresh out of college.

Green succeeded Bryan Price in the director’s position following the latter’s [retirement in October](#) and is joined by two regional entomologists: Doug Ginder and Jeanette McGavic who, respectively, cover the southern and central thirds of the state. Green handles the northern third and will continue to do so until another staffer comes along to fill that position.

The team is tasked with working closely with local health departments (LHD) to alert them to dangers, make mitigation suggestions, and offer educational support. In that capacity, the team works as subject matter experts, assisting LHDs. The educational aspect is especially important as Green said it is often humans who create the ideal environment for disease-carrying insects to thrive.

“The vast majority of what we do is educating people,” said Green.

This can include pointing out conditions that are prime factors for an insect invasion, such as areas of standing water which make for ideal mosquito breeding grounds.

The goal of Green and his team is to do all they can to prevent an insect-borne disease outbreak. Doing so means they’ll have to meet their foes on their home turf, which can range from a muddy mosquito-filled swamp to a flea-infested apartment. In other words, entomology isn’t exactly a desk job, and it’s just about as “hands-on” as a career can be.



Lee Green joined the Indiana Department of Health in 2006. The state’s senior entomologist, Green took the reins of director of the Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease section in October.

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A ‘bug guy’s’ life: Green, team swat vector-borne diseases

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

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

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

“Field,” in this case, can often be taken literally. For example, to study ticks the team will “drag” for the tiny pests in wooded locations. This involves pulling a cloth along the ground, which the parasitic arachnids mistake for a potential host. The ticks attach themselves

to the cloth and this allows Green and his team to collect the bugs which can then be tested for [Lyme disease](#) and [other illnesses](#) they can transmit.

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

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

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

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

“In just the past five years, we’ve collected and tested over 5,000 ticks,” said Green. He described the process as “a ton of work,” but the resulting



The Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease team has collected more than 5,000 ticks in recent years. Collecting ticks allows them to be tested for disease transmission.

[tick infection maps](#), which display data on the number of ticks found in each county that carried the bacterium that causes Lyme disease, allow the public to see at a glance any threats to their community.

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

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

Story by Brent Brown, Indiana Department of Health



The Indiana Department of Health’s Zoonotic and Vector-borne Disease section collects ticks by “dragging.” This process involves pulling a large cloth through a wooded area to encourage ticks to hitch a ride. The bugs can then be tested for Lyme disease or other transmissible illnesses. Doug Ginder is pictured dragging for ticks here.