
ADDRESSING RURAL CHALLENGES, FROM ADDICTION TO THE ARTS

CENTER FOR RURAL ENGAGEMENT
We partner with rural communities to improve Hoosier lives.

The Center for Rural Engagement at Indiana University Bloomington brings together people, research, cultural assets, and expertise to improve quality of life and address challenges in areas such as:

- Health
- Arts and culture
- Education
- Housing
- Environment and resilience
- Business and innovation
- Leadership development

Together with our partners, we have become a national model for how universities can support the needs and futures of rural residents and communities.
IU students are making a difference
Together we’ve accomplished a lot in our first year:

**ENGAGED**
1,500+ residents in 39 Indiana communities and 27 counties

**LAUNCHED**
135 projects, including 67 community resilience projects, 52 health projects, and 16 arts and quality of place projects

**INVOLVED**
4,500+ IU students, 150+ faculty members, and all 16 IU Bloomington schools

**PARTNERED**
in grants totaling more than $2.5 million and with all three of IU’s Grand Challenges programs

Our Sustaining Hoosier Communities initiative is thriving

**WINNER**
2019 Outstanding Program Award, EPIC-N

**LARGEST**
rural-focused university teaching initiative in the United States

In Orange County alone, work included:

**300+**
IU students

**23**
faculty

**28**
community projects

**9**
IU schools and departments

IU students are making a difference

**70,000+**
hours of student work focusing on health, mental health, addiction, and social work

**658,000+**
hours of student volunteer services to local communities through IU Corps, valued at $16 million

We’re working for Indiana

- Health
- Arts
- Housing
- Resilience

2018–19 impact
Opioid addiction has devastated rural communities. Together we’re fighting back.

To battle the opioid epidemic in Lawrence County, John Keesler—a professor in the IU School of Social Work and a resident of the county—collaborated with Sheriff Mike Branham. They conducted a community survey of attitudes toward mental health and addiction issues and awareness of resources. Keesler’s work later expanded to support a federal grant project that informed rural opioid planning across all of Indiana.

IU social work classes also got involved statewide. They explored the impacts of drug use on individuals and families, examined best practices from other communities, and held sessions to inform and empower Indiana residents—efforts that totaled nearly 70,000 hours.

This work is done in collaboration with an IU Grand Challenge, Responding to the Addictions Crisis. The initiative is one of the nation’s most comprehensive state-based responses to the opioid crisis—and the largest led by a university.

“There are great people living here who are truly invested in seeing our community thrive in the future.”
—Mike Branham, sheriff, Lawrence County
Together we’re working to ensure justice for all, while supporting judges and preparing law students.

The IU Maurer School of Law was the first law school in the nation to establish an access-to-justice service learning program.

Its many initiatives include a partnership with Indiana Legal Services that provides free legal services to people filing for expungement of nonviolent offenses. The result: people in recovery get back on track in their lives and careers, employers gain qualified workers, and students grow by serving people in need.

Another Maurer program connects law students with rural county courts for judicial clerkships. Created in partnership with the Indiana Supreme Court, the program enhances Indiana’s local judiciary and public services while giving students experience practicing law in smaller communities.
Together we’re helping the arts thrive in rural communities.

The Rural Arts Series has deeply connected with three communities—Huntingburg, Nashville, and Salem—through creative writing workshops, theatrical performances, IU Cinema film screenings, artist residencies, traditional and contemporary art exhibits, and master classes and performances with the IU Jacobs School of Music.

The series has generated a lot of excitement and has had a particularly profound effect on the communities’ middle and high school students—the artists of tomorrow.

The Center for Rural Engagement also completed strategic plans to build arts capacity in these three communities through the arts administration program in the IU O’Neill School of Public and Environmental Affairs. In addition, the school is launching a Certificate in Rural Arts Administration, the nation’s first of its kind.

And in Orange County, students in the IU Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture + Design connected with local arts and social services organizations to create designs for a community arts studio and an accessible park.

Together these programs are contributing to a vibrant quality of place in several Indiana towns.

“You gave them new dreams to dream.”
—Bonnie Harmon, band director, Salem Community Schools
Together we’re helping workers and people of all incomes find good, affordable places to live.

The Center for Rural Engagement formed a regional coalition to create a housing plan for Greene, Lawrence, Monroe, Orange, and Owen counties, with a focus on generating housing units for various income levels.

In Orange County, the IU Eskenazi School of Art, Architecture + Design created a plan for a modest home that can be built on vacant or blighted lots—expanding low-cost housing for the workforce and supporting aging in place.
Together we’re using data to make healthier communities.

Professor Priscilla Barnes of the IU School of Public Health-Bloomington and her team of graduate students helped Daviess, Lawrence, Martin, and Orange counties develop Community Health Improvement Plans (CHIPs) using data from local health assessments.

The CHIPs will help these communities set SMART goals—goals that are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound—to meet a range of health objectives, from addressing gaps in services to preventing and treating chronic conditions.
Together we’re bringing tailored care to people with diabetes.

For more than four decades, Southern Indiana Community Health Care (SICHC) has provided high-quality, community-based health care to local families. Now SICHC, the Center for Rural Engagement, and the IU School of Nursing Bloomington have teamed up to conduct home visits for patients with diabetes.

As part of their clinical experience, students in professor Greg Carter’s classes are helping people with diabetes test their A1C values, evaluate the safety of their homes, and learn how to improve their health.

The students are also assessing the availability of health services in Orange County that would benefit patients, and are finding ways to improve the county’s health system. In total, IU nursing students have invested more than 500 hours in care and assessments in Orange County.
Together we’re championing safe water and robust recreation.

The Center for Rural Engagement and IU’s Eppley Institute for Parks and Public Lands completed a Park, Recreation, and Protected Land Inventory and Opportunity Map. The report lists all parks, recreation activities, trails, waterways, and public lands in the Indiana Uplands region.

Through additional community interviews, the team identified key needs and opportunities for regional recreation development to increase tourism, improve health, and support quality of place. And now the team has begun to address these opportunities through strategic sessions with regional partners and recreation professionals.

The center also launched a karst aquifer study with the Indiana Geological and Water Survey. Focused on water resilience, the study contributes to an IU Grand Challenge, Prepared for Environmental Change. Findings will help IU and the state understand how environmental change has affected our water sources, and will inform municipalities on treatment and policies to keep our drinking water safe.
“I believe this new center can be truly transformative for our 11-county region of the state, one project at a time.”

—Former Lt. Governor Becky Skillman

Learn more
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Propose a project

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