

Toward a state of well-being

In Gov. Mitch Daniels' inaugural address last January, he talked about ways in which each of us can pitch in to "raise a new barn in Indiana" and collectively facilitate a great comeback for the state we all love.

With regard to our health and well-being, he said, "Every citizen who stops smoking or loses a few pounds or starts managing his chronic disease with real diligence is caulking a crack for the benefit of us all."

Last week, the governor launched his INShape Indiana program designed to bring this important message and the tools necessary to succeed to Hoosiers across the state.

The governor's program is highlighted on Web page www.inshape.in.gov, where you can log on, lighten up and help improve the health status of our state along the way.

We have all heard the sad statistics — when it comes to our health, we are first in the things we want to be last in.

Indiana is at or near the top nationally of every negative health measure, including obesity, the smoking rate and the many afflictions that accompany them: high blood pressure, diabetes, cancer, heart problems and stroke.

Despite the proven benefits of physical activity, more than 50 percent of American adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits.

Twenty-five percent of adults are not active at all in their leisure time. Activity decreases with age and is less common among women than men and among those with lower income and less education.

Insufficient physical activity is not limited to adults. More than a third of young people in grades 9-12 do not regularly engage in vigorous-intensity physical activity.

Daily participation in high-school physical-education classes dropped from 42 percent in 1991 to 32 percent in 2001 (CDC, 2002).

The governor's INShape Indiana program aims to reverse this trend and connect Hoosiers to the existing programs, services and events that are offered by many fine organizations and agencies in Indiana.

If you accept the challenge, INShape Indiana allows you to register as a participant in the initiative.

As a method to capture the success you will experience when you make the commitment to a healthier lifestyle, you will be able to update a brief health profile every two weeks once you have registered on the Web site.



**LUKE
MESSER**

Over time, the success you have in your fitness quest will be recorded in this profile.

Together, Indiana will improve the amount and quality of physical activity in which Hoosiers engage, increase the level of fruit and vegetable consumption, decrease the use of tobacco and lower the average weight of those who have made a commitment.

The medical evidence makes it clear that people of all ages who are generally inactive can improve their health and well-being by becoming active at a moderate-intensity level on a regular basis.

Regular physical activity substantially reduces the risk of dying of coronary heart disease, the nation's leading cause of death, and decreases the risk for stroke, colon cancer, diabetes and high blood pressure.

It also helps to control weight; contributes to healthy bones, muscles, and joints; reduces falls among older adults; helps to relieve the pain of arthritis; reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression; and is associated with fewer hospitalizations, physician visits and medications.

Moreover, physical activity need not be strenuous to be beneficial; people of all ages benefit from participating in regular, moderate-intensity physical activity, such as 30 minutes of brisk walking five or more times a week.

With INSHAPE Indiana, you will have the opportunity to create and join groups to motivate your friends, family and coworkers to accompany you on your journey to better health.

Gov. Daniels hopes to identify Indiana's fittest organizations to be recognized at a special celebration.

There is strength in numbers — if we pull together to meet this challenge, there's no telling what we will be able to accomplish as a state.

For assistance with any aspect of the INShape Indiana program, please contact the Governor's Council for Physical Fitness and Sports via e-mail at help@inshape.in.gov.

Messer is executive director of the Indiana Republican Party and represents District 57, including most of Shelby County, in the Indiana House.