



After a day in the morgue at Porter Regional Hospital, Chuck Harris returns to his house in Valparaiso.

PHOTOS BY BEN MIKESELL | IDS

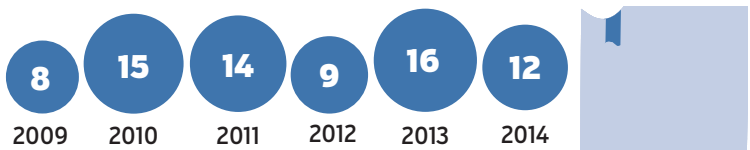
The guardian

In Northwest Indiana, a coroner tries to reach heroin addicts before they reach his morgue.



Chuck Harris, 45, the coroner of Porter County, has spent the past five years spreading awareness against substance abuse, especially heroin, in northwest Indiana. Porter County and neighboring Lake County are considered two of the few high drug traffic areas in the United States.

Deaths from heroin overdose in Porter County



In 2014, **12** people died from heroin overdoses. Of these 12 people, **2** were female and **10** were male. Their occupations included landscaper, student, busser, construction worker, carpenter, crane operator and secretary. Their ages ranged from **18** to **63**.

SOURCE STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

GRAPHIC BY ANNA BOONE | IDS

By Michael Majchrowicz
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When the coroner arrived, the parents were in hysterics. No, they told him, their son didn't use hard drugs. Definitely not.

The smell hit Chuck Harris' nostrils even before he opened the bedroom door. He stepped across the sea of dirty laundry, noted the Xbox controller on the bed and saw the body.

The man's feet were still planted on the ground, his upper torso folded so that his face met the mattress. He had died standing up.

He was 21. He'd had just enough time, before the heroin stopped his heart, to stash the syringe inside a slit in the mattress.

No autopsy would be necessary.

The scene was one Harris knew well. In Northwest Indiana, heroin is becoming more pure, more accessible and more affordable. During the past six years, 74 people in Porter County have died of heroin overdoses.

As the county's coroner, Harris is usually called to the scenes. The bodies — bloated, dotted with track marks, foaming at the mouth — are often found in bedrooms. Sometimes a syringe is still clutched in a lifeless hand. Sometimes a needle is transfixed in a vein.

Harris has grown beyond weary of this never-ending cycle of sobbing families and grieving children and lives cut short. He wants it to stop.

He has to do more than just count the bodies.

* * *

He bursts through a back door of Porter Regional Hospital and heads to his morgue.

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MEN'S BASKETBALL

Big Ten honors IU trio Monday

By Alden Woods
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The Big Ten Conference announced its 2014-15 postseason awards Monday, with three IU players picking up honors.

Yogi Ferrell, first team All-Big Ten

The junior guard was selected by the conference's coaches and media. This was after a season that saw his role change from last season.

After Ferrell broke the program record for single-season 3-point attempts last season, both he and IU Coach Tom Crean said he needed to become more of a facilitator this season and involve the Hoosiers' new group of scorers. He did, which prompted a rise in his efficiency numbers.

Ferrell averaged 16 points, five assists and 3.5 rebounds per game this season. He finished the season shooting 44.1 percent from the field and 42 percent from 3-point range, both notable increases from last year. His assist rate rose and he turned the ball over less frequently. His offensive rating increased to 124.2, No. 39 nationally.

It's the second All-Big Ten honor of Ferrell's career. Last season, he was named second team All-Big Ten.

James Blackmon Jr., Big Ten All-Freshman team

Blackmon picked up freshman all-conference honors despite a well-publicized slump in the season's final months. He scored 15.8 points and pulled in 5.3 rebounds per game this season — both second on the team — while shooting almost 39 percent from 3-point range.

Blackmon, a McDonald's High School All-American, started every game for IU when healthy. He was also named honorable mention All-Big Ten by the media, but not by the coaches.

Troy Williams, honorable mention All-Big Ten

Williams broke out against Butler in December, scoring 22 points and pulling in 11 rebounds in an 82-73 win. From that point on, he became the Hoosiers' second-most important player, leading the team in rebounding and taking on a bigger offensive role.

Crean experimented with running the offense through the hyperathletic Williams, who cut his turnover rate by more than 5 percent and tallied 28 more assists this season than last — in three fewer games.

Williams and Ferrell have drawn consideration as early entrants for the 2015 NBA Draft, though neither is projected as a lottery pick. Neither has announced whether he will return to school next year.

Cleveland band to stop in Bloomington at Root Cellar

By Adam Smith
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Vocalist and guitarist Max Stern of Cleveland said he looks forward to seeing a different side of Bloomington than the last time he was here.

He said he and his band, Meridian, played a show at "a really gnarly crust-punk house" in 2010 and saw people doing some type of drug off of the washing machine during his band's set.

The band's Midwest tour brings them to the Root Cellar tomorrow. Other bands that will be performing include Unions, Joe & Chance and Kleinerwasserbar.

Though the band's show at the Root Cellar won't have the same wild element, Stern said people should still expect to have a good time if they come out. He said the set is diverse with a lot of ups and downs.

MERIDIAN
No cover charge
9 p.m. today, the Root Cellar

"It's cool to play different kinds of shows," Stern said. "Our sound covers a lot of different aspects of folk, indie, punk and stuff like that. I think there are a lot of different kinds of bands we can play with."

Stern said the band is having a lot of fun getting its live sound how it wants it. This is the first time all five members of the band have gone out on tour together, and Stern said he is excited because he didn't ever think they would be able to do a tour together with everyone having busy schedules. Typically, he said, just he and his brother Jake, who plays guitar and does backup vocals in the band, are the only ones who are able to



COURTESY PHOTO

Meridian, a Cleveland-based band, is coming at 9 p.m. today to the Root Cellar. This tour is the first time all members of the band have toured together.

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Audra McDONALD

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