

## CATCHING THE GEOCACHING BUG

BY: Melissa Jeremiah, RN, CHCE

Director of Operations Hoosier Uplands Home Health and Hospice

With the Christmas shopping season in full swing a unique gift you may want to consider is a GPS system. Some people think of a GPS as a tool to use in your car, however certain types of GPS systems, which can be purchased at most sporting goods locations can also be used for the sport of geocaching.

Geocaching is an activity that combines treasure hunting and physical activity. There are 3,222 geocaches hidden within 50 miles of Salem according to [www.geocaching.com](http://www.geocaching.com), which is a free site where you can look up your next treasure hunt.



We prefer to hunt for treasure that contains geocoins or travelbugs, which are items that are meant to travel from site to site, which are hidden primarily in ammo canisters. We have run across some interesting travelbugs during our hunts. We once found this kiwi travelbug in the Jackson County Forest that had traveled from New Zealand to Indiana. We located him on 1/1/07, just days after I received my GPS for Christmas, at which time he had logged 9,406.60 miles.



We released a bullfrog travelbug into the wild on 03/10/07, and he is now in Germany and has logged 6,781.46 miles. The photo to the left was taken of him in Germany.

Another thing to know about geocaching is if you take something from a geocache site you should leave something in return. Suggested items to leave are toys, hot wheels cars and key chains. Also the geocache is never to be buried.

My family and I have had many adventures while geocaching. It is a way to get exercise, and find places that you never knew existed, such as the Medora Brick Plant, the Big Spring Nature Preserve or a view from a high mile above Deam Lake that are all within a few miles of your own backyard. The treasure sites on [www.geocache.com](http://www.geocache.com) are marked to show the difficulty of the find and the terrain, so you can decide upon the level of physical activity you are willing to take on. This is also a great activity for history buffs, as there are some sites where the location is the treasure. Another benefit of geocaching is that it brings the family together. Happy Caching!