



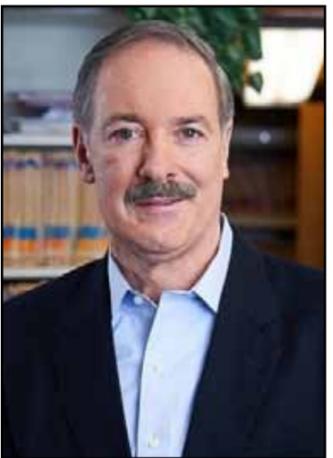
# OUR TOWN TIMES

2019 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. VIII

DRUG USE ▲ NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH ▼ COMMUNITY SUPPORT ▲ EDUCATION ▲ LAW ENFORCEMENT ▼ VOLUNTEERISM ▲

**REP. JOHN JOYCE DIAGNOSES DRUG EPIDEMIC IN BLAIR COUNTY**  
By Congressman John Joyce (PA-13)

Much has happened in the few short weeks since I began my tenure as the 13th District's new Congressman, but one of the most important things I've done is conduct a district-wide listening tour on healthcare and addressing the opioid crisis. As a doctor, I felt it was important to get out and visit as many hospitals and medical centers as possible, so I could see firsthand what types healthcare challenges we are facing. It seems like in almost every visit I've made, whether it was the James E. Van Zandt VA Medical Center or the Hollidaysburg Veterans Home, the opioid epidemic was a topic of discussion. And why wouldn't it be? Pennsylvania has been one of the states hit hardest by the drug crisis, with drug related deaths increasing by 60 percent in the last two years. According to the Centers for Disease Control, we have lost 180 people in Blair County alone since 2010 due to overdoses – and the number of deaths is increasing every year. As Operation Our Town's goal is to make Blair County a better place to live through fighting drug abuse, it needs to continue its focus on combatting the opioid epidemic. And I pledge that I want to be as helpful as possible in this fight. So what can we do? How can we work together to reverse the troubling trend that is plaguing our district when it comes to drug deaths? The first thing we need to do may seem simple, but's



it's critical to the effort. As a doctor, I know we need to reinforce to our community that addiction is a disease, not a moral failing. Those who are suffering should be encouraged to seek help, and it's necessary that we be there to provide it. More beds are certainly needed, but it's not just additional funding that will bring improved treatment. Investing in treatment centers with proven results needs to be our priority. Partnering with local rehabilitation centers to make sure that federal grants are going to only the most successful programs will be a task I focus on. We also need to stop harmful drugs from finding their way to our children. Securing our borders in order to keep out

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# OPIOID ADDICTION

## HOW TO COPE

By Judy Rosser, Executive Director, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships

One of the most important ways we can address the opioid crisis in our communities is through education. Community members need to become more aware of the risks related to opioid medications and other physically dependent medication such as benzodiazepines (e.g., Klonopin, Ativan, Xanax, Valium). Patients need to become advocates for themselves and their children when being prescribed medications. Asking for more information regarding the medication and its dependency risk can increase awareness. We are seeing many changes in our physical health systems and physicians through regulations around best practices and pain management, but patients are still encouraged and may need to ask additional questions. Opioid Use Disorder is still the primary diagnosis in Blair County. Most individuals do not understand what it means to have an opioid use disorder, and the difference between dependence/addiction as well as tolerance. Opioid use disorder does not just include persons who are using heroin; it includes individuals who are physically dependent on prescription medications. These pain medication drugs have a high dependency risk, even when taken as prescribed. Prescription opioid medications include Oxycodone (e.g. OxyContin, Percocet), Oxymorphone (e.g. Opana), Morphine (e.g. Kadian,

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# METHAMPHETAMINE

By Tom Brandt, Supervisory Narcotics Agent, Pa Office of Attorney General Bureau of Narcotics Investigation & Drug Control

Due to a significant rise in the number of methamphetamine and crystal methamphetamine cases in Blair County in 2018, there is a need to educate the community on this trending problem. Other common names for methamphetamine include chalk, crank, crystal, ice, meth, and speed. People can take methamphetamine by: inhaling/smoking, swallowing (pill), snorting, injecting the powder that has been dissolved in water/alcohol. Because the "high" from the drug both starts and fades quickly, people often take repeated doses in a "binge and crash" pattern. In some cases, people take methamphetamine in a form of bingeing known as a "run," giving up food and sleep while continuing to take the drug every few hours for up to several days.

**How does methamphetamine affect the brain?**

Methamphetamine increases the amount of the natural chemical dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is involved in body movement, motivation, and reinforcement of rewarding behaviors. The drug's ability to rapidly release high levels of dopamine in reward areas of the

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**What is methamphetamine?**  
Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug usually used as a white, bitter-tasting powder or a pill. Crystal methamphetamine is a form of the drug that looks like glass

**How do people use methamphetamine?**

People can take methamphetamine by:

- inhaling/smoking
  - swallowing (pill)
  - snorting
  - injecting the powder that has been dissolved in water/alcohol
- Because the "high" from the drug both starts and fades quickly, people often take repeated doses in a "binge and crash" pattern. In some cases, people take methamphetamine in a form of bingeing known as a "run," giving up food and sleep while continuing

# HEROIN: NATIONAL EPIDEMIC HITS OUR STREETS

By Tom Brandt, Supervisory Narcotics Agent, Pa Office of Attorney General Bureau of Narcotics Investigation & Drug Control

Opiates, to include prescription pain medication, heroin, and fentanyl are part of a major epidemic going on nationwide and in Blair County in 2018, so there is an ongoing need to educate the community on this issue. People inject, sniff, snort, or smoke heroin. Some people mix heroin with crack cocaine, a practice called speedballing. of these drugs may open the door to heroin use. Nearly 80 percent of Americans using heroin (including those in treatment) reported misusing prescription opioids first. a back-and-forth state of being conscious and semiconscious

**How do people use heroin?**

People inject, sniff, snort, or smoke heroin. Some people mix heroin with crack cocaine, a practice called speedballing. Heroin enters the brain rapidly and binds to opioid receptors on cells located in many areas, especially those involved in feelings of pain and pleasure and in controlling heart rate, sleeping, and breathing.

**Short-Term Effects**

- People who use heroin report feeling a "rush" (a surge of pleasure or euphoria). However, there are other common effects, including:
- dry mouth
  - warm flushing of the skin
  - heavy feeling in the arms and legs
  - nausea and vomiting
  - severe itching
  - clouded mental functioning
  - going "on the nod,"

**Long-Term Effects**

People who use heroin over the long-term may develop:

- insomnia
- collapsed veins for people who inject the drug
- damaged tissue inside the nose for people who sniff or snort it
- infection of the heart lining and valves

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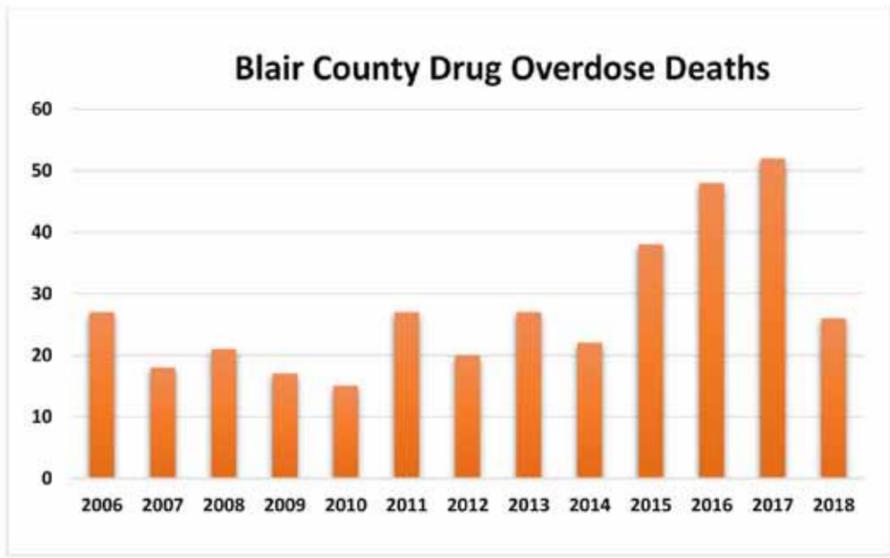
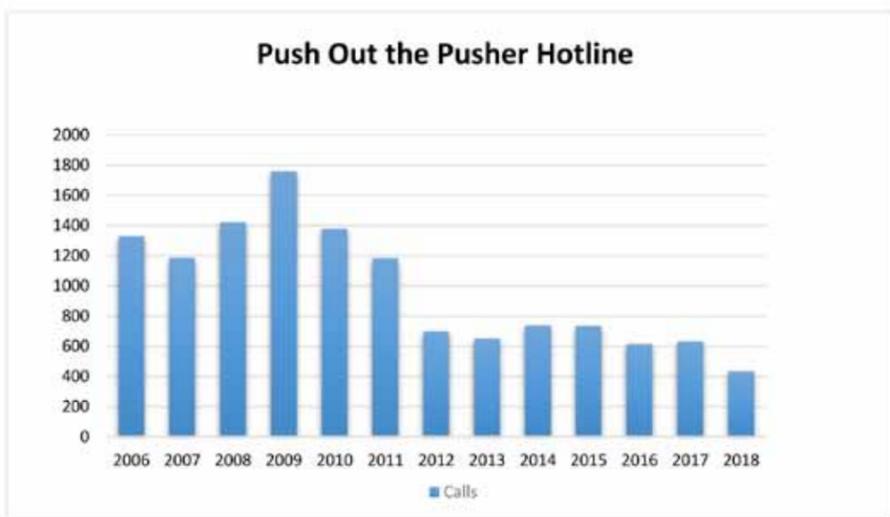
**What is heroin?**  
Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia, Mexico, and Colombia. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin. Other common names for heroin include big H, horse, hell dust, and smack. Research suggests that misuse

**Prescription Opioids and Heroin**

Prescription opioid pain medications such as OxyContin® and Vicodin® have effects similar to heroin.

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# POLICE REPORT



Source: Operation Our Town 2018

FRATERNAL  
ORDER  
OF POLICE

BALD EAGLE  
LODGE #51

1979 REESE  
HOLLOW ROAD  
P.O. BOX 99,  
PORT MATILDA, PA.  
16870

SERVING OFFICERS  
OF BLAIR, CENTRE,  
AND CLEARFIELD  
COUNTIES

## K9 OFFICERS MAKE POSITIVE IMPACT

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Law enforcement work hard to protect our community every day, which is why they need the best tools and resources to help them do their job. K-9's continue to be a great asset to law enforcement because they can perform a variety of tasks within the law enforcement department, such as catching criminals, sniffing out drugs, and rescuing people trapped under debris. Officers and their K-9 partners team together with the community to prevent and deter unlawful activities that leave our citizens and business owners victimized. They also serve as ambassadors

### K-9 Freddy - Logan Township Police Department:

- K-9 Freddy is a two-year-old Belgian Malinois that began his service with Logan Township Police Department on November 13, 2017. Freddy's handler is Officer Alex Vazquez.
- K-9 Freddy was made possible through the support of Operation Our Town, the Blair County District Attorney's Office, and donations from the community.

Vazquez and K-9 Freddy were involved in the basic training of the new Blair County Sheriff's Office K-9 handler Corporal Bennett and K-9 Rik.

- Officer Vazquez and K-9 Freddy assisted the United States Postal Service/PSP in a search warrant in Everett, PA this year resulting in a seizure of drugs/cash. They also assisted the Pennsylvania Game Commission in New Paris, PA with a suspected drug activity.

### K-9 Ciro - Logan Township Police Department:

- The second handler and K-9 for Logan Township Police Department is Patrolman George Swander and his 1 1/2 year-old Belgian Malinois, "Ciro" who both became active on patrol with LTPD on November 9, 2018.
- K-9 Ciro was made possible through a donation from Fiore Toyota.
- Like K-9 Freddy, K-9 Ciro is also a dual-purpose K-9, capable of Narcotics Detection and Patrol/Tracking.
- Patrolman Swander and K-9 Ciro have been active out of the gates as they recently assisted APD in the apprehension of a fleeing subject who crashed after a vehicle pursuit and was apprehended by Patrolman Swander and K-9 Ciro. They also assisted in a robbery investigation while attempting to pick

up a track on the suspect. Patrolman Swander and K-9 Ciro also participated in an Our Town patrol with APD just prior to the holiday.

- Recently, both Officer Vazquez/K-9 Freddy and

### K-9 Rik - Blair County Sheriff's Office:

- K-9 Rik is a 4-year-old Belgian Malinois that began his service in September 2017 with the Blair County Sheriff's Office. K-9 Rik's handler



Pictured: Officer Vazquez and K-9 Freddy.

to strengthen public relations and opinions of the local law enforcement community.

Blair County is fortunate to have the following K9's proudly serving our community:

- Officer Vazquez and K-9 Freddy have been involved in continuing training throughout the year for drug detection and patrol/tracking. Officer



Pictured: Patrolman Swander and K-9 Ciro.

Patrolman Swander/K-9 Ciro were asked by the AG's office to participate in some saturation patrols throughout Centre County where they partnered with Centre County Law Enforcement

- Logan Township Police Department anticipates that both handlers and K-9's will be involved in a few school searches in early 2019.

is Corporal Justin Bennett.

- K-9 Rik was donated to the office from a Special Operations Unit stationed in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. K-9 Rik served 1 year in Afghanistan, and was later retired from the Military Working Dog (MWD) program.
- K-9 Rik and Cpl. Bennett obtained certification consisting of

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# HONOR THE BADGE

[OperationOurTown.org](http://OperationOurTown.org)

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## Allegheny Township Police Department – 2018 Highlights Chief Leo Berg III, Allegheny Township Police Department

- This year, the Allegheny Township Police Department has a lot to be proud of as the construction of our new municipal building housing the police department is complete. We are moved in, operational, and very pleased with our new building.
- The Department handled 5,173 incidents in 2018, slightly up from the 4,948 incidents we handled in 2017.
- The Department continued to participate in the statewide Aggressive Driving and Buckle Up PA Programs that focus on traffic safety. Officer Paul Nagle was recognized for his level of efforts participating in the programs.
- The Department continued our focus on impaired driving and made 51 DUI arrests in 2018. Ptm. Bryan Ketner was recognized for his DUI enforcement efforts and was awarded the Top Gun award for departments in our category in Blair County.
- As part of the impaired driving enforcement, the Department also participated in DUI roving patrols and DUI Checkpoints that focus on detecting/arresting impaired drivers.
- The Department investigated 336 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2018, slightly down from 348 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2017.
- Technology upgrades included the installation of in-car computers, printers, and scanners which link the officers to the 911 emergency center and the services provided by Jnet. Officers are also able to access department records and create and file traffic citations electronically.
- The Allegheny Township Police Department kicked off the year with a team at the Polar Plunge, raising money for Special Olympics. Then throughout the year, the Department conducted child fingerprinting at the PA RV Expo, Super Hero Day, and at Wal-Mart during the Children's Miracle Network event. We also partnered with Operation Our Town at some of these events and extend a special thank you to them for that assistance!
- The Allegheny Township Police thanks our community and programs like Operation Our Town and Because We Care for your support and efforts to make Allegheny Township a great place to live and work. We look forward to serving our community in the years ahead!

## Altoona Police Department – 2018 Highlights Sgt. Tom Venios, Altoona Police Department

- The Altoona Police Department and other law enforcement agencies statewide play an important role with PA Special Olympics in fundraising and participating in events year-round. For the first time, this year, 21 APD officers participated in the Special Olympics Polar Plunge. These officers raised over \$11,000 and, on a freezing February day, dove into the icy waters at Canoe Creek State Park. APD officers were excited to donate their time for such a worthy cause.
- APD purchased four Trek Powerfly E-Bikes with available grant money for the Bike Patrol. The E-Bikes utilize an electric motor that assists the bike officer in pedaling harder and faster. Officers working an 8-hour shift, wearing 20+ pounds of police related equipment, felt the benefits with faster response times, the ability to negotiate virtually any terrain in the city, and less fatigue and injuries. With just a few hours of charging, the E-bikes are capable of traveling 27+ MPH, with a battery life of 50-90 miles, depending on the power setting.
- Through a generous donation, APD was able to purchase a Bounce Imaging ball camera for the Tactical Response Team (TRT). This versatile tactical camera is a softball-sized rubber ball that has cameras surrounding it 360-degrees. The capabilities of this type of tactical camera gives officers the upper hand when conducting searches of houses and buildings. Its versatility allows the ball to be thrown, suspended, or used as a pole camera. The camera provides a 360-degree view for tactical officers and command staff using Bluetooth wireless technology.
- During the summer, APD was awarded a License Plate Reader (LPR) through the Pennsylvania Auto Theft Prevention Authority. The LPR is mounted on the roof of a marked patrol vehicle that is commonly assigned to dedicated traffic enforcement. With the elimination of registration stickers, it is difficult for officers to know when registrations are expired or suspended. The LPR enables traffic enforcement officers to scan hundreds of license plates every shift, looking for stolen, suspended, or expired registrations. The LPR is credited with finding stolen vehicles and affecting drug and gun arrests stemming from dedicated traffic enforcement.
- APD finished the year out with a very successful National Night Out. This was our 2nd Annual event that attracted over 2,000 people. Several Police, Fire, and EMS vehicles were on display, as well as heavy equipment from the Altoona Highway Department. Kids and adults alike had a blast learning the ins and outs of different vehicles. The event boasted live entertainment, food, games, and several Blair County organizations that provide services to the public. This is a major event for APD because it gives community members the ability to discuss issues, ask questions, and have general conversation with police officers. It's a benefit to not only the community, but the officers themselves.

## Blair Township Police Department - 2018 Highlights Chief Roger White, Blair Township Police Department

- 2018 was a busy but safe year for the officers of the Blair Township Police Department.
- BTPD handled 2,798 incidents in 2018, which is an approximately 10% increase over 2017.
- The Department continued to focus on traffic safety via enhanced enforcement of the motor vehicle laws and actively participating in the statewide Aggressive Driving and Buckle Up PA Programs. Ptm. Nathan Hale was recognized by the PA Aggressive Driving Enforcement and Education Program for his efforts in this area.
- The focus also continues on detecting/arresting impaired drivers. The Department made 33 arrests for impaired driving in 2018. Ptm. Benjamin Shanholz was recognized for his efforts in this area and was awarded the Top Gun award for departments in our category in Blair County.
- Blair Township Police also saw a significant increase in drug related complaints/arrests in 2018, totaling 20.
- 2018 technology upgrades included the installation of in-car computers, printers, and scanners which link the officers to the 911 emergency center and the services provided by Jnet. Officers are also able to access department records and create and file traffic citations electronically.
- 2018 also saw upgrades in the areas of departmental weapons and equipment.
- BTPD conducted its annual Trick or Treat Night outreach wherein officers distributed over 400 goody bags to children while patrolling the Township. This is an annual effort made possible by the support and donations from many businesses located within the community.
- The Blair Township Police Department thanks its citizens and Operation Our Town for the continuing cooperation and support in their efforts to keep Blair Township the great community it is, and we look forward to serving in 2019!

## Duncansville Police Department – 2018 Highlights Chief Jeff Ketner, Duncansville Police Department

- Jeff Ketner took over as Chief on January 8, 2018 as former Chief James Ott was elected County Sheriff.
- The Duncansville Community Days Festival was held in July for three days.
- We participated in the National Night Out Against Crime in August and had a very good event with a great turnout.
- We pre-made 300 Halloween treat bags and gave them all out in under an hour and a half.
- We also helped with the Borough's Children's Christmas and held a party for them in December.
- We hired James Brantner, H.T. Fowles, and Traci Winters as part-time police officers to go along with myself, Lieut. Bill Rhodes, and Officer Aaron Wagner.

## Hollidaysburg Police Department – 2018 Highlights Chief Rodney B. Estep, Jr., Hollidaysburg Police Department

Hollidaysburg Police Department is comprised of eight full-time officers, four clerks, and a secretary to the Chief of Police employed to protect the community twenty-four/seven. The makeup of Hollidaysburg Police Department allows for a dynamic department able to implement change and receiving optimum training for the betterment of the community. At the start of 2018, Chief Gehret retired and Chief Estep assumed the role with confidence, leading the department to an abundant amount of accomplishments. Under Chief Estep, a new chain of command was implemented, featuring a new sergeant, patrol officer, and communications officer. Below you will find statistics from 2018:

- 3,379 Calls for Service
- 296 Criminal Arrests
- 19 Juvenile Arrests
- 499 Traffic Citations, 730 vehicle stops
- 47 DUI Arrests
- 79 Non-traffic citations

Between the daily activities of law enforcement, the department invested significantly on training officers on a wide variety of tasks, calculating to 263.5 hrs. The training included supervisor level incident command system, pursuit policy updates and training, taser instructor school, school threat assessment (in conjunction with various other drills with Hollidaysburg School District), standardized field sobriety instructor school and breath alcohol instrument operator school (to continue to operate the only Alcohol Breath Testing device within Blair County). Also, the department initiated a multitude of systems, including in-car computers (county-wide), TraCS, and new records management system accessible via mobile data terminals. Furthermore, investments were made in changing our Evidence Processing System for a more efficient police department.

In 2019, Hollidaysburg Police Department is excited to continue the service to the community as the department awaits the arrival of body worn cameras and updated patrol car cameras and completion of a complete overhaul of our policies and procedures. As the year progresses, the community can expect continued outreach from the department with Coffee with a Cop.

Should you have any questions regarding the Hollidaysburg Police Department, please do not hesitate to call.

## Logan Township Police Department - 2018 Highlights Chief David Reese, Logan Township Police Department

- Selected Patrolman Swander as the 2nd K-9 handler. Patrolman Swander and his partner "Ciro" trained from August to October to become certified in dual-purpose K-9 operations (Narcotics/Patrol).
- LTPD became one of the few municipal departments in the region to certify a Motor Carrier Safety Assistant Program (MCSAP) Officer with Patrolman Rick Benzel completing the 3-week training program in June. Patrolman Benzel mentored with the Pennsylvania State Police Motor Carrier Enforcement Team for 60 days before becoming fully certified. Patrolman Benzel is now active within Logan Township, performing enforcement/inspections of commercial vehicles.
- LTPD/PSD and APD captured homicide suspect John Stiver in a joint law enforcement operation in July without incident in the Homer's Gap area of Blair County. Stiver was wanted for a fatal shooting in Altoona a few days prior. Sergeant Terry Walter and Patrolman Rick Benzel were instrumental in the capture of Stiver, placing themselves at great risk in a wooded tracking of the fugitive. Both were awarded Letters of Commendation by Chief Reese.
- LTPD continued their partnership with the Penn State University Police in helping to provide safety and security for those attending Beaver Stadium for the 2018 PSU Football season.
- LTPD collaborated with the Veterans Affairs Police and Allegheny Township Police in October during an active shooter exercise at the Van Zandt Medical Center.
- LTPD is proud to announce that 2 officers, Patrolman Tyler McClellan and Anthony Talamo, recently became certified as Child Safety Seat Technicians.

## Tyrone Borough Police Department - 2018 Highlights Chief John R. Romeo, Tyrone Police Department

- Creation of a Patrol Sergeant Position (Jason Hollis) through Civil Service Testing.
- Installation of mobile computers into all patrol vehicles, giving officers additional resources while on patrol, and instant access to registration and driver information through Clean/NCIC, call data, and GPS mapping for car location.
- Advanced to the TraCS System for traffic citations, written warnings, and crash reporting. Now citations are all electronic and automatically go from the car to the District Court System (county-wide project).
- Approval by Borough Council to move forward to re-establish a K9 Program in Tyrone Borough.
- Ordinance adopted by Borough Council to approve officers to wear body cameras.
- Borough Council approved the hiring of another full-time officer, bringing full-time officers to seven, including the Chief, and five part-time officers.
- Upgraded to the new X2 Tasers, after receiving a donation from a local entity. The department had been carrying the X26's from 2012.

## Blair County District Attorney's Office

By Peter J. Weeks, First Assistant District Attorney

The Blair County District Attorney's Office and Operation Our Town share a common mission of ensuring public safety. Serious and violent crimes continue to threaten this safety. Operation Our Town is a proven partner in "Taking Back Our Neighborhoods." From the beginning, Operation Our Town partnered with us in law enforcement to improve equipment; support special operations; and assist in securing a drug prosecutor. As a result, offenders committing drug and drug-related crimes or other violent offenses are afforded thorough investigations and fair prosecutions.

Ensuring public safety is not only accomplished by enforcing the law. Prevention is equally important. Operation Our Town and the District Attorney's Office joined forces with the police departments in Hollidaysburg, Tyrone, Logan Township, and Altoona to protect our community with the installation and promotion of Medication Collection Boxes. The Medication Collection Boxes are an effective way to prevent legally obtained opiates from being diverted for illicit abuse by others. (See the statistics included in this newsletter for a quarterly breakdown). Every person who uses a drop box is a local crime fighter!

Although the District Attorney's Office works to dismantle the organizations profiting from drug dealing and resultant crimes, we

increasingly see the cross-over of drug addiction and drug related issues in the commission of child abuse and elder abuse crimes. The District Attorney's Office, along with other community agencies like Family Services, Inc., Blair County Children and Youth Services, and Blair Health Choices, pooled resources to operate a Multi-Disciplinary Investigative Team (MDIT) and a Child Advocacy Center in Blair County to reduce the trauma to children and solidify the prosecutions of child molesters. 2018 was the first full year of the CAC's operation, and it has provided our community with the means to effectively investigate crimes against children without further traumatizing the child victims. To combat elder abuse, the District Attorney's Office works closely with Blair Senior Services to identify and prosecute the exploitation of older adults, including those financially devastated by the addiction of a family member.

Many claim that drug trafficking and drug use are victimless and nonviolent crimes that unnecessarily burden our prison systems. This is simply not true. Drug use impacts society, communities, and families. Those who sell and use drugs will commit crimes of violence to protect their trade and obtain their high. These crimes range from domestic abuse stemming from drug use, burglaries and thefts to obtain money and drugs, the illegal

use and possession of firearms to facilitate drug offenses, and even shootings and other acts of violence by those involved in drug trafficking. Unfortunately, in 2018, an investigation revealed violent drug traffickers had begun to operate a child pornography ring within our community with the aim of establishing a human trafficking enterprise. 2018 also saw a dramatic rise in methamphetamine use and trafficking, which poses a significant threat to law enforcement and the general public. The District Attorney's Office, along with law enforcement throughout Blair County, will continue to bring these offenders to justice. While we believe in providing treatment options for criminals who have drug and alcohol addictions, we remain committed to holding the safety of the community and the quest for victims above accommodations for those who commit crimes.

We, in law enforcement, continue to adapt to the changes in the laws and tactics of the drug dealers to stay ten steps ahead of the offenders. The collaboration that we have between the business community, drug and alcohol treatment agencies, and prevention and social service groups is directly related to Operation Our Town and unmatched in other communities. It is this collaboration that strengthens and unifies us in our shared mission for a safer Blair County.

## Drug Prosecutor Position Summary

By Amanda Jacobson and Peter J. Weeks, Assistant District Attorneys

The OOT Drug Prosecutor grant position was created in 2007 upon the Blair County community's recognition that a need existed within the Blair County District Attorney's Office to handle the rising influx of cases due to drug crimes and drug related crimes. In 2018, the Blair County District Attorney's Office promoted Assistant District Attorney Amanda Nehrkorn Jacobson to the Operation Our Town Drug Prosecutor grant position. Attorney Jacobson came to this position as an experienced prosecutor and trial attorney who carried a full caseload, including three criminal homicide cases and four drug delivery resulting in death cases.

Attorney Jacobson, until her resignation on November 2, 2018, reported directly to the First Assistant and District Attorney. She acted as the county-wide coordinator for drug investigations, prosecutions, and related training. Attorney Jacobson handled a full caseload consisting of drug-related homicide cases, drug delivery resulting in death cases, historical drug investigations, drug trafficking felony cases, drug manufacturing felony cases, firearms felony cases, aggravated assault, robbery, rape, and child abuse (both sexual and physical) that correlate back to drug use, drug trafficking, or other drug violations. Attorney Jacobson

In addition to these responsibilities, Attorney Jacobson filed and litigated bail forfeiture and revocation petitions, litigated and filed civil asset forfeiture actions, approved search warrants, and authorized consensual interceptions related to the Pennsylvania Wiretap Act. Attorney Jacobson also attended forensic interviews of abused children at the Blair County Center for Child Justice (CAC).

Throughout 2018, approximately 309 felony drug cases were assigned between the drug prosecutor position and the First Assistant. Given Attorney Jacobson's departure, these cases were transferred to the First Assistant. There are currently 488 active felony cases pending for Attorney Weeks. The District Attorney's Office continues to attempt to incarcerate individuals who violate their bail conditions.

The District Attorney's Office continues to file asset forfeiture petitions where property is utilized by drug dealers to facilitate drug dealing, or drug dealers acquire property because of their drug trafficking. Proceeds from asset forfeiture are utilized to purchase equipment and provide training and assistance that would otherwise not be possible. In 2018, \$75,597.90 was forfeited to the District Attorney's drug fund and we forfeited \$14,782.95 to PA Office of Attorney General.

In 2018, there were 28 new forfeiture actions filed.

The cases investigated and prosecuted in 2018 continued the trend where individuals involved in drug trafficking are committing other types of crimes as well. These crimes include criminal homicide, sexual assault, domestic violence, and child abuse within Blair County.

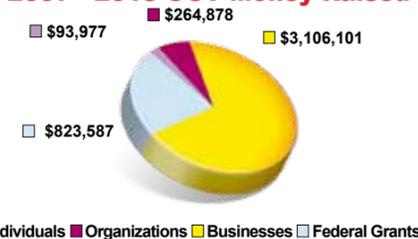
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Thanks to Operation Our Town for their assistance in the fight against drugs.

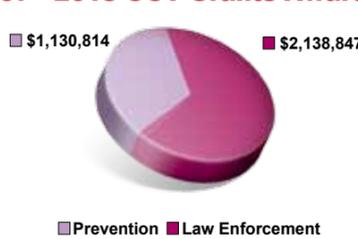
BLAIR COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
RICHARD A. CONSIGLIO

# COMMUNITY

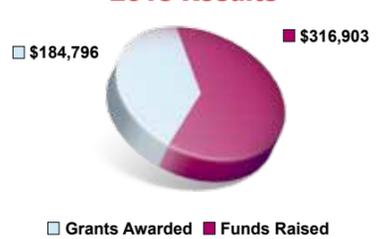
## 2007 - 2018 OOT Money Raised



## 2007 - 2018 OOT Grants Awarded



## 2018 Results



# Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation

By David Cunningham, President

If you never change, you can never improve. With that credo in mind, 2019 is set to be a year of change for the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation. Even as we celebrate a decade of progress in our quest to transform recreational spaces in Blair County, we are looking forward to the new directions ahead of us.

As a reader of this paper, you may already be familiar with the parks that our group has helped to improve across Altoona. There's the revamped Prospect Park along 15th Street, the new Hamilton Park on East Cherry Avenue, and of course our first effort, the Booker T. Washington Outdoor Facility. We believe community parks are a vital piece of society. Our group, made up entirely of local

into a spot available for all. Our first step in this mission is the addition of a Sway Fun Glider to Prospect Park, a project that we're undertaking in partnership with Smiles for Miles and the Central Blair Rec Commission.

A more inclusive outlook isn't the only big change for us in 2019. This year, we'll be remaking our flagship event for the first time since its inception. Those familiar with our organization already know the BTW 3-on-3 Basketball Tournament that has been our summer tradition the past 10 years. That has always been our opportunity to show off the great BTW park complex at 19th Street and 13th Avenue. Over the years though, that event has come to outgrow the three courts available there. As such, we're happy to



Pictured: Sway Fun Glider that will be installed at Prospect Park

volunteers, seeks to improve central Blair County by creating and preserving those community parks and other recreational places.

In our time, we've targeted large projects with large impacts. What makes an impact large though? Is it always the project that benefits the most people? Is it the project with the biggest square footage? Can a big impact instead be a project that helps children who would otherwise be left out?

This year, our board has decided to answer just that by focusing our efforts on bringing inclusive equipment pieces to established parks in the area. That will include equipment that is accessible and fun for children in wheelchairs, as well as sensory components that can be enjoyed by children of all abilities. In the past, we've chosen to incorporate some of these pieces into our newly built parks, but this will be the first time that we'll be specifically targeting inclusive projects. We're looking to take parks that could be unusable for some families and turn them

announce that in 2019, we'll be moving our tournament to the newly remodeled Lakemont Park, where we'll have room to grow even further. Make sure to follow our page at facebook.com/BTWRP as we announce all of the details closer to summer.

Among these changes though, the fundamentals will be staying the same. First and foremost, our vision remains steadfast. We wish to see neighborhoods strengthened through shared spaces that are welcoming to all. Likewise, the partnerships that we've forged will continue to inform and strengthen the work that we're doing. We've been fortunate to partner with Operation Our Town from the very beginning of our organization. The Operation Our Town board recognizes the impact that community parks have on their own mission to reduce crime and drug activity, and as such, they've supported our efforts again and again. We are honored to have had such a meaningful ally over the past decade and we look forward to the positive changes we can make in the future.

# HEROIN

Continued from A1

- abscesses (swollen tissue filled with pus)
- constipation and stomach cramping
- liver and kidney disease
- lung complications, including pneumonia
- mental disorders such as depression and antisocial personality disorder
- sexual dysfunction for men
- irregular menstrual cycles for women

## How can a heroin overdose be treated?

Naloxone is a medicine that can treat an opioid overdose when given right away. It works by rapidly binding to opioid receptors and blocking the effects of heroin and other opioid drugs. Sometimes more than one dose may be needed to help a person start breathing again, which is why it's important to get the person to an emergency department or a doctor to receive additional support if needed.

Naloxone is available as an injectable (needle) solution, a handheld auto-injector (EVZIO®), and a nasal spray (NARCAN® Nasal Spray).

Friends, family, and others in the community can use the auto-injector and nasal spray versions of naloxone to save someone who is overdosing.

The rising number of opioid overdose deaths has led to an increase in public health efforts to make naloxone available to at-

risk persons and their families, as well as first responders and others in the community. Some states have passed laws that allow pharmacists to dispense naloxone without a prescription from a person's personal doctor.

## Is heroin addictive?

Heroin is highly addictive. People who regularly use heroin often develop a tolerance, which means that they need higher and/or more frequent doses of the drug to get the desired effects. A substance use disorder (SUD) is when continued use of the drug causes issues, such as health problems and failure to meet responsibilities at work, school, or home. An SUD can range from mild to severe, the most severe form being addiction.

Those who are addicted to heroin and stop using the drug abruptly may have severe withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms, which can begin as early as a few hours after the drug was last taken, include:

- restlessness
- severe muscle and bone pain
- sleep problems
- diarrhea and vomiting
- cold flashes with

goose bumps ("cold turkey")

- uncontrollable leg movements ("kicking the habit")
- severe heroin cravings

Researchers are studying the long-term effects of opioid addiction on the brain. Studies have shown some loss of the brain's white matter associated with heroin use, which may affect decision-making, behavior control, and responses to stressful situations.

## Who supplies drugs to America?

In 2012, around 23.9 million American citizens were consuming illicit drugs or psychotherapeutic medications, per the National Institute on Drug Abuse. How does the number get that large? Over the years, as the drug trade has grown, so has demand. If each addict or recreational substance abuser, at some point, introduces his or her drug of choice to a new drug abuser, then the circle just continues to grow wider. But where does the cycle begin? The answer is with manufacturing.

While many of these substances certainly come from other places, America supplies plenty of its own drug supply, too. Of the drugs that

## What can citizens do to get involved/help?

Educate yourself on the signs of drug activity. The thing about drug operations is that they can be set up anywhere, anytime. Occasionally, it's not just police officers that work to find the bad guys. It may all boil down to a tip given by an observant resident. Here are some things to watch for regarding suspicious neighborhood drug activity:

- There's an unusually large amount of traffic, often at strange hours.
- This traffic is usually quick, and the people stay only a short time. Sometimes they don't even go in at all; instead, someone comes out to meet them.
- Observable exchanges of items, especially where money is visible.
- Ability to afford items without a job - cars, TVs, etc.
- Neighbors will continually host parties and appear to be under the influence of drugs.
- Repeated flickering of cigarette lighters.
- Windows are blocked



are entering the United States from outside native territories, most are coming from Central and South America. The majority of drugs that come from other nations into the U.S. do so via Mexico.

## International drug trade

The heroin supply in America is mainly derived from South America and Mexico. A large portion of the world's heroin is cultivated in Afghanistan, around 90 percent of it, but only about 4 percent of heroin in the U.S. comes from Afghanistan, per 2013 data reported by The Week. Approximately 4.2 million people over the age of 11 have used heroin in their lifetime, NIDA reports.

Most of America's cocaine comes from Bolivia, Columbia, and Peru. Among 15-64 year olds in America, Business Insider reports 2.2 percent use cocaine each year.

Up to two-thirds of the marijuana being consumed in America comes from Mexico, while domestic growers may be accountable for much of the rest. Domestic production of this drug may only increase in coming years as it becomes legal in more states.

out, preventing neighbors from seeing in.

- Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia (syringes, pipes, baggies, etc.) in the area.
- Noxious odors coming from around houses or buildings, such as musty or chemical smells.
- Houses or buildings where extreme security measures seem to have been taken.

After a report is provided, it may not always result in a drug arrest, as some tips simply lead to dead ends. At times, it takes sufficient evidence or a prolonged investigation, so be patient and keep a watchful, yet inconspicuous eye on suspicious neighbors.

Anyone that suspects ongoing drug activity in Blair County should contact the Push Out the Pusher Hotline at (814) 693-3020. You can remain anonymous. If drug activity is spotted in real time, residents should try and get descriptions of people, vehicles, and the direction of travel, and call their local police department or 911.

# 2018 OOT GOLF TOURNAMENT RESULTS

By Randy Feathers, Golf Tournament Chairperson



Operation Our Town held its 6th Annual Golf Tournament on September 18, 2018 at Park Hills Golf Club. The golf tournament yielded a net profit of over \$129,000 thanks to our 50 teams and 143 sponsors! Many thanks, once again, goes out to the OOT Golf Committee, Park Hills Golf Club, and all volunteers who helped to make the event a success.

US Foods sponsored the Neighborhood BBQ on Monday evening in conjunction with the golf tournament. The food was provided by US Foods and their chefs, Travis Seymore cooked several different flavors of wings, and beverages were provided by Furrer Beverage. Dana Thompson and Thompson Pharmacy provided the décor for the Texas BBQ theme for the event. Golfers, sponsors, and OOT grant recipients enjoyed networking on the outdoor patio.

The Neighborhood BBQ included recognition of several community leaders for their service. Congressman Bill Shuster was recognized for his 18 years of service to Blair County, and his staff member, Jim Frank, received the award on his behalf. Chief Tim Mercer of Logan Township Police Department, Chief John Hawksworth of UPMC Altoona

Police Department, and Chief Dave Gehret of Hollidaysburg Police Department were all recognized for their retirements and service to Blair County. The evening ended with a fun glow in the dark golf ball throw contest to win golf packages and prizes.

The golf tournament was held on Tuesday and golfers had the opportunity to choose from an 8:00am or 1:00pm tee time. Sheetz was the main food sponsor on Tuesday and provided a delicious breakfast and lunch, and snacks on the golf course. The golf tournament included the "Golden Ticket" contest in which ten golfers in the morning session and ten golfers in the afternoon session had the opportunity to putt for a \$5,000 cash prize donation from Park Hills Golf Club. The winner of each session was the golfer that got their putt in the hole or closest to the hole.

Due to golf course conditions from rain the day prior, golfers had to play 9 holes instead, so the winning teams were categorized into the Front 9 and Back 9 winners. Front 9 winners, 1st Place: Darryl Owens, Matt Neumeier, Harry Benjamin, John Ventura. Front 9 winners, 2nd Place: Pat Miles, Dick Scholton, Matt Gieg, Mike Gieg. Back 9 winners, 1st Place: Doug

Meyers, Chuck Meyers, Chris Nelson, Paul Randazzo. Back 9 winners, 2nd Place: Mike Lester, Darrell Jones, Mike Cottle, Mike Savastio. The overall Closest to the Pin winner was Ed Moffett. The winning teams all received special golf gifts.

Save-the-Date for Operation Our Town's 7th Annual Golf Tournament that will be held on Tuesday, September 17, 2019 at Park Hills Golf Club and promises to be bigger and better than last year! Golfers will still have the choice of an 8:00am or 1:00pm tee time. Sheetz will also be providing a delicious breakfast and lunch for morning and afternoon golfers to enjoy before they tee off, so come hungry! We will also be doing another exciting \$5,000 putting contest for golfers!

Please consider supporting Operation Our Town through our annual golf tournament, as it has become one of our major fundraisers. The money raised from this tournament goes towards funding law enforcement and prevention programs aimed at reducing drugs and crime in Blair County. Please contact Shawna Hoover at (814) 296-8730 or shawna@operationourtown.org for more details on how you can support this year's tournament!

# OPIOID CRISIS REQUIRES COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

The opioid epidemic has taken a catastrophic toll on communities across the state – including many neighborhoods right in our own backyard. This crisis is not restricted to urban areas. In fact, most of us can name at least one person who has been affected by addiction within our own circle of friends and family. Over the past several years, new laws have been added to the books to limit opioid prescriptions written in emergency rooms, protect Good Samaritans who seek help for overdose victims, help addicted inmates get clean, and make life-saving medications more widely available to those who need them. Additional funding was also included in the budget to support 20 treatment centers to help individuals who are struggling due to heroin and opioid addiction.

During the 2017-18 Legislative Session, I also supported passage of new laws to encourage the use of existing beds in health care facilities for detoxification and treatment, improve opioid abuse education in schools, and establish uniform standards for the operation of addiction

recovery houses. These new laws are a strong first step in limiting the damage of this crisis, but much work remains to be done to protect vulnerable members of our communities. As we look ahead to the 2019-20 Legislative Session, a number of measures



have been proposed that will help us take the next steps toward ending the scourge of heroin and opioid addiction in Pennsylvania.

I am cosponsoring a bill that would give prosecutors additional tools to punish drug dealers who cause serious bodily injuries. Law enforcement and emergency responders have seen a

dramatic increase in the number of overdose cases related to heroin laced with other powerful opiates, including fentanyl. Overdose cases that do not result in death often lead to permanent injuries or impairments.

The bill would ensure local prosecutors can hold drug dealers more accountable for the damage they cause by establishing a second-degree felony offense in these cases.

I am also supporting legislation that would amend the Pennsylvania Constitution to include a crime victims' bill of rights, known as Marsy's Law. The bill would ensure that the rights of victims are protected every bit as vigorously as the rights of the accused.

There is no one solution to help address every aspect of the disease, from identification, to treatment, to recovery. It is a complex problem that requires a broad and determined approach. I am hopeful that by passing these bills, we can ensure better treatment of patients suffering from addiction and tougher penalties against the people who are profiting from the suffering of others.

# REP. JOYCE

Continued from A1

illegal drug traffickers is one way we are already doing so. Bolstering cooperation with the Blair County Drug Task Force to disrupt the Baltimore to Altoona heroin pipeline should be considered as well.

As a member of Congress, I will also continue to push for legislation that puts limits on opioid prescriptions and incentivizes the use of drop boxes. And visiting our schools

to educate students on how truly dangerous these drugs can be will be something I promise to do often. These are only some solutions. I urge all of you to come to my office and share your ideas. If you are having a community roundtable on the subject, I would welcome an invitation. I look forward to joining you to curb this crisis and make our neighborhoods safer.

# Drug Prosecutor

Continued from A3

violence, gun crimes, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft cases. Additionally, the District Attorney's Office continues to work closely with police and the coroner's office to aggressively investigate, charge, and prosecute drug delivery resulting in death cases. Law enforcement and the District Attorney's Office have been successful in investigating the chain of command for several of those drug organizations, such that the suppliers were also arrested and charged

with drug delivery resulting in death. Additionally, ADA Jacobson and ADA Nichole Smith worked with Sgt. Merritts of the Altoona Police Department to develop a human trafficking case from an initial arrest involving armed robbery and drug trafficking. While several of the cases are still pending, the first codefendant recently entered a guilty plea to all charges for a sentence of eight to twenty years, representing Blair County's first successful human trafficking conviction.

# 2018 GRANT RECIPIENTS

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town holds a grant cycle once a year to support programs aimed at the education and prevention of drug use in Blair County. All nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies are eligible for grant consideration.

The 2019 Grant Cycle will open on May 1, 2019 with a deadline for grant applications on June 7, 2019. Applicants have the option of using the "\$2,999 & Under" or "\$3,000 & Above" grant applications to apply for funding. For more information, please visit [www.operationourtown.org](http://www.operationourtown.org) and click on the Grants tab on the homepage.

A total of over \$53,000 in grants were awarded by Operation Our Town during the 2018 Grant Cycle to the following programs:

- Altoona Area Public Library: De-tangle with Zentangle
- Altoona Area School District: A.A.S.D. C.H.O.I.C.E.S. (Choosing Healthy Options In Character, Education, and Sports)
- Altoona Area School District ELECT Program: ELECT Program Workshops & Groups
- Altoona Area School District Foundation: Project SOAR (Study, Overcome, Achieve, Reward)
- Blair Regional YMCA: Family Y-Nites
- Booker T. Washington Revitalization

- Corporation: Iuzzolino Park Revitalization
- Central Blair Recreation & Park Commission: Youth Sports Program Supplies & Equipment
- Child Advocates of Blair County: Choices Summer Program
- Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation: After School & Summer Program
- Hollidaysburg Area School District: Safe Schools Hotline
- Joshua House: Cross-Town Basketball
- Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church: Taking Control
- N.E.W.S. Worthy Network: FAITH Foundation Recovery House Work Services Program
- Refuge Youth Network: Wild Ones (Outdoor Adventure Trips)
- The Door Student Services: The Door Gamers & Programmers Club
- The Nehemiah Project: Hope Community Redevelopment & Renewal
- The ROCK: Reaching Out to Community Kids
- United Way of Blair County's Family Resource Center – Parents as Teachers Program and Make Parenting a Pleasure Parenting Class



# Healthy Blair County Coalition

By Coleen Heim, Director

The Healthy Blair County Coalition (HBCC) is a partnership of local individuals and organizations working to promote the social, economic, emotional, and physical well-being of our community. The Steering Committee collaborates with a broader group of community stakeholders on whom the community decisions would have an impact, who had an interest in the effort, who represented diverse sectors of the community, and who were likely to be involved in developing and implementing strategies and activities. Currently, there are 132 community partners who represent individuals and organizations such as social services, government, planning, public health, education, hospitals, community foundations, healthcare providers/behavioral health, businesses, economic development, criminal justice, libraries, drug and alcohol, health insurance/managed care, media, recreation, etc. These community partners have contributed by participating in the needs assessment, attending meetings, joining work groups and committees, funding and sponsorships,

promotion of HBCC, and/or participating/sponsoring programs and activities that support the strategies identified in the community health needs assessment. One of our guiding principles is to utilize the “collective impact” concept as we move forward, in which a highly structured collaborative effort can achieve substantial impact on large scale social problems. In 2010, based on the County Health Ranking Report, Blair County was ranked 63 out of 67 counties for being unhealthy. In 2018, we improved to 45.



However, no one organization or agency has the resources to improve the overall health of our county, but through our community working together, we can make a difference. In 2019, our fourth community needs assessment report will be shared with the community. The report will include community and household challenges that focus on: economics, education,

environment, health, housing, leisure activity, safety, social, transportation and other. In addition, we will have a perspective on the strengths of our neighborhoods and the best and worst things about Blair County. The following highlights the activities and accomplishments of each work group or committee that has been meeting regularly to address the challenges and issues that were identified in the needs assessment. **The Let's Move Blair County Committee** is implementing programs/activities and collaborating with other agencies to address obesity, encourage physical activity, and impact the incidence of diabetes. For the third year, a Let's Move Blair County Day at the Altoona Curve was held on Sunday, May 6, 2018. This event continues to expand with a health fair on the concourse, activities throughout the game, and crowning the county winner of the Corporate Wellness Challenge. In collaboration with South

Hills School of Business & Technology, an interactive Active Living Brochure/Map was developed and 10,000 copies were distributed throughout the county. It includes resources and activities in Blair County. As a follow-up, we have just launched a Daily Do Challenge on our Facebook page. HBCC supports the efforts of the Blair County Planning Commission to increase opportunities for physical activity by creating walking routes through a project called WalkWorks. In addition, HBCC collaborates with the Blair County Conservation District and the Urban Ag Network. Each of our three local hospitals, as well as other community agencies, provide classes/programs on healthier eating, physical activity, diabetes education, and stress reduction. There are many opportunities to help our community become healthier and one example was the Healthy Halloween Harvest Festival which was held on Sunday, October 28, 2018. Finally, we are in the process of developing an Active Living/Steps Challenge Program for the spring of 2019. In collaboration with the Healthy Blair County Coalition, the Blair County Chamber of Commerce created a **Workplace Wellness Committee**. The purpose is to encourage businesses to become part of the wellness movement and share resources

to develop or enhance current workplace wellness programs. The Workplace Wellness Committee has hosted seven Wake Up to Wellness events. We are continuing the Corporate Wellness Challenge that began in 2014 by the Tyrone Regional Health Network and the Northern Blair County Recreation Center. Last year, there were 25 businesses with approximately 435 employees that lost a total of 3,421 pounds. The **Mental Health Work Group** is addressing unmet needs and working to improve issues related to mental health services for children and adolescents. Members of the work group are hosting Community Conversations about Mental Health. These conversations provide an opportunity for people to learn about mental health issues, including breaking down misperceptions, and promoting recovery and healthy communities. In addition, the work group developed a training based on the Columbia-Suicide Assessment Tool. The Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) supports suicide risk assessment through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask. The answers help users identify whether someone is at risk for suicide, assess the severity and immediacy of that risk, and gauge the level of support that the person

*Continued on A14*

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## Operation Our Town Community Revitalization Roundtable Report

By Patrick Miller, Executive Vice President, Altoona Blair County Development Corporation

Operation Our Town's Community Revitalization Roundtable works to facilitate partnerships between the community, business, and our many urban neighborhoods to address the issues related to blight and disinvestment. Members come together in many different forums and groups to discuss strategies and tools that either exist or could be developed to revitalize core neighborhoods. In 2018, momentum carried over with the creation of the City Land Bank and the formal designation of the City's Redevelopment Authority to serve as the administrative entity to the Land Bank. The passage of recent legislation in Harrisburg allowed this designation to occur. In 2019, official actions will be taken by the City of Altoona, the County of Blair, and the Altoona Area School District to ratify the formation of this very important tool to help with the fight on blight and property disinvestment.

On a lighter note, revitalization and development of properties in the City's Central Business District continues with a lot of positive results. Recently, the unveiling of the Cooper building facade by the Colombo family revealed how attention to detail and the desire to preserve the historic fabric of buildings in downtown can create an architectural

gem with a building that not long ago probably could have been demolished without much concern. The same holds true with the opening of the bakery a block up the avenue and the anticipated opening of the brewery/brick oven pizzeria in 2019. Both buildings are being restored, maintaining the unique architectural features that were uncovered during the exterior demolition phase. Discussions continue about the possible daylighting of the former Gables Department Store building on 11th Avenue. And the most recent announcement by the Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation that the organization approved the sale of the former Downtown Drug building site to Penny Properties, which opens the door for the development of a new mixed-use commercial/residential development on the site. All exciting community revitalization news.

In closing, and as I mentioned in the last roundtable update, the link between a healthy, safe, and vibrant community is inseparable to the quality and function of its built environment. Communities that invest in and plan for the best possible place-based outcomes are the communities that are realizing higher rates of investment, talent attraction, and overall economic and social revitalization.

## Operation Our Town K-12 Education Roundtable Annual Report

Co-Chairs: Cathy Harlow, Superintendent of Schools Tyrone Area School District and Robert Gildea, Superintendent of Schools Hollidaysburg Area School District

The Operation Our Town K-12 Roundtable, consisting of superintendents from the seven Blair County School Districts, focused on a number of initiatives during the 2018 calendar year. Though the use of drugs and alcohol and its devastating effects continues to be a point of emphasis, a renewed focus on addressing the underlying wellness needs of our students in order to give them the skills they need to make positive choices in their future was the point of emphasis throughout the year.

In a continuing effort to ensure school safety and student wellness needs are quickly identified, six Blair County schools implemented the Safe Schools Helpline. This anonymous 24-hour hotline enables anyone to call in a concern regarding school safety or the personal safety of a student who may be considering self-harm. The hotline also has a “live counselor” component so that a student in crisis has access to a trained counselor that he/she can speak with 24 hours a day. Depending on the severity of the concern,

the content of the concern is forwarded to a school representative, local law enforcement, or both. The K-12 Roundtable is very appreciative of the support provided by Operation Our Town to initiate this worthwhile endeavor. The seven Blair County schools worked together to hold a countywide in-service day at Altoona Area School District in October. Teachers from all seven Blair County School Districts started the day with a presentation by motivational speaker Ed Gerety. Ed teaches the life skills that are essential for our youth to develop as leaders in school and in life. These skills include respect, character, gratitude, leadership, attitude, and making a difference. Ed also met with student leaders from all districts, emphasizing the importance of making good choices and having a positive impact on your school community.

Work continues with the Blair County Truancy Task Force. Through 2018, district representatives continued to work collaboratively with Children, Youth, and Families as well as Blair

County judges and district magistrates to further develop a unified plan to reduce chronic absenteeism. Finally, the 2018 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) is administered to 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th grade students across the commonwealth every other year. The survey includes questions about drug use, gambling, depression, violence, bullying, and school/community engagement. Though drug use has tapered off or decreased in a number of areas, the use of vaping devices both regionally and state-wide are nearly twice the national average. A number of districts across Blair County have been working with Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships to educate parents and students on the trend and the harmful effects of vaping. The PAYS survey also illuminated the growing number of students who indicate thoughts of depression and disconnect within their communities. Districts have been working closely with area agencies to explore ways to better meet the wellness needs of our students.



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# BUSINESS

## OOT Pharmacy Roundtable

By Greg Drew, R.Ph., President, Value Drug Company

I'm very excited to relate the Pharmacy Roundtable's accomplishments during 2018. I would like to start by thanking the Operation Our Town Board of Directors for their unconditional support of our work and thank the Pharmacy Roundtable members that faithfully arrive at our 7:15 AM meetings every month. Most importantly, I would like to thank Shawna Hoover, Operation Our Town Executive Coordinator, for keeping us moving and fastidiously tracking our progress.

The Roundtable exists to perpetuate pharmacy's role in the opioid crisis, bringing the strength in numbers of community pharmacists in controlling diversion of opioid drugs which otherwise would be available for illicit use and provide opportunities for addiction. Our Roundtable is comprised of pharmacists, medical prescribers,

nurses, law enforcement professionals, addiction treatment professionals, and legislators dedicated to our principles, working collaboratively to help reduce the improper distribution of opioids and addiction.

As always, we believe that it is important to note findings of the Annual DEA National Drug Threat Assessment:

**Drug poisoning deaths continue to be the leading cause of injury death in the United States; they are currently at their highest ever recorded level and, every year since 2011, have outnumbered deaths by firearms, motor vehicle crashes, suicide, and homicide. In 2016, approximately 174 people died every day from drug poisoning. The opioid threat (controlled prescription drugs, synthetic opioids, and heroin) has reached epidemic levels and currently shows no signs of abating, affecting**

**large portions of the United States. Meanwhile, as the ongoing opioid crisis justly receives national attention, the methamphetamine threat remains prevalent; the cocaine threat has rebounded; new psychoactive substances (NPS) are still challenging; and the domestic marijuana situation continues to evolve. Controlled Prescription Drug (CPD) abuse, specifically of opioid analgesics, has been linked to the largest number of overdose deaths in the United States every year since 2001. Deaths related to CPDs, cocaine, psychostimulants with abuse potential, and heroin all continue to rise. However, 2016 was the first year deaths from synthetic opioids (other than methadone), the category that includes fentanyl, has been higher than deaths from other illicit drugs.**

Our work at the Pharmacy Roundtable during 2018 has continued our mission to reduce the available supply of opioid prescription drugs from the normal distribution channels associated with prescribing and dispensing of

these agents in the community. We have focused awareness and education efforts to prescribers and pharmacists of the opioid crisis and the roles that they can play to help control the problem. We have also provided community outreach presentations to community groups describing the issues and how it affects our communities.

We enhanced our drug disposal efforts further in 2018 in a couple different ways. Firstly, the number of drug disposal locations increased, bringing on two new locations, at the Walgreens in Altoona and the State Police barracks in Hollidaysburg. At Value Drug Company, we worked with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office to distribute Deterra medication disposal bags to pharmacies in 16 counties, including Blair County, to be made available to patients with drug disposal needs. This project provides options for patients no longer requiring a prescription opioid.

We also helped to facilitate a research project with the Blair County

Drug and Alcohol Program organization, the University of Pittsburgh Research Unit, and the National Chain Drug Stores Association Foundation to assess the ability of pharmacists to provide assessment and intervention services with opioid using patients. This effort, known as Project Lifeline, is ongoing and several of our local pharmacies are participating, including four Thompson Pharmacy locations (Chestnut Avenue, Broad Avenue, Downtown Altoona, Hollidaysburg), Duncansville Pharmacy, two Giant Eagle pharmacy locations, and Community Pharmacy in Tyrone.

Our efforts will continue educating pharmacists, prescribers, patients, and the media, on the risks of prescription opioid medications, as well as community awareness of the issues facing us.

Thanks once again to our tireless committee members, arriving monthly at 7:15 AM on a Friday, to make our community a better place to live.

## Central PA Landlord Association

By Bill Kitt, President

The Central PA Landlord Association (CPLA) is growing and making a difference in our community. We encourage all landlords to join to help continue our success in supporting and educating landlords. There are many benefits to joining the Landlord Association, but the biggest benefit is landlords helping landlords.

The CPLA is changing the image of today's landlord. We care about safe, affordable housing, while maintaining housing for our neighborhoods and our tenants. Our goal is to provide landlords with the knowledge, resources, and tools they need to succeed. We offer our landlords a library of documents that cover policies, regulations, and compliance. Our landlords meet once a month to hear guest speakers such as attorneys, magistrates, fair housing representatives, etc. The CPLA also has an active Pennsylvania Realty Owners Association (PROA) representative who provides updates on pending legislation that affects our landlords locally and statewide.

We believe better landlords help build and maintain better communities. Therefore, we are proactive in our efforts in working with local municipalities and interest groups to provide our support in their efforts. Our relationship with Operation Our Town has been beneficial in coordinating landlord workshops, roundtable meetings, and reaching all segments of the community.

This year, we partnered with the Operation Our Town Northern Blair Roundtable to bring a mini half-day

landlord educational workshop to Tyrone on April 13, 2018. Over 90 people were in attendance. Topics included landlord/tenant responsibilities and lease enforcement, property maintenance, how to file for possession of a property, running a criminal and credit check prior to a lease, having a solid lease with correct language, and warning signs of illegal activity.

Our annual full-day landlord educational workshop was held on November 2, 2018. There were over 70 landlords in attendance. The workshop was a joint effort between Operation Our Town, Altoona Housing Authority, and the Central PA Landlord Association. The topics included:

- Magisterial District Judge FAQ
- Rental Inspection Checklists
- Veterans Housing & Homelessness
- Fair Housing Regulations
- Signs of Illegal Drug Activity
- Prepared Renters Program
- Eviction Process
- Mold Identification
- Pest Infestation/Bed Bugs
- Fire Safety Tips
- Landlord Relationship with Adult Probation & Parole Office

Each topic was presented by professionals in their field. There was time for questions

and answers, which was a valuable tool for landlords. Speakers interacted with the landlords. It was very beneficial to all that attended. We will have another educational landlord workshop in the fall of 2019. It will be advertised and posted on our website. All landlords should try to attend.

We also developed, in cooperation with Operation Our Town, a Quick-Tip Resource Guide for landlords. The Resource Guide is a valuable tool that connects landlords to resources related to landlords.

The following topics are listed in our guide with information and contact numbers. The guide is posted on our website.

- Blair County Municipalities
- Notice of Fair Housing

- Drug Activity-Rental Properties
- Section 8 Housing
- Student Housing
- Disability Resources
- Veterans
- Central PA Landlord Association
- PA 211 information
- Blair County Medication Collection Box locations

Check out our website at [CentralPaLandlords.com](http://CentralPaLandlords.com). The CPLA residential listings website allows landlords to post residential and/or commercial property for sale or rent. The student housing website connects student housing landlords with students looking for off-campus housing.

Benefits of becoming a CPLA member include:

- Online rental listings
- Online business directory
- Extensive online

- document library
- Membership to Johnstown Credit Bureau
- Credit checks
- Background checks
- Collection services
- Issues addressed with local government
- Educational workshops
- Membership to PROA
- Legislative updates
- Monthly meetings
- Address current issues
- Informative and educational speakers
- Tenant database

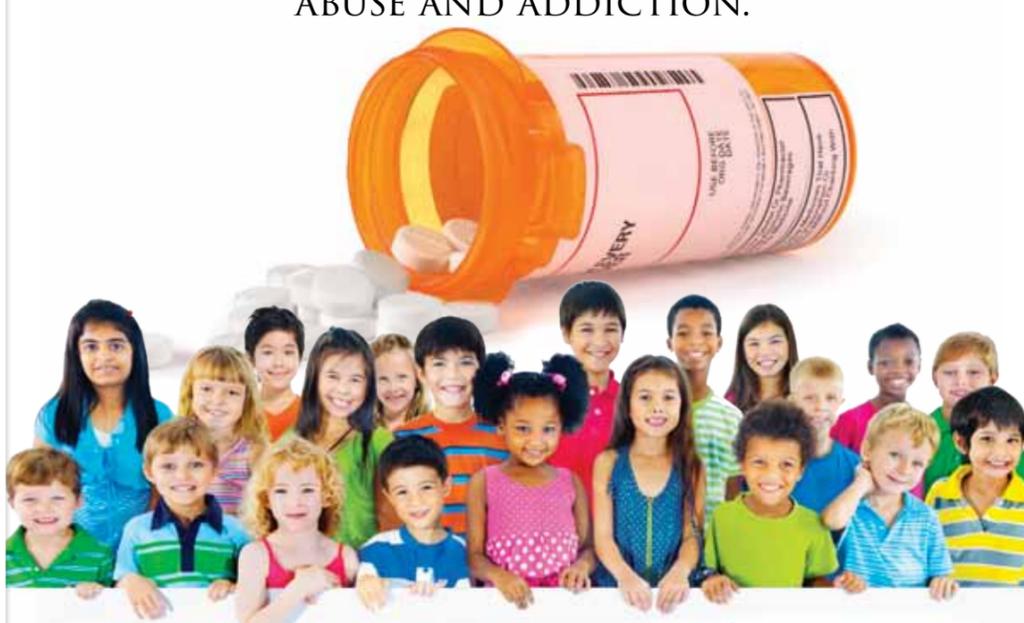
I would like to encourage all landlords to join our association.

Monthly meetings are held on the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Contact the CPLA: [www.centralpalandlords.com](http://www.centralpalandlords.com)  
William Kitt, President  
814-695-2138

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REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY

# PUSH OUT THE PUSHER

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**693-3020**

# LOCAL

## 2018 Blair County Drug Collection Boxes Data

LOCATION	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	TOTAL
ALTOONA POLICE DEPT.	168.75 lbs.	166.87 lbs.	143.75 lbs.	192 lbs.	671.37 lbs.
HOLLIDAYSBURG POLICE DEPT.	92 lbs.	115.5 lbs.	141 lbs.	67 lbs.	415.5 lbs.
LOGAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPT.	24.5 lbs.	48 lbs.	34 lbs.	21.5 lbs.	128 lbs.
TYRONE POLICE DEPT.	59.75 lbs.	61.75 lbs.	112 lbs.	60.5 lbs.	294 lbs.
TOTAL	345 lbs.	392.12 lbs.	430.75 lbs.	341 lbs.	1508.87 lbs.

### 2018 Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

In addition to the main golf tournament, Operation Our Town held its 5th Annual Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament at Park Hills Golf Club for high school golf teams from Blair and surrounding counties. The Student Golf Tournament was rescheduled and held on October 8, 2018 due to rain on the originally scheduled date in September.

To start off the event, Sheetz provided a delicious lunch for all student golfers and coaches, and Operation Our Town provided gifts for the student golfers. Dinner was held after golf, which included pizza provided by Domino's, wings cooked by Travis Seymore of Alto Markets, hot dogs, and a sundae bar provided by The Meadows Frozen Custard of Greenwood.

The Student Golf

teams. A \$2,500 grant was to be awarded to the winning boys and girls team's school district to be used for a current or new school program that is aimed at the education and prevention of drug use. The winning boys team was Tyrone Area High School and the winning girls team was Central Cambria High School. Central Cambria and Tyrone High Schools will both use their grant in February 2019

"prison to the Olympics" as a BMX racer. He went from a life of addiction and crime early in his life to today, where Tony is a changed man and inspires so many to live their life with purpose. Tony has dedicated his life to bringing awareness around the country, describing how dangerous prescription pill and heroin abuse are.

The 6th Annual Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament will be held on

year's tournament will include the return of the \$2,500 grant to the winning boys and girls team's school district to be used for a current or new school program that is aimed at the education and prevention of drug use. Businesses also have the opportunity to sponsor a school district of their choice for \$500, which will include signage displayed at the event on September 16th.

We look forward to continuing the Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament to educate students on the mission of Operation Our Town. If your business would like to sponsor a school district in the Student Golf Tournament, please contact Shawna Hoover at (814) 296-8730 or shawna@operationourtown.org for more details on how you can support this year's tournament!



A total of 108 students from 17 school districts participated!

Tournament included an exciting prize for the winning

on motivational speaker, Tony Hoffman. Tony has gone from

Monday, September 16, 2019 at Park Hills Golf Club. This

you can support this year's tournament!

### CONTINUING THE FIGHT ON BLIGHT

By Mayor Matt Pacifico, City of Altoona

Blight takes a toll on communities in a number of ways. Statistics show that blighted, abandoned property can be a danger to the public and lead to an increase in crime. It has a negative effect on surrounding property values, which impacts both adjacent property owners and the community as a whole with the resulting loss in real estate tax revenue. The City dedicates significant resources on enforcement actions against the owners of these properties.

The City has made good progress this year in its efforts. When I last reported to you on this, the City's Blight Task Force had completed its report in March 2018, which prioritized strategies for future efforts. These included establishing a land bank, expanding the City's Home Repair and

Rental Rehabilitation Assistance programs, expanding implementation of Act 90 of 2010 which allows the City to revoke permits and lien personal and real estate assets of property owners who have walked away from their properties, and engagement with the County's Tax Claim Bureau relative to the sale of properties at tax sale. The full report can be accessed on the City's website at [www.altoonapa.gov](http://www.altoonapa.gov) and click the link for City of Altoona Blight Task Force Comprehensive Blight Strategy Plan.

A land bank is one tool that local governments may use to return vacant, abandoned, and tax delinquent properties to productive use. Act 33, adopted by the PA legislature

in 2018, grants redevelopment authorities the same powers allocated to land banks under the PA Land Bank Act. Land banks are independent public entities, created by municipalities, to expedite the process of acquiring and rehabilitating blighted, dilapidated, and abandoned properties. Act 33 allows those land bank powers to be conferred on a redevelopment authority, thereby eliminating duplication and costs. I introduced legislation in September 2018 to designate the City of Altoona Redevelopment Authority to act as a land bank. This legislation was adopted by City Council on October 10, 2018 and the City became the first municipality in

the Commonwealth to designate its redevelopment authority to act as its land bank. With the assistance of the City's consultant, Winnie Branton of Branton Strategies, over the coming months, the Authority will be developing policies and procedures for the land bank's operation.

Finally, I am proud to report on the success of the Altoona Community Clean Up Day, held on October 6, 2018. My office spearheaded a partnership with Operation Our Town, Blair Companies, United Way of Blair County, and Altoona-Blair County Development Corporation to organize nearly 140 volunteers

from the community to assist homeowners who were unable to perform basic property maintenance projects on their homes due to various circumstances. The outpouring of support from businesses that donated, the churches that assembled large groups of volunteers, and all of the other organizations and individuals who volunteered was amazing to see! Without everyone's commitment, the event would not have been possible and for that, I am truly appreciative.

We all should be proud of our community and I remain committed to working with you to continue to move the City forward!

Proudly supports Operation Our Town and our local business community

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BEFORE



AFTER

# OPIOIDS: HOW TO COPE

Continued from A1

Avinza), Demerol, Tramadol, and Codeine, to mention a few.

The National Institute on Drug Addiction provides a view of the differences between dependence, addiction, and tolerance in an opioid use disorder. Physical dependence happens as a result of the physical change from chronic exposure to pain medications or heroin. Addiction involves the changes in the brain that include the dependency on the drug, but is distinguished by compulsive drug seeking and use despite the negative consequences.

Tolerance presents itself when increased doses are needed in order to get the same effect and is accompanied by dependence. When a person is physically dependent on an opioid (pain medication/heroin) they will begin to experience unpleasant physical symptoms when the medication/heroin is reduced or stopped abruptly.

### Blair County Physical Healthcare Response:

As part of a statewide federal grant, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships is partnering with several of our physical healthcare providers to incorporate screening for substance use disorders into three physical health practices (Empower3, UPMC Altoona Family Physicians, and UPMC Healthy Beginnings Pregnancy Care Center). The model called Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) provides an organized workflow in the clinic to screen patients for alcohol and other drug use at each appointment. The model provides for the early identification of substance use that may need to be addressed and/or is interfering in the

successful treatment of other physical health issues. Physical health providers are trained on how to do a brief intervention with the patient to determine their willingness to address their substance use issues. The model helps support the integration of addressing the disease of addiction in a safe, compassionate, and supportive environment. SBIRT provides recognition of substance use disorders as a primary health concern and is a preventive model to reinforce nonuse/abuse lifestyles. It results in reduction of use of alcohol and other illicit drugs as a result of the brief intervention and referral to treatment. Once a patient agrees to receive specialized addiction treatment, they are referred to a Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnership drug and alcohol case manager who is operating within the physical health clinic. The case manager meets with the patient and helps the patient navigate the referral to treatment and supports them throughout the process. Since March 2017 and through November 2018, the following patients have been screened, received brief interventions, and referred for care:

Screened	15,818
Brief Intervention	1004
Early Intervention/Treatment	311

Without the incorporation of this model at each of these sites, the patients may not have been identified and their overall health may have been impacted by their substance use. Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships is thankful for the leadership at each of these sites who have recognized

the need to be involved in the project and provide a holistic approach to healthcare.

### The Current Picture in Blair County:

Opioids are the primary drug of choice at time of admission of Medicaid eligible clients in Blair County. In fiscal year 2017-2018, our Medicaid data showed 2,886 distinct members admitted for substance use disorders. 1,819 admissions (63%) had an opioid use disorder. One group of individuals who are underserved and less likely to receive an intervention in our community are our older populations. Less than 20% of admissions are age 44 and above. This is of concern because data shows they are at risk based on prescribing data and overdose data. Currently, our prescription drug data from January 2016-August 2017 identified the 44-70 year-old population receiving the highest volume of two specific pain medications. In conjunction, our overdose data also shows 24% of fatal overdoses are over the age of 50. There are many possibilities as to why we are seeing this underserved trend. Some of it may be perception and stigma in relationship to the overall understanding of addiction. Whatever the reason, we want to encourage families to seek support through their physicians and the community resources. You are not alone, and Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships is available to assist you in navigating the community resources.

### Methamphetamine

In the past year, Blair County has seen an emerging trend of methamphetamine, as well as cocaine in our communities. In the past, we would

hear occasional reports of methamphetamine use (20 cases a year) or methamphetamine labs being discovered in a home. The current trend of distribution reported by local law enforcement appears to be through internet purchases mailed into the community. We have seen a 300% increase in reports of methamphetamine use at time of assessment. This is a drug that is being used along with other substances. The following information provides some education about methamphetamine, including how it is used, what products are used to produce it, and some of the physical consequences of use:

- Methamphetamine, or meth, is a highly addictive synthetic chemical that acts as a stimulant.
- It is snorted, injected, smoked, or swallowed.
- It is not to be confused with methadone, a synthetic opiate used to rehabilitate heroin users.
- Most of the methamphetamine abused in the USA comes from foreign or domestic super-labs. It is made from easily accessed legal ingredients such as battery acid and anti-freeze.
- It can also be made in small, illegal laboratories, where its production endangers the people in the labs, their neighbors, and the environment. It is a high level bio-hazard.
- Symptoms of use include: increased respiration, rapid heart rate, irregular heartbeat, increased blood pressure, and hyperthermia (when the body overheats), and a severe "crash" when it wears off. The skin of a user often has multiple acne-like sores.
- Other consequences of use include: unhealthy weight loss, severe dental problems, anxiety, confusion,

insomnia, mood disturbances, and violent, aggressive behavior.

- Psychotic features include paranoia, visual, and auditory hallucinations.

• There can be damage to blood vessels in the brain which causes structural and functional changes in areas of the brain associated with emotion and memory.

- Use can cause a stroke, heart attack, and death.
- Street names include: Speed, meth, crystal meth, chalk, ice, crystal, crank, and tweak.

### You Are Not Alone

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships can support families and individuals who are seeking help for a substance use disorder. Our services are free to the individuals and families. We offer case management services that will provide a free evaluation, navigate any insurance issues, and make referrals to treatment services. We manage the public funding to assist those individuals who do not have insurance seeking treatment. In addition, we have many support programs to help navigate the social service system for such needs as food, housing, mental health, physical health, Medicaid enrollment, and criminal justice involvement. We have intensive case managers that work alongside certified recovery specialists to support the different pathways to recovery. In addition, we provide a family support group called HOPE, a 12-week educational series for family members called BALM (Be a Loving Mirror), SMART recovery groups, and Healing Hearts (grief support group for family members/friends who have lost someone to addiction) at our facility. If you or your loved one needs assistance, please call Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships at (814) 381-0921.

## CENTRAL PA LANDLORD'S ASSOCIATION

625 HAWTHORNE DRIVE  
HOLLIDAYSBURG, PA 16648  
WILLIAM KITT, PRESIDENT  
814-695-2138

The Central PA Landlord's Association (CPLA) is growing and making a difference in our community. We encourage all landlords to join to help continue our success in supporting and educating landlords. There are many benefits to joining the Landlord Association, but the biggest benefit is landlords helping landlords.

CENTRALPALANDLORDS.COM

# Be a Crime Fighter!



**Let's get dangerous and potentially addictive drugs out of homes and off the street!**

Free Medication Drop Boxes are available for you to discard unused medications! The best way to combat drug diversion and abuse is to get drugs away from folks who may be tempted to use or sell them. Drugs discarded into the dropboxes are safely destroyed by law enforcement.

#### Drop Off Locations:

- **Altoona Police Dept.**  
1106 16th Street Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2489  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week
- **Hollidaysburg Police Dept.**  
401 Blair Street Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
(814) 695-3711  
Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 11:00pm
- **Logan Township Police Department**  
100 Chief Logan Circle Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-3364  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- **Tyrone Borough Police Dept.**  
1100 Logan Avenue Tyrone, PA 16686  
(814) 684-1364  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm
- **Walgreens Pharmacy**  
508 E Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 944-3236  
Monday – Friday, 9:00am – 9:00pm  
Saturday, 9:00am – 6:00pm  
Sunday, 10:00am – 6:00pm
- **State Police-Troop G - Hollidaysburg**  
1510 N Juniata St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
(814) 696-6100  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week



#### Project Supported by:



#### Grant-Funded Program Administered by:



## METH | *Continued from A1*

brain strongly reinforces drug-taking behavior, making the user want to repeat the experience.

#### Short-Term Effects

Taking even small amounts of methamphetamine can result in many of the same health effects as those of other stimulants, such as cocaine or amphetamines. These include:

- increased wakefulness and physical activity
- decreased appetite
- faster breathing
- rapid and/or irregular heartbeat
- increased blood pressure and body temperature

#### Long-Term Effects

People who inject methamphetamine are at increased risk of contracting infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. These diseases are transmitted through contact with blood or other bodily fluids. Methamphetamine use can also alter judgment and decision-making, leading to risky behaviors such as unprotected sex, which also increases risk for infection.

Methamphetamine use may worsen the progression of HIV/AIDS and its consequences. Studies indicate that HIV causes more injury to nerve cells and more cognitive problems in people who have HIV and use methamphetamine than it does in people who have HIV and don't use the drug. Cognitive problems are those involved with thinking, understanding, learning, and remembering.

Long-term methamphetamine use has many other negative consequences, including:

- extreme weight loss

- severe dental problems (“meth mouth”)
- intense itching, leading to skin sores from scratching
- anxiety
- confusion
- sleeping problems
- violent behavior
- paranoia - extreme and unreasonable distrust of others
- hallucinations - sensations and images that seem real, though they aren't

In addition, continued methamphetamine use causes changes in the brain's dopamine system that are associated with reduced coordination and impaired verbal learning. In studies of people who used methamphetamine over the long-term, severe changes also affected areas of the brain involved with emotion and memory. This may explain many of the emotional and cognitive problems observed in those who use methamphetamine. Although some of these brain changes may reverse after being off the drug for a year or more, other changes may not recover even after a long period of abstinence. A recent study even suggests that people who used methamphetamine have an increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease, a disorder of the nerves that affects movement.

#### Can a person overdose on methamphetamine?

Yes, a person can overdose on methamphetamine. An overdose occurs when the person uses too much of a drug and has a toxic reaction that results in serious, harmful symptoms or death.

Methamphetamine overdose can lead to stroke, heart attack, or organ problems such as kidney failure, caused by overheating. These conditions can result in death.

#### How can a methamphetamine overdose be treated?

Because methamphetamine overdose often leads to a stroke, heart attack, or organ problems, first responders and emergency room doctors try to treat the overdose by treating these conditions, with the intent of:

- restoring blood flow to the affected part of the brain (stroke)
- restoring blood flow to the heart (heart attack)
- treating the organ problems

#### Is methamphetamine addictive?

Yes, methamphetamine is highly addictive. When people stop taking it, withdrawal symptoms can include:

- anxiety
- fatigue
- severe depression
- psychosis
- intense drug cravings

#### How is methamphetamine manufactured?

Most of the methamphetamine abused in this country is manufactured in “superlabs” here or usually in Mexico. But the drug is also easily made in small clandestine laboratories, with relatively inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients such as pseudoephedrine, a common ingredient in cold medications. To curb production of methamphetamine, Congress passed the Combat Methamphetamine Epidemic Act in 2005, which requires that pharmacies and other retail stores keep logs of purchases of products containing pseudoephedrine and limits the amount of those products an individual can purchase per

day. A few states have even made pseudoephedrine available only with a prescription. Mexico has also tightened its restrictions on this and other methamphetamine precursor chemicals. But manufacturers adapt to these restrictions via small or large-scale “smurfing” operations: obtaining pseudoephedrine from multiple sources, below the legal thresholds, using multiple false identifications. Manufacturers in Mexico are also increasingly using a different production process (called P2P, from the precursor chemical phenyl-2-propanone) that does not require pseudoephedrine.

Methamphetamine production also involves a number of other easily obtained chemicals that are hazardous, such as acetone, anhydrous ammonia (fertilizer), ether, red phosphorus, and lithium. Toxicity from these chemicals can remain in the environment around a methamphetamine production lab long after the lab has been shut down, causing a wide range of damaging effects to health. Because of these dangers, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency has provided guidance on cleanup and remediation of methamphetamine labs.

#### What can citizens do to get involved/help?

Educate yourself on the signs of drug activity. The thing about drug operations is that they can be set up anywhere, anytime. Occasionally, it's not just police officers that work to find the bad guys. It may all boil down to a tip given by an observant resident. Here are some things to watch for regarding suspicious neighborhood drug activity:

- There's an unusually large amount of traffic, often at strange hours. This traffic is usually

quick, and the people stay only a short time. Sometimes they don't even go in at all; instead, someone comes out to meet them.

- Observable exchanges of items, especially where money is visible.
- Ability to afford items without a job - cars, TVs, etc.
- Neighbors will continually host parties and appear to be under the influence of drugs.
- Repeated flickering of cigarette lighters.
- Windows are blocked out, preventing neighbors from seeing in.
- Finding drugs or drug paraphernalia (syringes, pipes, baggies, etc.) in the area.
- Noxious odors coming from around houses or buildings, such as musty or chemical smells.
- Houses or buildings where extreme security measures seem to have been taken.

After a report is provided, it may not always result in a drug arrest, as some tips simply lead to dead ends. At times, it takes sufficient evidence or a prolonged investigation, so be patient and keep a watchful, yet inconspicuous eye on suspicious neighbors. Anyone that suspects ongoing drug activity in Blair County should contact the Push Out the Pusher Hotline at (814) 693-3020. You can remain anonymous. If drug activity is spotted in real time, residents should try and get descriptions of people, vehicles, and the direction of travel, and call their local police department or 911.

# Faith-based Roundtable: Knitting Together a Community

By Lisa Hann, Executive Director, Family Services, Inc.

Every day in the news and social media, we see division, discord, and disharmony. We just can't seem to play nice in the sandbox or agree on anything anymore. Lack of cooperation and collaboration seems to have become the new normal, except here in Altoona. On the third Thursday of the month, at 2pm, pastors from several different denominations join with some interested laity, agency representatives, and anyone else who stumbles upon us at Second Avenue United Methodist Church. During this one hour time slot, we devote ourselves to talking about the needs of the community, which includes all of Blair County. We share concerns and newly found resources. We talk about what has been working and what needs help.

No one is an expert on everything, but together we problem solve, brainstorm, and get creative about how we address the impact of the opioid epidemic on our community, the plight of those in recovery facing obstacles, and how we can serve the purpose that God has given each and every one of us in this battle to fight addiction. From these meaningful discussions have

come congregations being trained in how to support their members who are in recovery, as well as still in active addiction. We offer annual Lunch and Learn opportunities to pastors, laity, and interested community members. In May, we offered training on the resources available for Children of Incarcerated Parents. The event offered insight and opportunities for discussion to 40+ attendees. In 2019, we hope to offer information on how the drug epidemic has impacted our foster care system.

If there has ever been a time to bring people of different faiths together, the time is now and the place is Blair County. Attending the Faith-based Roundtable is not a lifelong commitment. People join us for a season and take what they learn back to their churches and communities. New faces appear on a regular basis. All are welcome to come learn, share, and pray with us. Our goal is to prayerfully support the other roundtables and to join together to be a unified faith community that supports those impacted by addiction. To find out more, contact Lisa Hann at lhann@familyservicesinc.net

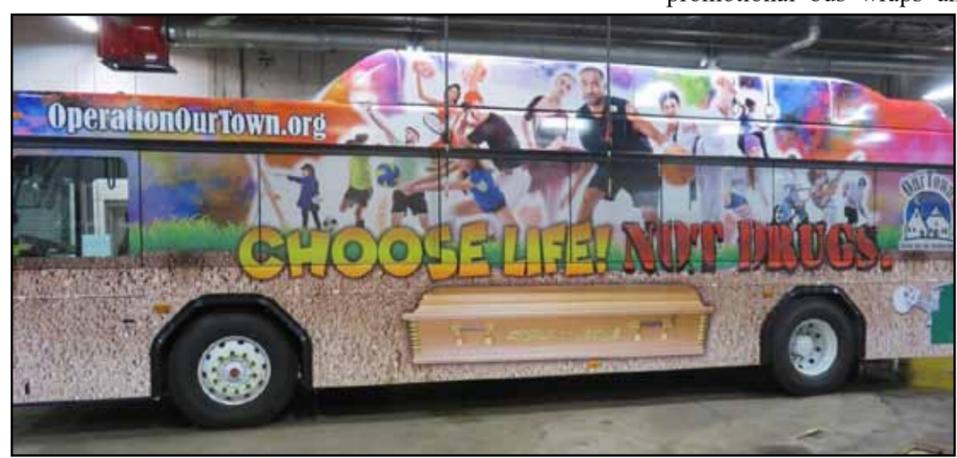
# AMTRAN & OPERATION OUR TOWN UNVEIL NEW BUS WRAP

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town has announced the unveiling of their fourth bus wrap design that appears on an Amtran bus that can be seen throughout Altoona. This year's design features the tagline "Choose Life! Not Drugs" which is illustrated by a positive scene on the top part of the bus depicting youth living active, healthy lives, and the bottom scene depicting a coffin, the negative consequence that can result from doing drugs.

remind the community of the reality that people are dying from drug overdoses in our community and hope that it steers people into making positive choices."

The new bus wrap design made its debut in the Spirit of Christmas Parade in downtown Altoona on November 29, 2018 and is now being utilized in fixed-route service. The other OOT bus wrap with children on the design and



Michael A. Fiore, President of Operation Our Town said, "We focused this design on combatting drugs in our community by showing the contrast between what can happen when you make the right and wrong choices. We wanted to make it a point to

the tagline "The Best Me is Drug Free" was moved to Amtran's Tripper service fleet in January 2019 and provides both morning and afternoon school bus transportation to AASD and BG students during the entirety of the school year. Amtran has been a



# 2018 Early Childhood Education Roundtable Report

By Rodney Green, Leadership & Special Education Consultant

2018 was a milestone year with many key activities and accomplishments for the Early Childhood Education Roundtable.

One accomplishment was the completion of the first ever Blair County Community Needs and Opportunities Assessment. With a significant monetary grant from the Early Learning Investment Commission, we were able to hire a nationally recognized early learning consulting group to conduct a needs assessment. The final product from the assessment process offered some sobering statistics and demographic information such as the following:

- 35% of Blair County's children under the age of 5 reside in at-risk family homes.
- 59% of eligible 3 & 4 year-old children are not enrolled in high quality Pre-K programs.
- Only 40% of Blair County's children under 5 can be served by our existing supply of quality slots.
- Less than 50% of early learning providers meet high quality standards.
- Less than 10% of families with infants and toddlers have access to the county's home visiting programs. All Blair County families with infants and toddlers qualify for this service.

With this new information in hand, the early childhood group worked closely with the consultants and local stakeholders to develop actionable recommendations to address the identified early learning needs. After much discussion, the group settled upon the strategy of raising private funds that could be directly invested to increase the capacity of quality early learning program spots.

To kick-off the effort to create an early learning impact fund, a meeting with a number of local business leaders was held on October 2, 2018 at the Sheetz Campus in Claysburg,

PA. Dan Hoover from Roaring Spring Blank Book Company chaired this initial appeal.



"Dan Hoover asks business leaders to support the Early Learning Impact Fund"

The goal of the meeting was to review the need to establish the Blair County "Early Learning Impact Fund." In essence, the fund would be an endowment fund to make strategic investments in local early learning centers, which will support the transition to becoming a 3 or 4 Keystone Star rated program. This strategy will significantly leverage local funds to increase state funding for local child care and quality early learning. It is estimated that an investment of \$100,000 could accrue an ROI of over \$1.1 million dollars of state funding. Since that October meeting, the fund has collected pledges equaling 65% of the initial \$100,000 goal. The Early Learning Impact Fund will have a separate oversight committee and the funds will reside in the Blair Chamber Foundation.

Another major accomplishment in 2018 was the planning and execution of hosting our third Early Childhood Summit. The Roundtable worked in collaboration with the Blair County Chamber of Commerce and the BASICS Early Childhood Sub-Committee to plan the 2018 Blair County Early Learning Summit, which was held on May 7, 2018 at the Blair County Convention Center. Over 75 early learning and business professionals attended the summit. Once again, Dr. Cameron was the keynote speaker. Dr. Cameron is a Professor, Department

of Psychiatry, University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and an Affiliate Senior Scientist, Oregon National Primate Research Center, Oregon Health and Science University.



"Dr. Judy Cameron presents the keynote speech at the 2018 Early Childhood Summit"

A highlight of Dr. Cameron's presentation was her introduction and overview of a new initiative called Working For Kids: Building Skills. "Working For Kids" is a novel community-based educational program that takes an intergenerational approach to putting children on a positive trajectory for success in school and in life. The training program is designed for parents, teachers, child care workers, and all community members, with a particular focus on teens and senior citizens. The Early Childhood Roundtable sees many possibilities of using this program and is pursuing other grant sources to fund the training sessions.

Finally, the Early Childhood Education Roundtable is looking ahead to 2019. The Roundtable will begin an educational initiative to educate others on the significant and burdensome cost of providing quality child care and early learning. In today's economy, the three highest costs to young families is: 1.) Housing; 2.) Health Care; and 3.) Child Care. This is an area where greater advocacy and educational efforts are needed. In addition, the Roundtable will take the following year to discuss and better understand the definition of "quality" in relation to child care programs.

long-time supporter of Operation Our Town by donating ad space for four promotional bus wraps and



providers, and the community at large.

According to General Manager Eric Wolf, "We are very proud of our participation with Operation Our Town and to unveil their newest bus wrap this year." He continued, "The fact is that anyone can be affected by illegal drugs, regardless of your education, income level, or neighborhood. We can only be successful in fighting this problem by pulling together all of our community's resources."

Amtran is a joint municipal authority of Logan Township and the City of Altoona dating back to 1958. It was created

as a successor to the trolley company, the Altoona & Logan Valley Electric Railway. The organization currently has 47 employees and 26 buses carrying 1,000 people a day (not including the students that are transported for the Altoona Area School District). When you add in the school students, Amtran's ridership is more than 600,000 per year. Amtran is also an important partner for Penn State Altoona, connecting their IvySide and Downtown Campuses. Amtran's funding is a combination of farebox revenue, along with support from federal, state, and local governments.

# REPRESENTATIVE PLANS TO FIGHT ADDICTION IN COMMUNITY

By Representative Jim Gregory

“Just do something Jim. Please!”

Those were the words expressed to me on dozens of occasions this past year while knocking on the doors of the people who live in the 80th House District.

Their pleas were the result of personal losses to addiction involving a family member, a loved one, a good friend or neighbor.

Whether it was on Peggy’s doorstep in Claysburg or the stoop of a Huntingdon County Corrections officer in Antis Township, or on any porch, in any check-out line, any church pew or on any farm in the 80th District, voters asked me to please go to Harrisburg and do something about the opioid epidemic that took their son or daughter too soon.

My story is much like theirs.

Thirty years ago, in June of 1988, I got a call from my mom crying uncontrollably on the other end as she tried to tell me to come home from Altoona quickly. “Your brother Brian is dead,” she said.

He was 26.

My parents are good people. My mom is retired and my dad still works as a plumber to this day at the age of 80. My brother, Brian, my sister, Gwyn, and I didn’t want for anything. But both Brian and I experienced addiction in our lives. His addiction was cocaine. Mine was alcohol. But it could have been anything. I’m nine years sober this Feb. 7.

Now by the grace of God and by the voters of my district I’m a state representative with a job to do. I must work with

all my fellow legislators, the addiction field professionals, and the governor of Pennsylvania to make my voice heard for the sake of those who plead with me to “just do something.”

The Commonwealth has had many well-intentioned

to recovery. But the key issue for me is stigma.

The one over-riding cause of addiction for so many is the fear of asking for help, acknowledging past mistakes, and the willingness to admit to years of living in shame, guilt and embarrassment no matter

sick and tired of being sick and tired.” I know because that is what happened to me.

We, as a community, have done the best we can to recognize the criminal element of drug addiction through efforts of organizations like Operation Our Town.

influences, and how we simply make it through each day without needing our drug of choice.

This can be done by changing how we approach mental health and improve mental wellness. I’m in favor of providing those resources to make a difference. I believe a return on that investment can lead to needing less money for prisons, for children and youth services, and foster care to name a few.

This can also be done by training medical professionals on knowing how to tell someone they have a problem and direct them to counseling. It isn’t easy for some doctors and nurses to tell a patient they have addiction issues. But doctors also need help that allows them more time with patients. We have a critical lack of available physicians in Blair County despite being home to three hospitals.

But no amount of money, counseling, or treatment can change this path of destruction until each of us recognizes in our own family, circle of friends, or classmates how we each play a role in an addict’s downfall.

If you or someone you know is struggling with drugs, alcohol, pornography, sex, gambling or even over work, ask yourself what you might be doing to enable their behavior. You, too, can ask for help.

Take an active role with me in helping solve this problem.

I want to deliver on your pleas to me to DO SOMETHING about addiction in Pennsylvania.



efforts initiated recently to help solve this problem. Much money has been allocated to provide resources for avenues

the consequences.

Only when the pain finally overcomes the fear, will addicts reach out and say, “I’m

their thinking. The disease of thinking affects how we process emotions like anger, how we deal with outside



## Eleventh Street Tower

1100 11th Street  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2011



## Green Avenue Tower

911 Green Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2009



# Altoona Housing Authority

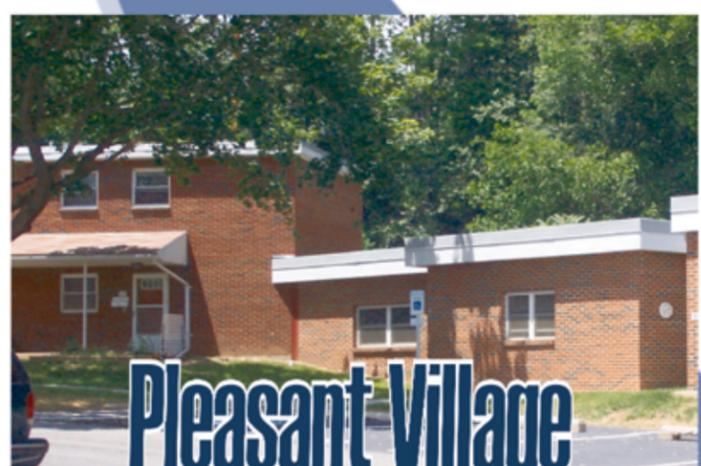
Providing safe and affordable housing for the City of Altoona, Pennsylvania  
Welcoming you to move towards a brighter future with the AHA

2700 Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-2000



## Fairview Hills

1614 1st Street  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2016



## Pleasant Village

2700 Pleasant Valley Boulevard  
Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-2010



Equal Opportunity Housing Provider

We are an Equal Opportunity Housing Provider. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability.



# BLAIR COUNTY COALITION

Continued from A6

needs. These conversations and trainings can take place in schools, businesses, faith-based venues, libraries, senior centers, etc. We are available to schedule either of these programs at your location.

The **Tobacco-Free Work Group** is promoting policies and programs that encourage smoke-free communities (e.g. smoke-free workplaces, clean air ordinances, smoking cessation programs, etc.). The work group developed and distributed a video to provide information and resources for businesses and organizations on how to become 100% tobacco-free workplaces. In collaboration with the Lung Disease Center of Central Pennsylvania, smoking cessation classes are being conducted in local hospitals, businesses, and other organizations. If you are interested in hosting smoking cessation classes, please contact their organization. Seven out of every ten smokers want to quit and smoking cessation programs are successful. For the second year, we hosted a Healthy Resolutions Expo at the Logan Valley Mall. This is different than the typical health fair by selecting vendors that would engage residents to learn about and commit to a healthy resolution such as getting more exercise, quitting tobacco use, drinking more water, eating healthier, scheduling important preventive health care checkups, etc.

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships (BDAP) and their partners have continued to expand the work started through the **Substance Use & Physical Health Coalition** which focuses on the physical health partnerships in our community. The implementation of SBIRT (Screening Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment) which includes substance abuse as an area screened during routine healthcare, has been expanded. As part of the project, physicians and other healthcare workers are

trained to intervene and a protocol for referral to drug and alcohol services was developed. Because of the success of SBIRT in Blair County, BDAP was asked to partner on a two-year national grant to implement SBIRT within pharmacies. Nine pharmacies in Blair County have signed on and received training. There is a 24/7 warm handoff from all Blair County Emergency Departments, Inpatient Hospitals, and the Pregnancy Care Clinic-Healthy Beginning sites for Substance Use Disorders.

The **Bridges Network** was formed to better understand the underlying issues related to poverty in Blair County and to network with other agencies and programs that provide resources for low-income residents. In cooperation with other community partners, the committee continues to conduct poverty simulations and host Bridges Out of Poverty trainings. To date, the work group organized and sponsored eight Poverty Simulation events with over 857 participants and volunteers.

The **Youth Connection Initiative** began when Blair County was one of twelve counties from across the country to be chosen by the National Association of Counties (NACo) in partnership with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation County Health Rankings & Roadmaps Programs to receive community coaching on efforts to reduce childhood poverty with an emphasis on youth connections. Based on the most recent Measure of America Report, 11.7% of youth and young adults ages 16-24 across the country are not in school or working. In Pennsylvania, that number was 10.8%. The data for Blair County indicates that over 1,900 youth and young adults (13.6%) are disconnected from school, the workforce, and our community. A Call to Action Summit on Youth



**Mariska Eash—Realtor**  
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Office: 814-695-4463  
Email: Mariskarealtor@hotmail.com

501 Allegheny Street  
Hollidaysburg Pa 16648

Connections was conducted in October 2017 with over 205 participants from all segments of Blair County attending. The Youth Connection Task Force has created four work

## YOUTH CONNECTION

It's our community's future.

AN INITIATIVE OF HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION

groups that are addressing four different strategies:

- School Attendance and Academic Success
- Workforce Development
- Connecting with Youth through Mentoring
- Prosocial Activities and Community Engagement (Youth Connection Team)

In addition, the task force recognizes the importance of existing school and community interventions. To learn more, please listen to the seven different podcasts that were created and posted on our website. The **Dental Care**

**Work Group** is working with local partners to address the gaps and promote available resources for dental care (adult and pediatric) in Blair County. Their goals include: supporting the establishment of a dental home for children and youth; increase local opportunities for individuals with developmental disabilities to have access to dental care; and educate partners who can share oral health messages with those individuals/organizations working with young children.

The **Data Analysis Work Group** will review and analyze the results of the latest community health needs assessment and assist in the collection and analysis of secondary indicator data. This report will be available in June 2019.

The **Marketing Work Group** is responsible for providing awareness of the Healthy Blair County Coalition, sharing the results of the community health needs assessment, and increasing collaboration and partnerships. Like our Facebook page and

participate in the Daily Do Challenge (facebook.com/healthyblaircountycoalition).

For more information on the Healthy Blair County Coalition and the activities of our work groups, visit www.healthyblaircountycoalition.org. Individuals and organizations can get involved in the following ways:

- Join the HBCC and attend coalition meetings.
- Sign-up and serve on work groups/committees.
- Collaborate and promote HBCC initiatives such as Let's Move Blair County, the Corporate Wellness Challenge, the Youth Connection Initiative, etc.
- Use the Let's Move Blair County on your website, newsletters, etc. (based on usage guidelines).
- Provide funding as feasible.
- Include HBCC in local community efforts.
- Utilize the needs assessment results and our Healthy Communities Institute data.

# The Best ME Is Drug FREE!

## ALTOONA HOUSING AUTHORITY

By Cheryl A. Johns, Executive Director

The Altoona Housing Authority is a Municipal Authority that was formed in 1949 to administer and develop safe, affordable housing for low and moderate income families within the City limits of Altoona. The first development created was Pleasant Village to address the housing shortage following WWII.

The housing inventory for the Authority consists of 532 public housing units, 933 Section 8 voucher units, and 126 non-subsidized units at Pleasant Village, with a staff of 32 employees.

As Co-Chairperson of the Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable, it is extremely important for agencies and landlords to get involved in their community. In collaboration with Operation Our Town and the Central Pennsylvania Landlords Association, the Authority hosts an annual

Landlord Education Workshop to educate agencies and landlords on the importance of lease enforcement, the proper process for evictions, knowing the warning signs for illegal activity in rental units, fair housing regulations, mold, and bed bugs. The workshop helps agencies and landlords implement strategies to tackle those issues and is the perfect setting for those in attendance to ask questions and gain knowledge. Last year's workshop was held on November 2, 2018 with over 70 in attendance.

The Housing Roundtable meets regularly with the primary focus of the agenda on how to educate as many landlords as possible with regulations associated with having a rental property. The Roundtable also finds the most qualified individuals to discuss the issues at hand. Providing a safe and secure

living environment for tenants continues to be a main priority for the Authority and the Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable.

Taking a "pro-active" approach with regular inspections of said properties is the key. Knowing who is residing in the unit and maintaining the condition of the property to meet code regulations is a landlord responsibility and the lease must be enforced. The roundtable identifies problems and finds workable solutions to potential problems, as well as implementation of educational techniques for renting properties to responsible tenants.

If you are interested in serving on the Housing Roundtable, please contact Mrs. Cheryl A. Johns, Executive Director of the Altoona Housing Authority, at (814) 949-2000.

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# WORKING TOGETHER...WORKS BETTER!

By Nick Gordon, PMSC AmeriCorps Member with Operation Our Town

Social experiments are rather interesting. Looking back at my high school senior project from a number of years ago, I had almost finished preparing a research presentation about how collaboration, gratitude, and generosity are integral to the success of individuals, businesses, and organizations. As I stared at my screen, however, I felt as though something was missing. While the research was both accurate and interesting to me, I had my doubts that anybody else would care. Why would they? After finding out that I would be one of the first presenters, I quickly devised a plan that involved some scheming and a trip to the store.

From the start of my presentation, the other students could see that I brought a few shopping bags full of something, and it caught their attention. When the time came, I unveiled the great mystery and passed around several different bags of candy to different groups of students. To go along with the candy were some very specific instructions. I not only gave each group the option to do with their candy as they pleased, but also informed them that groups would go one at a time.

The first and last groups were the most interesting to watch, because the first

group had the opportunity to set the trend of sharing their candy, while the last group had complete freedom to keep their own candy, in addition to what was shared with them. Everyone willingly shared, and they ended up with a better variety of candies. As others presented in the following weeks, quite a number of them brought in more candy as well. I was quite pleased that a simple activity caused my presentation to become more memorable and effective.

Even at that point, I knew I wanted to pursue work in the nonprofit field. As a strategically focused, efficient-minded individual, I saw the potential for explosive growth in organizations locally and wanted to contribute to the change. As a result, I left the area to pursue a Bachelor's degree in Management of Nonprofit Organizations and came back with a fresh set of eyes to see everything going on in Blair County, as well as plenty of experience to go along with the high honors and the piece of paper that helped boost my confidence and credibility.

Now that I have been involved with Operation Our Town for a few years, it has been interesting to reflect on



this experience as it relates to what I witness on a daily basis. One of the things I love most about Operation Our Town is that we give away a substantial portion of the money donated to us each year through grants, in order to work towards preventing drug abuse and crime, while promoting stronger communities in Blair County.

I have had the pleasure of visiting with most of the programs that we fund through our annual grant cycle. If I'm completely honest, I am

pleasantly surprised at how many times I hear about our grant recipients working together to help build each other up. So often people approach life with a mindset that if they help others, they end up missing out on their own opportunities in exchange. From what I've seen here in Blair County, this couldn't be farther from the truth. I see growth across the board when individuals, businesses, and organizations work together to build a thriving community.

As I close out this article, I am reminded of how grateful I am for all of the amazing people and organizations I've met and learned so much about along the way. If you are one of these people, thank you so much! To learn more about our grant recipients or read some of the highlight articles included at the end of each monthly newsletter, visit our website ([operationourtown.org](http://operationourtown.org)). If you're not yet involved, we'd love to help you become a part of what we're trying to accomplish.

## 7<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL OPERATION OUR TOWN GOLF TOURNAMENT

Taking Back Our Neighborhoods

# Save The Date!

September 16 & 17, 2019

PARK HILLS GOLF CLUB, ALTOONA

### Schedule of Activities:

#### Monday, September 16th:

12:00pm – Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament

5:00pm – US Foods Neighborhood BBQ

#### Tuesday, September 17th:

7:00am – Breakfast provided by Sheetz & registration for morning tee time

8:00am – AM Shotgun start

11:00am – Lunch provided by Sheetz & registration for afternoon tee time

12:30pm – AM Putting contest for \$5,000

1:00pm – PM Shotgun start

6:00pm – PM Putting contest for \$5,000

Dinner following afternoon golf

#### \$5,000 PUTTING CONTEST:

A \$5,000 cash prize donation from Park Hills Golf Club will be awarded to the winners of the putting contests!

#### Golf Sponsorship Levels:

Gold - \$6,000

- 2 groups in tournament

- Company banner displayed, sign on driveway

- Company name listed in Event Guide

- Specialty Gold & commemorative gifts for each golfer

Silver - \$3,000

- 1 group in tournament

- Company banner displayed, sign on driveway

- Company name listed in Event Guide

- Specialty Silver & commemorative gifts for each golfer

Bronze - \$2,000

- 1 group in tournament

- Company banner displayed, sign on driveway

- Company name listed in Event Guide

- Specialty Bronze & commemorative gifts for each golfer

Individual Golfer - \$400

- Individual entry in tournament

- Commemorative gifts for one golfer

#### Sponsorship Levels:

Beverage sponsor - \$1,000

- Company banner displayed during event

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Closest to the Pin sponsor - \$1,000

- Signage at the sponsored pin

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Golf Cart sponsor - \$1,000

- Signage on golf cart (limit 5 sponsors)

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Hole in One sponsor - \$1,000

- Signage at the sponsored Par 3

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Refreshment Tent sponsor - \$1,000

- Signage on one of the 4 Refreshment Tents or provide your company's tent

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Reception sponsor - \$500

- Company banner displayed during event

- Company name listed in Event Guide

"Tee Off Against Drugs" Student Golf Tournament sponsor - \$500

- Sponsorship of School District of your choice within Blair & surrounding counties

- Signage displayed during the event

on September 16th

- School District of the winning boys and girls team will receive a \$2,500 grant to be used for a current or new school program that is aimed at the education and prevention of drug use.

Greens sponsor - \$250

- Signage at the sponsored green

- Company name listed in Event Guide

Tee sponsor - \$150

- Signage at the sponsored tee

# Finding HOPE in One of Life's Greatest Struggles

By Dr. John Wells, HOPE Support Group Member

Having a loved one whose life and behavior have been overtaken by the chains of a substance addiction certainly presents one of life's greatest challenges. We watch the one we love spiral downward, totally out of control. Our own feelings of helplessness, hopelessness, grief, fear, isolation, and shame all compete for mastery of our present state of mind. This can be a crushing burden if those emotions are allowed to reign unchecked. Experts have stated many times that addiction is a family disease: the condition and its fallout negatively impact every member of the family. In the same way the one afflicted by a substance-use disorder finds it impossible to control their own behavior, their closest family and friends are also affected by their addiction and struggle to control the myriad of negative feelings and emotions dredged up by constant observation of their loved one's decline. These feelings can create a sense of isolation ("no one understands"), and shame ("what will people think?"). That isolation often extends to others within the family circle as their resentment builds over the increasing amount of attention devoted to the one afflicted ("all they ever talk about is Bill and his problem"). In addition to these feelings generated from within the family, often loved ones feel stigma from outsiders: the sense of disapproval, either expressed verbally or implied, that somehow, some way, the family must be to blame for their loved one's "failing." ("wow, I wonder where THEY went wrong... obviously not the "perfect family" they pretend to be").

Recognizing the emotional and psychological challenges that families and friends face when loving a person in addiction, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships offers a special support group for the affected rather than the afflicted. "HOPE" meets every Wednesday night from 5:30-7:30 PM in one of the conference rooms at the Partnership's main office at 3001 Fairway Drive in Altoona. My wife and I have been active participants in this group for over three years. Our attendance began as we sought support and understanding for our own family situation. At that time, we had a loved one who had struggled with alcohol dependence for some years in spite of repeated efforts at recovery and treatment. We were as confused, bewildered, and hopeless back then as anyone else who comes through those doors on a Wednesday evening. We needed to understand that we were not alone in our situation but rather that our experience was a common one, regardless of the substance involved. We needed to learn new ways to express our love that would not impede

our loved one's recovery, but rather support it. We needed to learn the definition of healthy detachment and how to practice it. We needed to learn the importance of setting and keeping boundaries to maintain our own emotional health.

Now through the passage of time, the grace of God, the assistance of BDAP, and the treatment professionals that they helped our loved one access, that person has been in sustained recovery for over two years. Through our continued involvement with the HOPE support group, our own situation has improved dramatically. We still attend almost every meeting, mostly not to seek support and wisdom for ourselves, but rather to have an opportunity to help others find a measure of peace in the midst of the storm that a loved one's disease can create in a family. Allow me to share with you some of the valuable lessons we have learned both from the group facilitator as well as the group members themselves.

There's a downward progression for the family too...

Addiction doesn't happen overnight. There's a progression from experimentation to casual use, to frequent use, to habit, to addiction. What begins as an adventure leads to a complete takeover of the chemical pathways in the brain, reordering priorities, overriding morals, and preempting logical decision-making. The overwhelming urge to seek more of the substance gains supremacy over ALL other thought processes. As we've implied above, loved ones often follow a similar progression as they interact with the one in substance dependency. The initial response is denial. The family is not aware of the impact of the disease and tries to find ways to explain the changes that they're seeing in their loved one. As the level of change becomes undeniable, the realization of the serious extent of the disease can cause guilt, fear, anger, disappointment, shame, or even the response of trying to minimize the problem. The family may move next to a phase that could be called management. They do their best to intervene in the course of the disease, trying to impose their rational solutions on a brain that has already been robbed of normal priorities and values by the substance. Ineffective efforts at control cause further frustration, anger, depression, anxiety, and often sleeplessness, as fear for the loved one's safety and grief over broken dreams and lost expectations loom larger and larger in their thoughts.

Gradually the family's mental and emotional health becomes progressively shackled to both the positive and negative progress of their addicted loved one,

leading to a roller coaster of emotion and stress. This destructive relationship is called codependency. Complicating all these feelings and frustrations is our natural instinct to protect our loved one from harm or injury. As we seek to protect them from the negative consequences of their growing disease, we may begin to pay their bills, shield them from discovery, make excuses to others for their behavior, and help them to avoid job loss or legal consequences of their wrong actions. But these loving, protective instincts that are natural to us actually allow the disease to progress unchecked, and produce the opposite of our desired result. This is defined as enabling. As things deteriorate further, the family may exhibit the following behaviors: resentment, bargaining, obsession over the problem, abandonment of their own healthy activities, emotional and physical exhaustion, friction with less-involved members of the family, feelings of failure, and increasing highs and lows related to their loved one's active disease. This is the phase that we could call deterioration. If families do not seek help for themselves, these behaviors can result in negative outcomes in their own lives: issues with both emotional and physical health, damaged family relationships, even financial problems. If this downward progression is left unchecked, it leads to hopelessness and despair: that feeling that there is absolutely "no way out." At this point, the family's emotional and possibly physical health is in collapse due to their prolonged constant interaction with the afflicted. Often they are entrapped in a repetitive cycle of counterproductive shielding from natural consequences, as unhealthy support (enabling) continues. Escape is possible for family members from this downward spiral anywhere along the path, yet often they do not know where to turn to get off the roller coaster.

But recovery is possible for the family too...

Just as those afflicted go through a lengthy process to achieve lasting recovery, so the affected recover their emotional health through a process as well. This is where the value of the HOPE support group comes into play. One of the first things presented to those attending is the concept of the three C's: we didn't "Cause" it, we can't "Control" it, and we can't "Cure" it. The first C reminds us that our loved one's disease is a result of choices that he or she made, NOT US. The second C reminds us of the incredible grip that the addiction has on the mind and body of the one we love so desperately. The third C reminds us that addiction is a disease. In other words, genuine physical and biochemical changes have

occurred in the brain chemistry and body that go far beyond simple willpower that might be utilized to break a normal "bad habit."

We then start to learn the difference between enabling and truly supporting recovery. Enabling supports addiction, the last thing that we want to do, yet the very thing that our natural instinct to show love unwittingly accomplishes. Through interaction with other members of the group as they share their stories, we learn from their successes and failures. The truth gradually starts to sink in, and we learn and grow. We identify new ways to show our love that will not shield the afflicted from those very consequences that might nudge them into seeking treatment and pursuing recovery. We learn that any financial support we might supply can be redirected by our loved one into a greater supply of the very substance that is destroying them. We learn to set new boundaries and then to stick to them as we develop healthier ways to interact with our loved one. The speed with which we learn these difficult lessons varies from family to family, just as the story of each substance-dependent loved one is unique. Soon we learn to identify the common threads in the stories and eventually to see them in ourselves. Once we recognize our own behaviors, often brought to our attention by other group members or the facilitator, we can begin to take steps to change our direction and thereby become healthier. We finally begin to regain our joy of living.

The HOPE support group has been instrumental not only in our lives but in the lives of the majority who attend. A support group like this is a major asset allowing the family to regain and maintain emotional and physical health while awaiting recovery and new life for those they love still trapped in substance dependency. And just as their recovery story can have its ups and downs, the family's does too. But as we learn how to more effectively interact with the disease, our lows are not as low, and we can get off the roller coaster before it hits bottom.

The most important lessons...

- Negative consequences can save lives
  - Any form of financial support allows resources to be diverted to procuring more substance
  - Stronger boundaries can help preserve our well-being till our loved one is ready to take positive steps toward recovery
  - Recovery is a process often accompanied by hills and valleys; don't lose hope when the ride gets bumpy.
  - Always remember the Three C's
- Having learned these truths and others from our involvement in the group, we now seek to pass them on to others in need in order that they too might regain their HOPE.

# K-9

Continued from A2

explosive detection, patrol operations, and human tracking.

- K-9 Rik is the only Explosive Detection K9 in Blair County and one of only a few within the surrounding area.
- The Sheriff K-9 Unit has been able to assist schools, businesses, religious venues, and all police agencies when dealing with suspicious items or the suspicion of explosive material being present.
- The Sheriff K-9 unit is funded solely by donations from the community.

## Tyrone Police Department K-9:

The Tyrone Borough Police Department began a fundraising campaign in October 2018 to fund the purchase of a new K-9 police dog for the department.

- The funds raised will help cover the cost of the K-9, handler/training, Police Service K-9 Kit, and patrol car changes for the K-9.
- The Tyrone K-9 will be a dual-purpose canine, doing both drug detection and patrol duties with its handler.



Pictured: Corporal Bennett and K-9 Rik.

- It will be used primarily in Tyrone Borough, but will also be available to all police departments and agencies in Blair County.
- The handler selection is slated for January 31, 2019.
- The K-9 will be picked by the new handler on February 12, 2019.
- Training will start on March 11th for six weeks.
- The K-9 and handler will be back from training on April 22nd and plan to be in service by April 26, 2019.

These law enforcement K-9's would not be possible without the support and donations from the Blair County community. If you would like more information about these K-9's or how you can help support any current or future expenses related to these K-9's, please contact the Logan Township Police Department, Blair County Sheriff's Office, or Tyrone Police Department. Blair County will continue to be well-protected by these valiant K-9's for years to come!

# ON THE AIR

By Silke Morrison, OOT Marketing Roundtable Member

Greetings all! My name is Silke Morrison and I've been fortunate enough to be the spokesperson for the Operation Our Town Marketing Roundtable on the Forever Broadcasting local radio stations for over a year now. In the past, we were

given air time each quarter on the morning "radio circuit" on each of the local stations via a live interview. The projects and events that we highlighted in 2018 included the It Pays to Pass Drug Testing Program, the annual Operation Our Town Grant Cycle, and the

Operation Our Town and Altoona Mirror Essay Contest.

For 2019, Forever Broadcasting has opted for a new format, I will be recording an interview that will be aired periodically beginning in January on Sunday mornings. The spot is called Forever Media Sunday Morning Community Spotlight. We are certainly grateful to have this opportunity to get the message out to the community

regarding all the good things Operation Our Town and its supporters accomplish together!

We will still be providing information on Operation Our Town and the valuable services it provides to the community by helping residents fight the never ending drug issues in our area. Some of the highlights will be the Tyrone Borough Police Department K9 fundraising campaign,

2019 Operation Our Town Grant Cycle, Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park, and the 7th Annual Operation Our Town Golf Tournament.

Operation Our Town is thankful for its partnership with Forever Broadcasting, which has provided us with an excellent resource to get information to the communities in our area for eight years!

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*congratulates*

### OPERATION OUR TOWN

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*a safer and better place to live!*



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# LOCAL STUDENT WINS ESSAY CONTEST

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Congratulations to Cullen Lloyd from Martinsburg (8th grade, home school) whose essay was chosen out of 509 entries as the winner of the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest! Cullen received \$250 in gift cards to The Meadows Original Frozen Custard in Hollidaysburg. Co-sponsors of the Essay Contest were the Altoona Mirror, Imler's Poultry, and The Meadows Original Frozen Custard in Hollidaysburg. Below is Cullen's essay on why being drug & alcohol free is important to a student's success:

**\*\* Please note: this story is a work of fiction. \*\***

Drugs destroyed my family. More specifically, they destroyed my brother's life.

My brother Joe was three years older than me, and I thought he was the coolest brother on the planet. He was smart, funny, athletic, talented, and always succeeded at anything he tried. Ranked fifth in his class for GPA, he was a member of the National Honor Society and was a class officer. After high school, he wanted to major in business and play college football. His last season as a star receiver on the football team, Joe had 500 receiving yards and seven touchdowns. He was well liked by his classmates and

teachers alike. It was safe to say he had everything going for him.

And then he got in the car accident.

Joe was coming home from football practice when another driver ran a red light and plowed into his car. Joe was knocked unconscious and rushed to the hospital. He suffered a severe back injury and the doctor prescribed oxycodone. Although the prescription was only for a couple of weeks, Joe quickly became addicted. Our family

was oblivious to the addiction, but we noticed changes in him that we thought were due to stress from his injury and school. Joe's grades started falling and he lost his membership in the National Honor Society. He began losing weight and was moodier than usual. This went on for a month.

After that, major red flags started popping up. We noticed him hanging out with some questionable friends. Money from my parents' wallets went missing. One

night, Joe didn't come home, and that really caught my parents' attention. The next day, Mom and Dad confronted him and he admitted that he was addicted to painkillers. My parents sent him to drug rehab where he spent a couple of months, but unfortunately, it was too late.

Because of what happened to Joe, I learned that drugs are detrimental to a student's success. Drugs keep you from thinking straight and making good decisions. Joe made many poor choices

because of his addiction. Drugs can ruin your dreams because once you're addicted, all you think about is your next high. They ended Joe's dreams of playing college football and becoming a businessman. Drugs cause your body to become weaker, physically. Joe lost a lot of weight and wasn't healthy the last few months of his life. I am determined to stay away from all drugs, even if they are legal, and I will make it my life's purpose to encourage others to do the same.



Pictured from left to right: Joe Meadows (Partner, The Meadows Original Frozen Custard of Hollidaysburg), Cullen Lloyd (Essay Contest Winner), Barb Harpster (Media Consultant, Altoona Mirror), Fred Imler Sr. (President, Imler's Poultry)

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

By Michael A. Fiore, Co-Founder/President, Operation Our Town

Operation Our Town is now going into its 13th year of operation, and we're proud of the accomplishments that we've seen thus far. We've been able to touch thousands of people because of the generosity and support the Blair County community has shown us over the years. We appreciate the continued support of our founding members and new donors, and all businesses and organizations that support our golf tournament each year. We've created solutions to respond to the numerous issues that the ever-changing drug trade throws at our communities.

Ongoing issues haven't changed and they always find different circumstances and levels of sophistication. This rings true for the continuing opioid crisis that our county is still facing, combined with an emerging trend of methamphetamine use. This is a war, not a battle, and we strive to manage it the best we can with our three main focuses on law enforcement, prevention and treatment.

The Law Enforcement

Roundtable continues to work on different ways to attack the supply of drugs, including opioids and methamphetamine, through ongoing special operations. The Pharmacy Roundtable continues to partner with local pharmacists to educate their patients on the various ways to control the abuse of prescription opioids. The remainder of our roundtables all work together in different ways to reduce the demand for those drugs in our community. The Early Childhood Education, K-12 Education, and Marketing Roundtables all work to reduce demand through education and awareness. The Community Revitalization, Criminal Justice, Faith-based, Housing, and Northern Blair Roundtables all work to reduce demand through community engagement.

There are also many community and neighborhood-based programs that are doing important community outreach to the youth and families that need it the most. Our prevention grant recipients are the most important asset we have, because they realize that the key

to gaining control of drug abuse begins with working with youth and their families, which is the core of where positive change can begin.

Our grants also continue

to support law enforcement by giving them the resources and equipment that they need to stay on top of the drug problem, and to do their jobs safely so that they can come home to their families every night. We appreciate all Blair County law enforcement that risk their lives every day and continue to

“Honor the Badge” to show our gratitude.

As a community, we will continue to face new challenges in the future, but we can make a difference if we work together. Thank you for your ongoing support. Your efforts have helped to make Blair County a great place to live.



CentralPATickets.com

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Ticket buying made central.

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# Blair County Agencies Who are Partnered with OOT

Allegheny Township Police - 814-695-3333  
Contact Person: Chief Leo Berg

Altoona Police - 814-949-2489  
Contact Person: Chief Janice Freehling

Bellwood Borough - 814-742-7800  
Contact Person: Chief Joseph Schlecht

Blair Township Police - 814-696-3846  
Contact Person: Chief Roger White

Duncansville Police - 814-695-1930  
Contact Person: Chief Jeff Ketner

Freedom Township Police - 814-695-8545  
Contact Person: Chief Terry Dellinger

Greenfield Township Police - 814-239-5313  
Contact Person: Chief Ronald Sharkey, Sr.

Hollidaysburg Borough Police - 814-695-3711  
Contact Person: Chief Rodney Estep

Logan Township Police - 814-949-3364  
Contact Person: Chief David Reese

Martinsburg Borough Police - 814-793-2838  
Contact Person: Chief Kerry Hoover

N. Woodbury Township Police - 814-793-4897  
Contact Person: Sergeant Jeff Ketner

Roaring Spring Borough Police - 814-224-5382  
Contact Person: Chief Gregory Wyandt

Tyrone Borough Police - 814-684-1364  
Contact Person: Chief John Romeo

Williamsburg Borough - 814-832-2022  
Contact Person: Chief Rowdy Kagarise

UPMC Police - 814-889-2453  
Contact Person: Chief Greg Servello

Pa State Police - 814-696-6100  
Contact Person: Sergeant Jesse Moyer

Central PA Humane Society - 814-942-5402  
Contact Person: Officer Paul Gottshall

Penn State Altoona Police - 814-949-5222  
Contact Person: Lt. Deb Stitt

Altoona VA Medical Center Police -  
814-943-8164 ext 7059  
Contact Person: Chief Paul Blanchard

PA Game Commission- 814-643-1831  
Contact Person: WCO Brandon Pfiste

Blair County Sheriff - 814-693-3100  
Contact Person: Sheriff James Ott

## Operation Our Town Roundtable Descriptions

### Community Revitalization Roundtable:

A community partnership to develop and implement strategies to improve neighborhoods.

### Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB):

To provide an ongoing forum for communication and collaboration among key decision makers for the purposes of evaluating, analyzing, planning, information sharing, and integrating and recommending action to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system.

### Early Childhood Education Roundtable:

To prevent involvement in drug abuse and criminal activities by providing pre-k age children with enriched early childhood learning experiences.

### Faith-based Roundtable:

From a faith perspective, respond to and contribute to the work of the Operation Our Town partnerships. Promote, facilitate, and encourage faith-based community partnerships in using God's gracious gifts to bring about positive change, hope, and spiritual health in the community.

### Gang Roundtable:

To gather, coordinate and disseminate gang related activities for the purpose of communicating information directly to the steering committee in order to assist in the development of strategic plans to deal with gang, drug, and crime prevention as a result of gang related activities.

### Housing Roundtable:

Identify solutions to address

the problems created by transient tenants. To discuss and implement educational techniques for renting properties to responsible tenants.

### K-12 Education Roundtable:

Elimination of drug abuse in K-12 students in Blair County through education, programming, and awareness of the dangers of drug abuse.

### Law Enforcement Roundtable:

To facilitate partnerships between the community and business to fight both drug use and crime through proven law enforcement techniques.

### Marketing Roundtable:

To communicate and promote the objectives of the organization to effectively engage the citizenry of our community to become involved in taking back our neighborhoods.

### Northern Blair Roundtable:

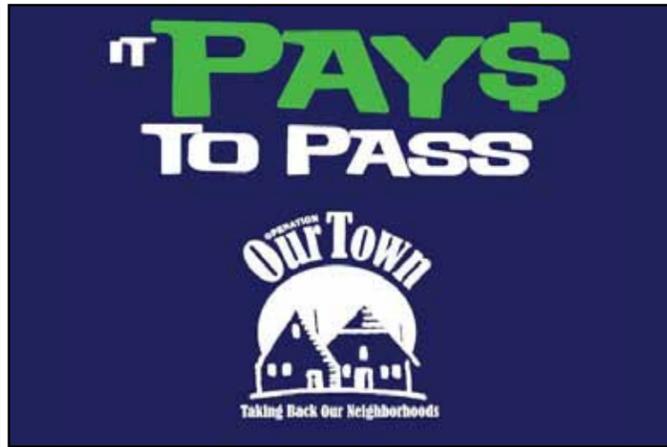
To facilitate partnerships between community and business in Northern Blair County to fight drug use and crime through proven law enforcement, treatment, and prevention techniques.

### Pharmacy Roundtable:

To assure the safety of pharmacy employees and patrons, and to improve relationships with local and state law enforcement, while enhancing the commitment of community pharmacies efforts to reduce the supply of prescription opioids in the community available for diversion and abuse.

### Volunteer Roundtable:

To support the mission of OOT with as many volunteers as possible.



## Voluntary Student Drug Testing Program Excels

Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The Operation Our Town Marketing Roundtable created the It Pays to Pass Program three years ago to encourage students in grades 7 through 12 to develop good habits and reward them for continuing to make the right choices. The It Pays to Pass Program rewards students that participate in the Hollidaysburg Area School District's voluntary student drug testing program. The purpose of the program is to help students remain drug-free and to give students an excuse to not give in to peer pressure if they are asked to try drugs or alcohol.

Each year, the Hollidaysburg School District provides a packet to all Junior and Senior High students and families to sign up for the district's voluntary drug & alcohol testing program. Students and parents must complete the consent packet. Upon turning in the consent packet, the students are given a "The Best Me is Drug Free" t-shirt or wristband provided by Operation Our Town. Student names are put in a lottery system and each week students are randomly picked from the lottery to be tested. If a student passes the 5 panel drug screen or the alcohol mouth swab test, they are given a \$25 Sheetz gift

card provided by Operation Our Town through the sponsorship of local businesses. Parents are notified of the test and the results. If a student does not pass the test, a non-punitive system is used. They are not punished at school, however, they must sign up for drug counseling or a rehab program. They are also referred to the school SAP (Student Assistance Program) team.

In the Junior High, 53 students have chosen to participate in the program in the 2018-2019 school year, which increased from 41 in the 2017-2018 school year. The increase is due in part to continuing to promote the program on Tiger TV, in the school newsletter and school messenger email to parents, having copies available at various locations throughout the school which students can easily access, as well as promoting the program during evening presentations for parents. The guidance department has also had Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships come in and speak with parents regarding current drug trends and vaping. The Junior High randomly tests one student each week. Wendy Lieb, Hollidaysburg Junior High School Nurse who administers the drug testing for the Junior

High said, "The program is a great way to promote healthy lifestyle choices, especially at the Junior High age where our young adults are very impressionable. The program gives the students a way "out" of experimenting with drugs or alcohol when with their peers."

In the Senior High, 122 students have chosen to participate in the program in the 2018-2019 school year. The numbers have tripled this school year as compared to prior years where there were only 30-40 students signed up each school year since the initiation of the voluntary drug testing. The Senior High randomly tests three students each week. Julie Bowser, Hollidaysburg Senior High School Nurse who administers the drug testing for the Senior High said, "The program has been a positive healthy behavior promotion aspect for the school environment. The students are enthusiastic about being called for testing and are thrilled with the Sheetz gift cards! Most of our students drive, so many of them say they will use the gift card for gas."

We are truly grateful for the support of the following local businesses and organizations that have contributed monetary donations to sponsor the purchase of the Sheetz gift cards: Allegheny Township Police Association, Ansley RV, Eldorado Kiwanis Club, P. Joseph Lehman Inc., Roundhouse Harley-Davidson, Stiffler McGraw, Ventura Construction Services, Value Drug Company on behalf of these local independent community pharmacies: Dick's Pharmacy, Duncansville Pharmacy, Greenwood Drugs, and Thompson Pharmacy. And we also offer a huge thank you to Sheetz for partnering with us again to support this very important program!

**CHOOSE LIFE! NOT DRUGS.**



# SEE SOMETHING? SAY SOMETHING!

REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY  
**PUSH OUT  
THE PUSHER™**

## 693-3020



# NORTHERN BLAIR ROUNDTABLE PUSHES FORWARD

By Sue Griep, Chairperson, Director of the Victim/Witness Program at the Blair County District Attorney's Office

The Northern Blair County Roundtable is a strong conglomerate of business, media, education, social, legal, church, and civic organizations in the Northern Blair area who come together on a monthly basis in an effort to better the community. The group, since being chaired by Sue Griep, has been working on learning about the community, the programs and services available, and the priority needs of the community. In its second year of the 3-year plan, the goal is for the committee to enhance and supplement rather than “reinvent the wheel,” she said.

Meetings are being held in various locations in the community to better acquaint the committee with locations, facilities, and services. If it's not possible to visit the agency, the speakers present to the committee at the Bull Pen Restaurant during lunch. Meetings have taken the group to the Tyrone Food Bank, Green Home Solutions, Northern Blair Rec, and Iron Bridge Dinner Theatre. Presentations have also been given by Reclamere, Every Life Matters, Graystone Court, Blair Senior Services, and Blair County Adult Probation and Parole.

In 2018-19, the group continues to build on its knowledge and will complete the visitation tour this May. While the committee is addressing various priority issues currently, the group will develop a precise plan on

areas in which they will focus for 2018-2019. Right now, homelessness, transportation, and education/employment have been identified as top priorities that need attention. A resource guide is in the midst of being completed to be available in the community for residents in need of services, and to assist volunteers and employees to help those who patronize their agencies and are in need.

For the past two years, the committee has sponsored a free spring workshop in the community to address timely issues. Two years ago, the group hosted, in partnership with PeerStar Support Services, a morning and evening workshop to address Bullying and Suicide Prevention. Last spring, Northern Blair OOT held a half-day workshop in conjunction with the Central PA Landlord Association, which was designed to assist landlords with various issues. There were 92 area landlords in attendance. Plans are being made to solidify a topic for the spring 2019 workshop.

In the spring of 2017, OOT partnered with Epworth Manor to restart their greenhouse to be able to provide fresh vegetables to the Food Bank. Under the capable management of one of the committee members, the greenhouse kicked off with donations from local businesses and individuals. In the spring of 2018, the coordinator stepped down,

and the greenhouse remained inactive for the season. New hope has bloomed for this spring, and various groups have expressed an interest to partner with OOT to reopen and help make the greenhouse viable once more.

The roundtable remains helpful in providing leadership to a number of programs and endeavors that have a positive influence in the town. The Tyrone/Bellwood Backpack Program, with the help of the roundtable, continue to operate successfully. The committee also provides leadership for an annual Tyrone Spring Cleanup Day which continues to boast nearly 100 volunteers from clubs, organizations, and churches in the area.

The roundtable plans to become more visible in the community in the coming year, appearing in various parades, attending various events and festivals, and partnering with various groups and organizations.

“We have a heart for the community, and want to help make it a safe and healthy community for all of us,” Sue Griep said. “For us as OOT, it's about us all working as a team with others and partnering together to be the best we can be and offer the most we can to ensure a good quality of life for our residents.”

If you would like more information on meetings, projects, or ways to help, please contact Sue Griep at Sgriep@Blairco.org.

# OPERATION OUR TOWN DAY AT DELGROSSO'S AMUSEMENT PARK

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The third Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park and Laguna Splash was held on August 16, 2018. For each coupon that was redeemed that day, \$3.00 was donated to Operation Our Town Day at the park



Town. A total of 266 coupons were used that day, resulting in a donation of \$798.00 to Operation Our Town!

Operation Our Town had a booth at the main entrance to the park and distributed

allows families to come together and enjoy time while experiencing the Operation Our Town presentations. “If we have just one of our park guests make a drug-free decision after hearing what



“The Best Me is Drug Free” wristbands, drug prevention information, and provided a drug-free pledge banner to sign to get a free OOT t-shirt. Child fingerprinting was also provided by PA State Police Trooper Dave McGarvey. Officer Alex Vazquez and his K9 Freddy from the Logan Township Police Department conducted two drug sniffing demonstrations outside the main entrance

they learned during the day, then it was worth it,” says Amy Mearkle – Director of Marketing for DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash. Mark your calendars for **August 15, 2019** for the fourth Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park for their continued support and look forward to another fun-filled day!



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# Operation Our Town Donors

Operation Our Town was founded in 2006 with the support of many local businesses. The following businesses with an asterisk (\*) are our founding members that initially committed at least \$10,000 per year for three years or more to fund local efforts to take back our neighborhoods from drugs and violent crime.

The success of Operation Our Town, combined with the desire to improve our community, has led additional local businesses to continue the work begun by our founding members by continuing to financially support local programs proven to reduce drug use and crime.

The donations listed in the donor categories below are cumulative.

<p><b>\$10,000 and up:</b>            Alan Gehring, Rhythm Systems            Altoona Area School District Foundation            Altoona Curve – Lozinak Professional Baseball, LLC            Altoona First Savings Bank            Altoona Pipe &amp; Steel Supply Company            American Eagle Paper Mills            American Insurance Administrators, Inc.            Amtran            Anonymous donor            APR Supply Co.            Arch Insurance Group            Blair Candy Company, Inc.*            Blair Companies*            Bolger Brothers, Inc.            Catalano, Case, Catalano &amp; Clark-Radzieta            Central PA Landlord Association            Chester E. Grannas Family Foundation            Courtesy Motors            D.C. Goodman &amp; Sons, Inc.*            Dean Patterson Chevrolet            Delta Health Technologies, LLC*            E.B. Endres, Inc.            Fine Line Cabinets, Inc.            Fiore Buick GMC*            Fiore Toyota*            First Energy Foundation            First National Bank            Fox 8 TV – Peak Media of Pennsylvania, LLC            Grainger Foundation, Inc.            Grappone Law Office*            Graystone Court            Harry K. Sickler Associates*            Holiday Inn Express*            Hoss's – Willard E. Campbell Enterprises, Inc.            Jones Day            Kooman &amp; Associates, LLC            Lawruk Machine &amp; Tool Company, Inc.            Lawruk Realty*            Lee Industries, Inc.*            Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.*            McLanahan Corporation*            M&amp;T Bank*            New Enterprise Stone &amp; Lime Co.*            New Pig Corporation*            Norfolk Southern Foundation            North American Communications NPC, Inc.*            Park Hills Golf Club            Patt Organization            PNC Foundation            Reilly Creppage &amp; Co.            Reliance Bank*            Rotary Club of Altoona            Seltzer Financial Strategies            Sheetz, Inc.*            Small Tube Products            S&amp;T Bank            Stuckey Automotive            The Hite Company, A Division of Mayer*            Thompson Pharmacy            United Way of Blair County*            UPMC Altoona*            US Foods            Value Drug Company            Ward Trucking, LLC*            Wolf Furniture*            YTI Career Institute - Altoona</p>	<p>Benzel's Bretzel Bakery, Inc.            Bernard Albert Good Post 8685            Business Planning Service, LLC            City Beverage of Altoona, Inc.            Concordia Society            Degol Organization            Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona            Galliker Dairy Company            Groff Tractor &amp; Equipment            H.F. Lenz Company            Inco Beverage, Inc.            Infinity Insurance Management Service            Irwin Financial, Inc.            Kunzler &amp; Company            Lezzer Lumber            Newborn Enterprises, Inc.            Nic's Tobacco Outlet, Inc.            Northwestern Mutual            Northwest Savings Bank            Pepsi Bottling Group, LLC            Pyramid Healthcare, Inc.            Say-Core, Inc.            Silk Mill Properties, Inc.            Stiffler, McGraw &amp; Associates, Inc.            Top to Bottom Office Interiors            Xantos, Inc.            Young, Oakes, Brown &amp; Co.</p> <p><b>\$1,000 - \$4,999:</b>            2nd Avenue United Methodist Church            Allegheny Club of Hollidaysburg            All Things Automotive, Inc.            Altoona Center for Nursing Care            Altoona Housing Authority            Altoona Mirror            Ansley RV            Atlantic Broadband            Babst, Calland, Clements &amp; Zomnir, PC            Bavarian Aid Society            Best Line Equipment            Blair County Chamber of Commerce            Blair County District Attorney's Office            Blair County Golf &amp; Driving Range – Madey Corp, Inc.            Blair County Police Departments            Blair Drug &amp; Alcohol Partnerships            Blair Medical Associates            Blue Knob Valley Chainsaw Carving Competition            Buccinese Society            Bun Air Corporation            Burgmeier's Hauling, Inc.            CBT Bank a Division of Riverview Bank            Centre Concrete Company            Cesare Battisti Mutual Benefit Association            Cleveland Brothers Equipment Co., Inc.            Cohen &amp; Grigsby, P.C.            Coldwell Banker Town &amp; Country            Real Estate            Construction Applicators            DelGrosso Family of Companies            DelGrosso Foods, Inc.            DelGrosso's Amusement Park            DiAndrea Media            Discovery House            Edward Jones Investments – Richard Logan            Empower Business Solutions, Inc.            Fenner Consulting            Fiore Brothers Management, LLC            Fiore Furniture            First Commonwealth Bank            Fraternal Order of Police Bald Eagle Lodge #51            Freedom Basketball Club, Inc.            Fringe Benefit Group            Golden Living Center – Hillview            Helsel, Fiore, Sheeler Wealth Management Team            Hollidaysburg Rotary Club            Housing &amp; Redevelopment Insurance Exchange</p>	<p>Keller Engineers, Inc.            Koehle Maintenance            Low Life Rider Chapter, Inc.            Loyal Order of Moose, Altoona Family Center #74            Mama Randazzo's, Inc.            Martin's Food Market – Ahold Financial Services            McAleer's Plumbing, Heating &amp; Air Conditioning            McQuaide Blasko, Inc.            Mock Creations            Mountain Research, LLC            Nason Hospital            Olive Garden - GMRI, Inc.            Omega Bank            ORX            Park Security Systems            Penn State Altoona            Pennsylvania Prison Warden's Association            P. Joseph Lehman, Inc. Consulting Engineers            Priority Management &amp; Associates            Providence Presbyterian Church            Ravine, Inc.            Roaring Spring Blank Book/Roaring Spring Water            Saint Francis University            Sam's Club #6460            Senior Life Altoona            Sheehan &amp; Associates            Shirley's Cookie Company, Inc.            Southshield Remodelers, Inc.            South Hills School of Business &amp; Technology            Swiss Club of Altoona            The Meadows Frozen Custard of Greenwood            The Meadows Original Frozen Custard of Hollidaysburg            ThyssenKrupp – AIN Plastics            United Way of the Capital Region            UPMC Health Plan            Warren A. Gingrich Agency, Inc.            Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC</p> <p><b>Under \$1,000:</b>            1st Summit Bank            A-1 Paving            AFSCME Local 906 – Hollidaysburg            Veterans Home            AFSCME Local 2188 – Altoona City Employees            Allegheny Mountains Convention &amp; Visitors Bureau            Allegheny Orthotics &amp; Prosthetics            Allegheny Township Police Association            Al's Tavern            Alto Markets, LLC            Altoona Auto Auction            Altoona Catholic Nurses            Altoona Center for Clinical Research, PC            Altoona Jewish Community School            Altoona Police Narcotics Division            Appalachia IU8            Arrow Land Solutions, LLC            Associated Builders &amp; Contractors, Inc.            A. Thomas Farrell Law Offices            Back in Action Physical Therapy &amp; Fitness Center            Backyard Burgers            Baechle &amp; Associates Architects            Baltimore Life Insurance            Beard Legal Group            Bellwood-Antis School District            Foundation            Bellwood Fraternal Order of Eagles            Bill Wertz &amp; Sons            Blair/Bedford Builders Association            Blair Business Technologies            Blair County Anesthesia, P.C.            Blair County Beverage            Blair County Children, Youth &amp; Families            Blair County Crime Solvers</p>	<p>Blair County Health &amp; Welfare Council            Blair County NAACP            Blair Gastroenterology Associates            Blair Orthopedics            Blair Roofing, Inc.            Blue Knob Golf Club            Bob's Storage            Carmike Cinemas            Carnegie Equipment, Inc.            Central Blair Recreation Commission            Central PA Cardiology, LLC            Central PA Digital Learning Foundation            Ciocca Benton &amp; Okonak, P.C.            Clear Creek Environmental            Clip Art Salon            Combined Insurance            Craig Fencing            Credit Control Collections            Cresson Lions Park Association            Cumming Motors, Inc.            Days Inn &amp; Suites, Altoona            Delozer Construction            Despoys &amp; Robertson Law Firm            D. Freemont, Inc.            DiAndrea Promos            Dick's Pharmacy, Inc.            Domino's            Douglas V. Stoehr, Attorney At Law            Drayer Physical Therapy Institute            Edward Jones Investments – Michael Harris            Eldorado Kiwanis Club            Epworth Manor            Fairfield Inn &amp; Suites–TownePlace            Suites by Marriott Altoona            Fairview United Methodist Church            Family Pizza &amp; Pub            Family Services, Inc.            Fiore True Value Hardware            First Presbyterian Church            First Stop Shop, Inc.            Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #8            Frederick Lock &amp; Key, Inc.            Freedom Excursions by Scully, LLC            Freedom RV Rentals, LLC            Furrer Beverage Co., Inc.            G.B. Wineland &amp; Son, Inc.            Geisinger Health Plan            Gerard Ziegler, CPA            G&amp;G Auto Sales            Global Impact            Gold Wing Road Riders Association            Chapter PAS            Good Advertising            Greendown Acres Mobile Home Park            Greenwood Pools &amp; Spas            G&amp;R Excavating            Griffith &amp; Petz Co.            Gwin, Dobson &amp; Foreman            Haberstroh, Sullivan &amp; George, LLP            Heidelberg Country Club            Holland Bros. Meats            Hollidaysburg Area Junior High            School Student Body            Home Health Resource            Home Nursing Agency            Homewood Retirement Centers            Housing Authority of Northumberland County            Investment Savings Bank            Iron Masters Country Club            Jack &amp; George's            Jaffa Temple Altoona Shrine Club            Jim Bryan's Tree Trimming &amp; Removal            J. 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**Individuals: Over 200 individual citizens.**

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Professional and OOT Titles

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**Randy Feathers**  
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**Ron McConnell**  
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**Shawna Hoover**  
 Executive Coordinator

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### Our Town Times

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