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Operation Our Town Reporter

a monthly newsletter *by our volunteers to our volunteers about* our fight against drugs and crime in Central PA

Volume 13, Issue 4 - April 2021



OperationOurTown.org

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Grainger Industrial Supply
Norfolk-Southern Foundation
Small Tube Products
Stuckey Ford & Subaru
Value Drug Company

Area police departments give year end review - A4

Drug court program: creating a balance - A5

OUR TOWN TIMES
2021 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. X

Combating the Drug Crisis: 2020 Year in Review

Over the past year, the citizens of Blair County have faced extraordinary challenges spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the year is not our only public health crisis. In 2019, Blair County reported 11 drug-related deaths. Last year, that number had already increased to 55 deaths. This frightening and significant statistic cannot be ignored and we cannot allow this alarming trend to continue.

A Pennsylvania statute enacted in 2019, the Substance Use and Abuse Prevention Act, was intended to help the Commonwealth address the public health crisis of addiction. Tragically, the law has been largely unenforced.

As a doctor who has treated patients in this community for more than 25 years, I have witnessed the devastation of addiction and the loss of lives. My heart aches for the Pennsylvania residents who are struggling with addiction, and I am committed to helping them.

In Congress, I am working to get the federal government, state, and federal leaders to address addiction, support Pennsylvania in recovery, and reduce the number of deaths caused by drug use.

As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, I have introduced legislation that will create a federal drug court program, and I will continue to work on this critical issue.

The ramifications of addiction are devastating, and we need to take action. I will continue to work with my colleagues in Congress to get the federal government to take action on this critical issue.

COVID-19: THE EFFECTS

NAVIGATING RECOVERY AMIDST A PANDEMIC

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

During the pandemic, Blair County Drug and Alcohol Partnerships, in partnership with the Sheriff's Office (SO), County Support and Treatment Services (SATS), County Jail, and other community partners, have supported the recovery of those with substance use disorders and the shared solutions needed to support those during this time.

It's critical to keep focus on federal, state, and provincial network response and the struggles to keep clients and staff safe from the virus.

We need to continue to partner with our social service and faith-based partners to help support the basic needs of those who are in the community.

First, I need to stress the isolation produced by the shutdown has had a negative impact on our recovering community. Isolation for someone in recovery is a risk factor for relapse. We have seen this throughout the pandemic shutdown. The recovery support system that is not just the treatment system, we serve in the community.

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HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS IN OUR BACKYARDS

By Ashley Gay Vance & Ashley Orman, Family Services Incorporated

Human trafficking is a serious human rights violation that is often overlooked. It is a multi-billion dollar industry that exploits vulnerable people across the globe. In Blair County, human trafficking is a growing concern, and we must take action to address it.

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BLAIR COUNTY H.A.R.T. HUMAN ANTI-TRAFFICKING RESPONSE TEAM

The Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team (H.A.R.T.) is a collaborative effort between Blair County and the Sheriff's Office. The team is dedicated to identifying, investigating, and prosecuting human trafficking cases in Blair County.

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Pick up your new window clings, magnets, & yard signs

The OOT Office
555 Rte 151, Room 404 - Altoona, PA 16602

PUSH OUT THE PUSHER

Police Report A2
Community A5
Business A3
Local A1E

The 2021 Annual Report is now available!
To view the full report, click on the link below:
https://operationourtown.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/OOT_AR2021Website-2-19-21.pdf

Mission

To facilitate partnerships between community and business to fight drug abuse and crime through proven law enforcement, treatment, and prevention techniques.



Month of April

4/1	Early Childhood Education Roundtable meeting	10:00am	Blair Co. Chamber
4/6	Northern Blair Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Zoom conference call
4/15	Criminal Justice Advisory Board Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Zoom conference call
4/15	Faith-based Roundtable meeting	2:00pm	Zoom conference call
4/16	Pharmacy Roundtable meeting	7:15am	Zoom conference call
4/21	Marketing Roundtable meeting	4:00pm	Zoom conference call
4/22	Housing Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Zoom conference call

REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY
PUSH OUT THE PUSHER
814-693-3020



Pennsylvania
Get Connected. Get Help.™

PA 2-1-1 is a comprehensive database that includes information about health & human services.

PA 2-1-1 can be accessed by phone 24/7 or the web at:

www.pa211.org



Circle of Hope at Tuckahoe Park

Union Avenue, Altoona, PA

Families United for Change invite you to visit the newly installed Circle of Hope contemplation garden. A place that has been created to raise awareness and help change the stigma surrounding substance abuse disorders.

Relax in the newly erected seating as you enjoy the garden.

Read the information and think about how you too can help to raise awareness.



Marianne Sinisi
COORDINATOR
814-934-8067

We are a group of family members affected by addiction. We invite everyone to share their voice, cares, and concerns. Join us in Altoona, PA at 7:00pm - Every Second Tuesday of the Month. For information on meetings, please call or visit us on facebook



814-381-0921

Grant Recipient Highlight: **The R.O.C.K.** (Reaching Out to Community Kids)

By: Marlene Dancy-Murray, PMSC AmeriCorps
Member with Operation Our Town



The R.O.C.K. (Reaching Out to Community Kids) organization's mission is – To fill a need in the community to allow children to come to a safe place where they know they can get a warm meal, have fun, and talk with people who care. The R.O.C.K. has a no violence, no bullying, etc., policy that each parent and each child has to sign, known as their Code of Conduct. This is because they want clear communication on what is expected of parents and students at The R.O.C.K. at the beginning of each term.

Before the pandemic, the biggest accomplishment was the consistency of the kids attending The R.O.C.K. Many of the children were returning with a 94% return rate. As well, many of them were bringing new friends and introducing them to The R.O.C.K. Many of those kids would become regular attendees. The OOT funds were utilized to provide healthy, well-balanced meals to an average of 60 children each week.

The novel virus COVID-19 has been an external limitation and barrier for the program. The R.O.C.K. continued their mission. Though having to shut down for the end of the year, the remaining funds were used to disperse school supplies to any children who needed them, in August, to ensure they'd have all the resources needed for those who had enrolled in virtual or in-person school.

During the beginning of the 2019-2020 program, 22 youth were surveyed. They were asked to highlight the corresponding positive assets out of 40, describing themselves. Students on average reported having 19/40 assets and only 5/22 reported having a positive identity. As the program progressed, the survey was repeated. It was found that the average assets were 23/40, however, only 3/22 reported having positive identity. Two (2) out of the 5 had moved away. After a group discussion, it was found that most of the kids were struggling with insecurities, puberty, changing of friends, etc.

The conclusion is that part of the R.O.C.K.'s program should be focused on encouraging students to believe in themselves, to like who they are, and feel confident and worthy. As well, Family Services and other community representatives partnered to discuss with them about different aspects of life and things that they may just want to learn, building confidence and character with knowledge and caring.



The R.O.C.K.(Reaching Out to Community Kids)

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