



OUR TOWN TIMES

2021 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. X

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

Combating the Drug Crisis: 2020 Year in Review

By Congressman John Joyce, MD

Over the past year, the citizens of Blair County have faced extraordinary challenges spurred by the COVID-19 pandemic, but the virus is not our only public health crisis. In 2019, Blair County reported 31 drug-related deaths. Last year, this number drastically increased to 55 deaths. This frightening and significant statistic cannot be ignored – and we cannot allow this alarming trend to continue.

As Pennsylvanians mourn deaths related to COVID-19, we cannot turn away from the co-morbidities that also claimed lives. Tragically, the pandemic exacerbated the drug and addiction crisis, devastating communities in Blair County and across our Commonwealth.

As a doctor who has practiced medicine in this community for more than 25 years, I have witnessed the ramifications of drug abuse and addiction firsthand. My heart is heavy for the Pennsylvanians struggling with addiction and recovery, as well as their families and loved ones.

In Congress, I am working alongside dedicated local, state, and federal leaders to prevent addiction, support Pennsylvanians in recovery, and protect our communities from illicit drugs. As a member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, which has broad jurisdiction over healthcare issues, I am leading Congress’ work to counter the addiction crisis and we will continue emphasizing this critical issue.

The ramifications of substance abuse and addiction transcend all divides and combating the drug crisis truly requires an all-hands-on-deck approach. In Congress, I



serve as a leader of a bipartisan working group on addiction. As a team, we have introduced commonsense legislation to counter addiction, improve accountability, and prevent drug trafficking.

In Blair County, it has been my privilege to work with neighbors and community organizations, including Operation Our Town, and connect those on the front lines of this fight with critical resources. In 2020, I welcomed the White House Drug Czar Jim Carroll to our region for discussions with first responders, healthcare workers, educators, law enforcement officers, elected officials, and other local leaders. Together, we identified opportunities for us to collaborate on

See Rep. Joyce/Page A6

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, as well as other Single County Authorities (SCA) (county organizations responsible for the management of state and federal drug and alcohol funding), have reported on the impact of the pandemic on persons with a substance use disorder and the shared

solutions needed to support them during this time:

- We must find creative ways to keep individuals who are in recovery connected to recovery support and treatment services. Isolation, particularly during early recovery, increases the risk and likelihood of relapse. Due to this, Blair County and the state have seen an increase in overdoses and overdose

deaths during 2020.

- It’s critical to keep focus on federal, state, and provider 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 we serve in the communities.

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 numerous shutdowns. The recovery support system that is not just the treatment system,

See Recovery/Page A13



HUMAN TRAFFICKING IS IN OUR BACKYARDS

By Ashley Gay Vocco & Ashley Owens, Family Services Incorporated

Human trafficking is currently a “hot” topic in our society. In movies and television shows, human trafficking often looks like a young child being kidnapped, trucks full of humans crossing state lines, or big city “pimps” running large prostitution operations. While those circumstances meet the definition of “human trafficking” and the needs of Hollywood producers trying to entertain and shock an audience, there are other lesser-known, but more common cases of human trafficking. Those lesser-known cases are primarily what law enforcement, medical professionals, victim advocates, forensic interviewers, child protective services, and the DA’s office, among other community members, are seeing right here in Blair County.

It is usually at this point in the conversation where most people think to themselves, “but Blair County does not have human trafficking.” On the contrary, the Center for Child Justice, Blair County’s Children’s Advocacy Center (CAC), forensically interviewed

twelve (12) potential child victims of human trafficking from March 2018 until June 2019. At least two other cases of adult human trafficking have been identified by the DA’s Office and law enforcement during this time period.

While these numbers may not be staggering, it is important to note that not all community

victim advocates, direct service providers, and community members to establish a victim-centered approach for effectively combatting human trafficking in our community.

In Blair County, every case of human trafficking charged by law enforcement also involved drugs and drug trafficking. In every instance, the victim was

or in exchange for the drugs themselves. Also, traffickers will provide the victim with drugs in order to get the victim addicted because an addict will be easier to control, and someone who is dopesick will often do things they wouldn’t otherwise do, in order to get their drugs.

Human trafficking involves the use of force, fraud, or coercion to obtain some type of labor or commercial sex act. Millions of men, women, and children are victims of trafficking every year around the world. Traffickers keep victims isolated – physically and emotionally – as a key method of control. Traffickers target vulnerabilities in potential victims, including psychological or emotional vulnerabilities, economic hardship, working parents or guardians, latchkey kids, lack of a social safety net, natural disasters, or social instability. Traffickers also use social media apps and videogames to connect with and befriend minors.

For more information on HART, or if you suspect human trafficking, contact us at 814-944-3585.



resources and government entities have been trained in the signs, the appropriate response, or the laws to properly prosecute human trafficking. Hence, HART, the Human Anti-Trafficking Response Team was created by Family Services Incorporated. HART is a collaboration of law enforcement, prosecution,

offered drugs – to take before the sexual acts occurred, or as payment for the sexual act. Or, the victim had already been using drugs. The intersection of drugs and human trafficking is not unusual. Trafficking can also frequently present as a drug addicted parent or caregiver, selling their partner or child for money to either buy drugs



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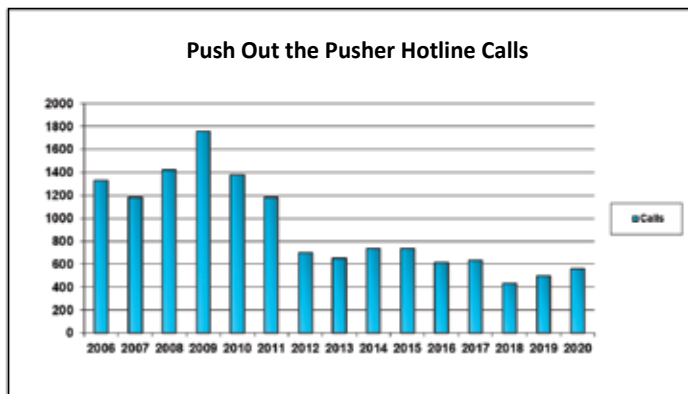
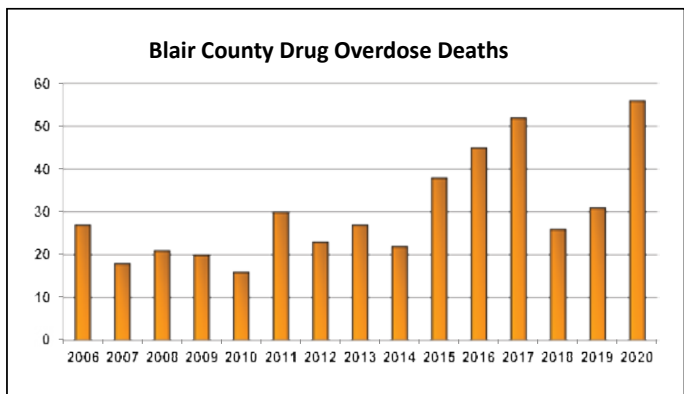
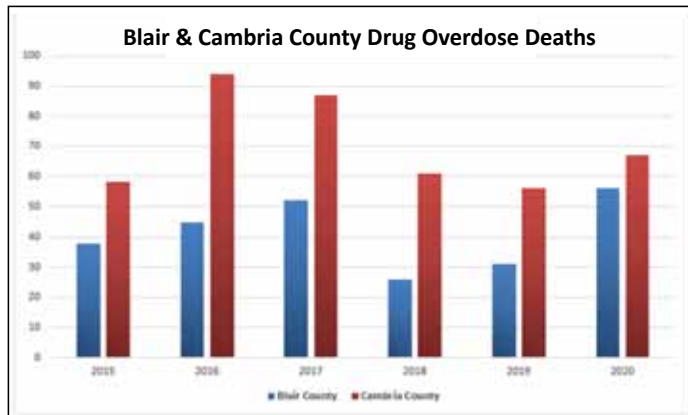
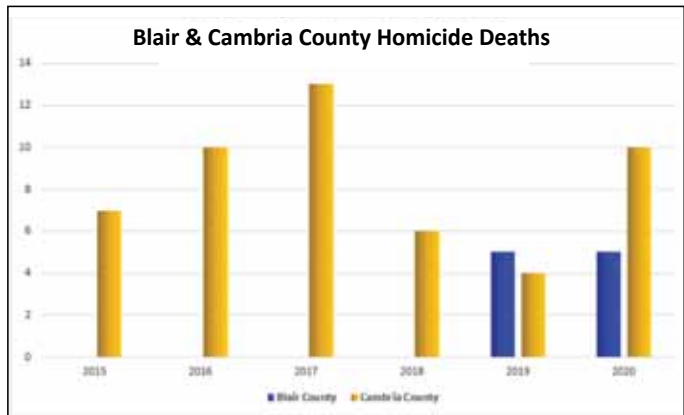
The OOT Office

5508 6th Ave., Rear - Altoona, PA 16602



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POLICE REPORT



Source: Operation Our Town 2020

FRATERNAL
ORDER
OF POLICE



BALD EAGLE
LODGE #51

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SERVING OFFICERS
OF BLAIR, CENTRE,
AND CLEARFIELD
COUNTIES

Protecting the police officers who protect us

By State Representative Lou Schmitt

Let's say an individual goes out to a bar and gets drunk. And unruly. Someone calls the police. Officers arrive on scene. The officers attempt to take the individual into custody. While resisting arrest, the individual intentionally spits directly into their faces. The officers undergo what is to most right-thinking people a serious, humiliating, and potentially lethal assault. You would think that anyone perpetrating such an act on a law enforcement officer would go to jail.

You would be wrong.

You would certainly think that if the individual knew or had reason to know he or she had an infectious disease

and intentionally spit on a law enforcement officer, the individual would, without a doubt, go to jail.

You would be wrong.

When Officer H.T. Fownes of the Allegheny Township Police Department visited me at my District Office a while ago and laid out the above scenario for me, I have to admit, my first inclination was to think he must be mistaken. When he told me that even if the person knew they had HIV or Hepatitis and spit on an officer, most of the time, the only thing the perpetrator could be charged with was Disorderly Conduct – a Summary Offense – I couldn't believe that was the law. I promised Officer Fownes

I would look into the matter and if he was right, I would do something about it.



I did some legal research and discovered that currently, the law in Pennsylvania provides enhanced protection for officers who are subjected

to assault with bodily fluids in correctional facilities and while transporting individuals to and from correctional facilities. However, the cop on the street is afforded no such protection under the law. I knew right then and there, I had to work to change that.

The legislative remedy I came up with was current House Bill 103, which creates the new crime of "Harassment of Law Enforcement Officer." The offense would be classified as a first-degree misdemeanor, which carries a penalty of up to five years in prison and up to a \$10,000 fine. If the person knows or has reason to know they have an infectious disease, the offense would be classified

as a third-degree felony, which carries a penalty of up to seven years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000.

Perpetrators who weaponize bodily fluids in degrading and dangerous attacks upon our thin blue line, and especially those who do so knowing or having reason to know they have an infectious disease, deserve to be behind bars. And that's just where HB 103 will put them. In this age of COVID-19, in this age of civil unrest, protests, and riots, in this age where they are so often under siege, I want law enforcement to know that I will continue to do everything within my power to protect them. I am dedicated to protecting the police officers who protect us.

Blair County District Attorney's Office

By Peter J. Weeks, 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. Every person who uses a drop box is a local crime fighter!

The District Attorney's Office works to dismantle the organizations profiting from drug dealing and resultant crimes. In 2020, the District Attorney's Office continued to prosecute dozens of defendants with a known history of involvement

with controlled substances. Notably, the District Attorney's Office obtained a conviction following a jury trial of an individual who was charged with Criminal Homicide after he took another man's life as the result of drug trafficking. Another individual was sentenced to over a decade in prison after being convicted for engaging in several drug transactions in which the Defendant was selling heroin that was laced with Carfentanyl. (Notably, this defendant was released by

the court pending trial and is alleged to have committed a homicide in Allegheny County while on bail). The District Attorney's Office is committed to not only protecting the citizens of Blair County from illegal substances, but also from firearms that may come into the hands of individuals who are not permitted to legally possess them.

Many claim that drug trafficking and drug use are victimless and nonviolent crimes that unnecessarily See Blair County/Page A5



HONOR THE BADGE

OperationOurTown.org

Law Enforcement Year in Review

By Jarod Quist, Blair County Drug Task Force Coordinator

A NATIONAL LOOK

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there were approximately 81,230 overdose deaths between June of 2019 and May of 2020. By comparison to the previous 12 month period prior to June of 2019, opioid overdose deaths increased by 38.4 percent, cocaine overdose deaths increased by 26.5 percent, and methamphetamine overdose deaths increased by 34.8 percent. Methamphetamine overdose deaths during this time period have now surpassed cocaine overdose deaths.

PENNSYLVANIA

Data from 2019 indicates that there were 4,458 drug overdose deaths in the Commonwealth. Of those, 3,742 were opioid related. This is a nearly 20 percent decrease in opioid related deaths when compared to 2017 when there were 4,630. Still, in 2019,

approximately 12 persons died from an overdose death every day in Pennsylvania.

BLAIR COUNTY

In 2020, the majority of drug cases in Blair County were either for heroin or methamphetamine. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, there were only 48 controlled purchases of a controlled substance. The Blair County Drug Task Force had to find a new way to investigate during the pandemic. With a focus on drug interdictions and saturations, the Blair County Drug Task Force made 131 arrests for drug related crimes in 2020. Notably, the Task Force seized approximately \$280,000 in US currency, 5 vehicles, 2 ATV's, approximately 30 firearms, and on one particular case, seized 225 grams (roughly half a pound) of heroin/fentanyl.

PARTNERSHIPS

As the epidemic continues,

new partnerships develop which result in new strategies to combat it. Partnerships have been created between law enforcement, education, treatment, and medical professionals, to name a few. These partnerships are combining agencies at the federal, state, and local levels, and crossing municipal, county, and state lines. Pennsylvania is taking an active role in building these partnerships to develop new and innovative strategies to combat this epidemic.

Law enforcement will also actively participate in partnerships with education, treatment, and medical professionals with new and innovative ways to combat this epidemic to make Blair County a better, safer place to live.

The Blair County Drug Task Force, in cooperation with the Pennsylvania Attorney General's Office, Bureau of Narcotics Investigation, is dedicated to their mandate of investigating drug trafficking in Blair County.

DRUG PROSECUTOR: POSITION SUMMARY

By Katelyn Hoover, Assistant District Attorney

The Operation Our Town 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 2020, Assistant District Attorney Katelyn Hoover continued to prosecute numerous felony drug cases in her role as the Drug Prosecutor in the Blair County District Attorney's Office. Despite being a young prosecutor, Attorney Hoover vigorously litigated cases through each stage of the criminal justice system including preliminary hearings, pre-trial motions, and jury trials. She also carried a full caseload, which included a death penalty first-degree murder case and assisted District Attorney Weeks in the investigation and filing of charges in several drug delivery resulting in death cases. Attorney Hoover

reports directly to the First Assistant and District Attorney. She acts as the county-wide coordinator for drug investigations, prosecutions, and related training. Attorney Hoover handles a full caseload consisting of drug trafficking felony cases, drug manufacturing felony cases, firearms felony cases, aggravated assault, robbery, burglary, and endangering the welfare of children that correlate back to drug use, drug trafficking, and misdemeanor drug violations. In addition to her own caseload, Attorney Hoover assisted District Attorney Peter Weeks in the various stages of investigation and prosecution for drug delivery resulting in death cases, historical drug investigations, as well as drug cases filed in Blair County by the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General. Attorney Hoover was also recently authorized to approve search warrants, criminal complaints,

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The Best ME Is Drug FREE!

Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Report

By Honorable Elizabeth A. Doyle, Blair County President Judge

This past year of 2020 was a year of challenges for the Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB), also known as the Operation Our Town Criminal Justice Roundtable. While we barely started into 2020, CJAB meetings were temporarily halted during March and April due to the emerging COVID-19 emergency. Initially, for the safety and well-being of the CJAB members, the CJAB in-person meetings were halted. By May of 2020, the Blair County Court had established a means of conducting CJAB meetings using computer video resources, and meetings were reestablished via virtual video means.

Upon reestablishing virtual video meetings in May, President Judge Doyle opened the meeting with a comment regarding one of the goals of CJAB, the goal to participate remotely, and the President Judge observed that the present video (and some phone) participation reflected success at working towards that goal in that "we were coming together, though being apart to stay healthy."

However, prior to the start of the COVID-19 emergency, progress for the year 2020 had begun; in February, an important Memorandum of Understanding was signed among many of the key participants of the CJAB (Blair County Courts of Common Pleas, Blair County District Attorney's Office, Blair County Public Defender's Office, Blair Drug and Alcohol Program, Inc., Blair County Criminal Justice Advisory Board, Blair County Adult Probation Office, and the Blair County Commissioners) recognizing and clarifying the respective goals and expectations of the participating agencies.

Although the Blair

County DUI Treatment Court began operation on December 6, 2005, and then became accredited by the Supreme Court of

Pennsylvania in April of 2015, the 2020 Memorandum of Understanding outlined the respective goals and expectations of the participating agencies. A cooperative program of the above-mentioned agencies, the Blair County DUI Treatment Court has been developed to increase public safety by providing Court-supervised community treatment for nonviolent offenders with substance abuse issues and to assist those suffering from addiction at becoming responsible and productive members of the community.

Upon signing this agreement, designated partners acknowledged that (1) each team member must obtain 6 hours annually of continuing education directly related to DUI Courts and to the 10 key components as a requirement of AOPC accreditation; and (2) that partners endorse the DUI Court policy & procedure manual and agree to work collaboratively to resolve problems by consensus to ensure continuation of the Blair County DUI Court. In addition to these two major group tenets, each participant agreed to abide by guiding principles that were specifically oriented to their individual partner organizations.

Also in February, CJAB voted to support the Blair County Public Defender's Office and Court Administration in their

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

**BLAIR COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY
PETER J. WEEKS**

application to obtain funds through PCCD's Capital Case Indigent Defense grant. The goals of the project were the worthy intent to further improve the quality of indigent defense in a pending capital case in Blair County, and to enhance defense strategies for indigent individuals in capital cases. The CJAB recognized that the Blair County Public Defender is representing a homicide case, and the cost of having a Mitigation Specialist to the County is very expensive, though important, as an aspect of Justice.

May was also an important meeting in that there was information disseminated about the pending Coronavirus Aid Relief Act (Coronavirus Supplemental Relief Funding). CJAB was to be the coordinating entity for the grant process, and it was estimated that Blair County would be eligible for just over \$91,000 in Relief Funding. The effort to attain this funding was eventually successful, leading to excellent resources that benefited the Court, County, and partners in continuing to make progress throughout the COVID-19 emergency. The CJAB law enforcement partners actually identified a drop in "call volume" since the start of the COVID emergency, which was a pleasant surprise to the group.

Many other vital COVID emergency related issues were discussed. The Housing Committee, represented by

Ken Dean, showed how the County had reacted in support of the homeless community, and stated that approximately 50 to 60 individuals were being provided with temporary housing in local hotels and motels during the COVID emergency, along with being provided with food and services as needed. The Public Defender discussed how his office had overcome the difficulty of speaking with jail-lodged clients during the emergency. Ashley Gay Vocco from Family Services brought to light the increase in temporary housing requests due to domestic violence, with these situations doubling during the COVID emergency. Finally, President Judge Doyle provided insight on how the Governor's order prohibiting evictions during the COVID emergency may affect the community and the Courts.

The May CJAB meeting brought to light how the COVID emergency affected each of the partner organizations, and how each organization was able to continue to operate and make progress. The specialty courts had reported a great increase in positive drug screenings during the start of the COVID crisis, and the specialty courts were taking steps to have Drug Court and DUI Drug Courts getting participants "in front of a Judge" as soon as possible in order to get the general specialty court population "back on track." One of the reported

bright spots at the start of the COVID emergency discussed during the May meeting was that CJAB participant Blair County Drug and Alcohol was continuing to find ways of getting people in need of treatment into programs despite great difficulty due to the COVID outbreak.

There were two major highlights of the June 2020 meeting, which again, was conducted via remote video participation. The first highlight regarded Ken Dean's discussion of a new reentry initiative initiated by Commissioner Bruce Erb. The new program, titled the "Blair County Reentry Coalition," included development and planning by many CJAB members. The focus of the coalition would be to ensure that as prisoners are released from the Blair County Prison, that they maintain improved skills and greater resources to assist in their reintegration into the community. The continued progress to develop this program during the COVID emergency served as an example of how the important work of the CJAB Roundtable could be successful, even in light of a major health emergency. June also brought positive news in that the Specialty Courts had reestablished court operations by including staggered times for court appearances, along with some remote video participation.

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DEPARTMENT UPDATES

2020 Year in Review : Dept. Highlights

ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP

Police Department – Assistant Chief Michael Robison

- The Allegheny Township Police Department purchased and began utilizing WatchGuard in-car and body worn camera systems.
- The Department handled 4,869 incidents in 2020, slightly down from the 5,203 incidents we handled in 2019.
- The Department continued to participate in the statewide Aggressive Driving and Buckle Up PA Programs that focus on traffic safety.
- 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. As a result of making several impaired driver arrests, Officer Paul Mummert Jr received a Top Gun Award.



Pictured: Blair County Sheriff's Office: Blue Lives Matter!



Pictured: Altoona Police at lemonade stand

- The Department investigated 316 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2020, slightly down from 341 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2019.
- The Police Department was fortunate enough to receive a Safe Medications Disposal drop off box from KidCents and the Rite Aid Foundation. Community members now have an additional safe and secure location to dispose of unwanted medications.
- The Allegheny Township Police thanks our community and programs like Operation Our Town, Blair County Crime Solvers, 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 – Sgt. Matthew Plummer

- In 2020, the Altoona Police Department handled 22,221 calls for service (an average of 61 calls per day), made over 2,000 arrests (256 of those arrests being possession with intent to deliver narcotics), and responded to over 200 drug overdoses.
- This year, we had 4 homicides in the City of Altoona, in which successful arrests were made in each case.
- 21 officers were affected with COVID-19 throughout the year.
- Community events were limited this year due to the



Pictured: Blair Township Police with Santa

escorting over 1,000 members of the community in a peaceful protest throughout Altoona.

- Santa Visits with Professional's Auto Body, in which officers accompanied Santa to provide 15 local families (46 children) with a better Christmas this year.
- The department started our very first APD Christmas Tree decoration program this year. Local youth were encouraged to come into the police station to obtain pre-made ornament kits to decorate two Christmas trees in the department lobby. Children could also mail letters to Santa and donate to Toys for Tots. The department collected countless toys for the Toys for Tots program.
- The department dedicated the front roll call room to Deputy Chief Tony Alaniello, who passed away on April 8, 2020, after a battle with Leukemia. Tony was still serving as Deputy Chief when he passed away and served the department for over 50 years.

BLAIR TOWNSHIP

Police Department – Chief Roger White

2020 was a busy but safe year for the officers of the Blair Township Police Department.

- COVID-19 was a dominant foe, which necessitated remarkable changes to how we operated and interacted with our public. Many positive changes were made to ensure the safety and health of our public and our officers.
- BTPD handled approximately 2,000 incidents

in 2020.

- 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.
- Our focus also continued on detecting/arresting impaired drivers. Ptlm. Nathan Hale was recognized for his efforts in this area and was awarded the Top Gun award for departments in our category in Blair County.
- The prevalence of alcohol and drugs continues to be a factor in a large percentage of incidents handled by the Department. Incidents involving individuals with mental health issues also increased in 2020.
- 2020 technology upgrades included the purchase and installation of in-car cameras, as well as individual officer body cameras.
- Officer safety was also enhanced through the acquisition of enhanced body armor, ballistic helmets and face shields, and individual officer ballistic shields.
- In December of 2020, the Blair Township Police assisted a well-known celebrity with some scouting and address checks as he prepared for his annual Christmas Eve trip.

The Blair Township Police Department thanks its citizens and Operation Our Town for the continuing cooperation and support in our efforts to keep Blair Township the great community it is, and we look forward to serving in 2021!

HOLLIDAYSBURG

Police Department – Chief Rodney B. Estep, Jr.

Hollidaysburg Police Department is comprised of nine 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 2020, Chief Estep presented a lofty set of goals for the department. Among the goals accomplished were implementation of a completely overhauled policy and procedure manual, as well as adding a detective and ninth officer to our ranks. Below you will find statistics from 2020:

- 3,840 Calls for Service
- 244 Criminal Arrests
- 46 Juvenile Arrests
- 835 Traffic Citations
- 1,149 Vehicle Stops
- 24 DUI Arrests
- 44 non-traffic Citations

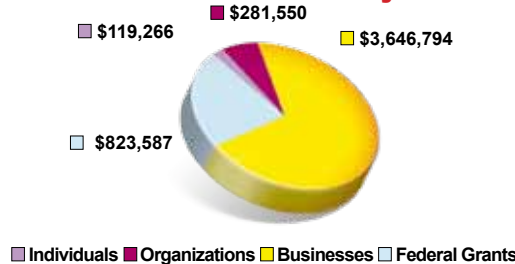
In 2021, Hollidaysburg Police Department is excited to continue the service to the community and is praying for a return to more normal ground. Should you have any questions regarding the Hollidaysburg Police Department, please do not hesitate to call.

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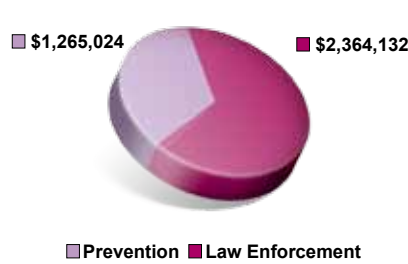


COMMUNITY

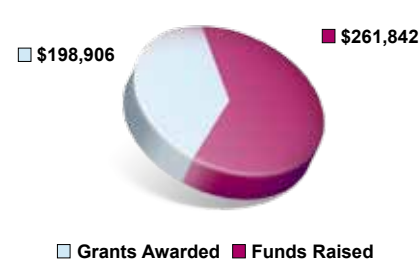
2007 - 2020 OOT Money Raised



2007 - 2020 OOT Grants Awarded



2020 Results



CONTINUING THE FIGHT ON BLIGHT

By Mayor Matt Pacifico, City of Altoona and Rebecca Brown, Director of Codes and Inspections

This past year, we've all experienced challenges and endured hardships, and the fight against blight has been no exception. The City had to develop different strategies and utilize different tools in our fight against blight during a pandemic.

Statistics show that blighted, abandoned property can be a danger to the public and can lead to an increase in crime. Not only does blight create a negative effect in our neighborhoods, it also 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.

We're pleased to report that in 2020, the City added two additional tools to the Blight Task Force toolbox: the establishment of an Assistant District Attorney, and further engagement with the County relative to the sale of condemned properties.

The City of Altoona's Solicitor was sworn in as Assistant District Attorney, which enables misdemeanor charges to be filed against repeat Code offenders. After a summary citation receives two guilty findings, the Assistant District Attorney is able to file misdemeanor charges, which carry a stronger penalty. The use of this tool has been effective in achieving compliance more quickly than previous enforcement cases that could sometimes take years to resolve.

In late December 2020, the City began utilizing Senate

Bill 940. Senate Bill 940 will allow municipalities to file and record properties under a condemnation order. When a property, dwelling, or structure is declared condemned, the City will file an order with the County, and the order will be considered a legal notice to all purchasers or prospective buyers of the property. The recorded condemnation order will be a lien on the property and will not be affected by a County Upset Sale, a Judicial Sale, or Repository Sale; the condemnation order will remain with the property until such time it is vacated by the City. This Act is a significant step in the fight against blight, and one that will be a great benefit to the City in terms of responsibility for condemned properties.

Although the City was unable to hold our annual Altoona Community Clean Up Day, we are hopeful that the event will continue in 2021. While other volunteer groups were also unable to come together to hold a cleanup event this year, "solo" cleanups are still encouraged. There are many ways neighbors can assist one another with collecting litter, weeding sidewalks, and other basic maintenance and upkeep of properties. Until such time we can organize a group event, these "solo" efforts can make a difference in neighborhoods. Keep an eye out for 2021 Altoona Community Clean Up Day information.

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



**Blair County
CRIME SOLVERS**
814-695-7555

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. (currently inactive & will meet as needed)



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 abuse 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 abuse 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.

Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator is at 814-296-8730.

Blair County: DA's Office

continued from A2

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, stabbings, and other acts of violence by those involved in drug trafficking.

Unfortunately, in 2020, the trends from 2019 continued and we saw a significant rise in fatal overdoses involving fentanyl, methamphetamine, and heroin, and a historic rise in drug related homicides. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an excuse for social activists to release dangerous individuals from prison and has stalled our ability to do trials. We look forward to being permitted to resume jury trials to get back to the business of fairly and effectively trying those who prey on our community. Now more than ever, it



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.



**FAMILIES
UNITED
FOR CHANGE**

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.

Marianne Sinisi
COORDINATOR
814-934-8067

Blair County Drug Court Program

By Katelyn Hoover, Assistant District Attorney

Once an individual is charged with criminal offenses, the case advances through the various stages of the criminal justice system before reaching a final disposition of a guilty plea or a trial. Throughout the entire process, attorneys from the Blair County District Attorney's Office and the attorney representing the defendant are engaged in negotiations to try to reach an agreement that is satisfactory to both parties. When negotiations are occurring between the interested parties, there are a variety of tools at the disposal of both sides that can be utilized in order to ensure a balance between punishment and rehabilitation can be achieved.

In Blair County, one of these alternatives is the drug court program, which is now called probation with restrictive conditions. If an individual is accepted into this program, he or she enters a guilty plea to the respective charges and is placed on supervision for a period that is typically eight years. During the first three years of that

Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation

By David Cunningham, President

You, Dear Reader, don't need to be told that 2020 was a singular and, yes, difficult year. It's no exaggeration to say the pandemic has disrupted every aspect of our lives. Work with the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation has been no exception. Despite significant setbacks though, this year has shown us just how important outdoor, open-air activity is for all of us.

If you're not familiar with our group, the BTW Corp is a collection of volunteers here in Blair County dedicated to creating recreational spaces for residents of all ages and abilities. Over the past decade, we've completed some truly remarkable transformations across Altoona, starting way back in 2008 with the Booker T. Washington Outdoor Facility at 19th Street and 13th Avenue. There's also been Prospect Park along 15th Street, Hamilton Park on East Cherry Avenue, and other smaller improvements around the city. From our earliest days, Operation Our Town has been a partner in this revitalization work, and we've been thankful for their continued support. Since 2008, we've been fortunate enough to complete over \$1.2 million worth of public park projects across Altoona.

This year in particular, spaces such as these were fundamental for the well-being of our communities. In the earliest days of the virus, when even outdoor parks were closed as a precaution, many people were dealt a reminder of just how important these spaces are to them. When it was safe to reopen them, demand

for parks and other outdoor activities was overwhelming. Being outside has helped to recharge spirits dampened by the isolation and boredom of lockdown.

Both of our major annual events had to be cancelled this past year, but that's not to say it was a total loss. With the help of a generous grant from Operation Our Town, we were able to continue work on our latest project - improvements to Iuzzolino Park on Maple

needs.

In closing - a request. 2021 is sure to be a slow year, as our large fundraising events took a hiatus. However, as an infrastructure-building organization, we have the luxury of taking a year off from spending as well. Another partner is not so fortunate. Our annual Community Classic Dinner is traditionally held alongside the Central Blair Recreation Commission. While we raise



Pictured: Merry Go All at Iuzzolino Park

Avenue, near the Jaffa Shrine. 2019 saw the installation of a beautiful new playground by the city crews. In 2020, the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp and members of the Iuzzolino Park Restoration Project were able to keep that momentum going with the installation of a new Merry Go All. This playground equipment is similar to a traditional merry-go-round, but features seats so that children of all abilities can join in the fun. The project was a part of our larger effort of recent years to incorporate accessible play equipment into parks that might otherwise be failing children with special

money for parks, they raise money for their recreational programming, specifically their scholarship fund for low/moderate income families. The demand for this programming has not stopped because of the pandemic. Indeed, the need is greater than ever. If you are reading this, we encourage you to consider making a donation to the CBRC so that they may continue this meaningful work. More information on their scholarship fund and programming is available at their website CBRCParks.org.

David Cunningham's goal is to enhance neighborhoods throughout the city of Altoona.

REP. JOYCE

Continued from A1

realistic solutions that will help all of us in Altoona and across Blair County.

While we fight addiction in our communities, we also must stop illicit drugs from reaching our streets in Blair County. As the only doctor on the China Task Force, I led our work to hold the Chinese Communist Party accountable for illicit fentanyl that originates in China and kills our friends and neighbors in Pennsylvania. Additionally, I have worked to stop the legalization of marijuana and to secure our borders from illicit drugs.

As we stay tough on drug

dealers, we also must be a pillar of support for individuals and families struggling with addiction. The pandemic has created new challenges – including limited access to in-person care – and I am working with community leaders to overcome these barriers. Despite these setbacks, I have been inspired by Pennsylvanians' commitment to this effort, and their commitment to each other. In the year ahead, I am committed to continuing the pursuit to combat addiction and support the courageous Pennsylvanians in recovery.

Drug Prosecutor

Continued from A3

and consensual interceptions relating to the Pennsylvania Wiretap Act. In addition to these responsibilities, Attorney Hoover began working on an initiative which will allow specialized prosecutors and law enforcement officials to visit local schools in Blair County and conduct age appropriate information sessions to educate the youth about various topics including, but not limited to, the criminal justice system, internet safety, the dangers of controlled substances, and dating violence.

The District Attorney's Office, through Attorney Hoover and Attorney Hausner, continue 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. These training opportunities allow our local law enforcement to stay up-to-date on the latest trends in drug trafficking and drug related crimes, including homicides.

The cases investigated and prosecuted in 2020 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, gun crimes, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, and theft cases. Blair County saw an increase in the number of theft cases in which firearms were stolen. In May of 2020, at the conclusion of a nine-month investigation, officers arrested six individuals in connection with the exchange of firearms and controlled substances between Cambria and Blair Counties. In July of 2020, law enforcement officers successfully executed the

Continued on Page A22

GRANTS: 2020 RECIPIENTS

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town holds a grant cycle once a year to support programs aimed at preventing and/or reducing drug abuse and/or crime in Blair County. All nonprofit organizations, schools, and government agencies are

eligible for grant consideration.

The 2021 Grant Cycle will open on May 3, 2021 with a deadline for grant applications on June 4, 2021.

Applicants have the option of using the "\$2,999 & Under" or "\$3,000 &

Above" grant applications to apply for funding. Please note that both grant applications have been revised and updated, so the updated versions must be used to apply for funding for the 2021 cycle. To access the updated

grant applications, please visit the Operation Our Town website at www.operationourtown.org and click on "Apply Now" under the Grants tab on the homepage.

A total of over \$48,000 in grants were awarded by Operation Our Town during the 2020 Grant Cycle to the following programs:

1. Altoona Area School District ELECT Program: ELECT (Education Leading to Employment & Career Training)
2. ArtsAltoona: After School Arts Program (ASAP)
3. Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County: S.M.A.R.T. (Students & Mentors Achieving Results Together) Mentoring Site-based Program
4. Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School: Drug Testing of Students
5. Blair Regional YMCA: Family Y-Nite
6. Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation: Iuzzolino Park Revitalization
7. Center for Independent Living of South Central PA: TEAM Builders
8. Central Blair Recreation & Park Commission: Youth Sports Program Supplies & Equipment
9. Child Advocates of Blair County: CHOICES Summer Program
10. Community Worship Center: Community Kids! Weekly Program
11. Cops & Boxing: Cops & Boxing Program
12. Evolution Expressions: Arts for Healing Groups
13. Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation: After School Program
14. Refuge Youth Network: Backyard Events
15. Roaring Spring Community Library: Curiosity Creates Open Art Studio
16. The ROCK: Reaching Out to Community Kids
17. Tyrone Area High School Agricultural Education Program: Growing Vertical to Help the Community
18. United Way of Blair County's Family Resource Center: Parents as Teachers Program and 24/7 Dad
19. Young Life of Central Pennsylvania: Young Life Camp

See Something? Say Something! 693-3020

Healthy Blair County Coalition

By Coleen Heim, Director



With the impact of the pandemic, the Healthy Blair County Coalition had most of their projects and events cancelled or adjusted. Our goal for this past year was to maintain our partnerships and the importance of staying physically and mentally healthy. 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

represented diverse sectors of the community, and who were likely to be involved in developing and implementing strategies and activities. Currently, there are 142 community partners who represent individuals and a diverse group of organizations.

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

community decisions would have an impact, who had an interest in the effort, who ranked 63 out of 67 counties for being unhealthy. In 2020, we improved to number 43. We understand that 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 2021, we will be conducting our fifth community needs assessment. This involves sending out a survey to 3,000 random households in Blair County along with surveys for key leaders, service providers, faith-based organizations, and healthcare providers. The surveys will focus on community and household challenges including economics, education, environment, health, housing, leisure activity, safety, social, transportation, and the impact of COVID-19. We also provide

the opportunity for any organization that would like to administer the survey with their own clients, families, or consumers. If you receive a survey, please complete it. The results of your survey, as well as others, will provide us with information on what you think is most important so our work groups can develop programs and activities that are most beneficial.

We will continue to provide awareness of our mission and work towards increasing collaboration and partnerships among all aspects of the community. For more information on the Healthy Blair County Coalition and the activities of our work groups/committees, visit www.healthyblaircountycoalition.org and like our Facebook pages. Individuals and organizations can get involved in the following ways:

- Join the HBCC and attend coalition

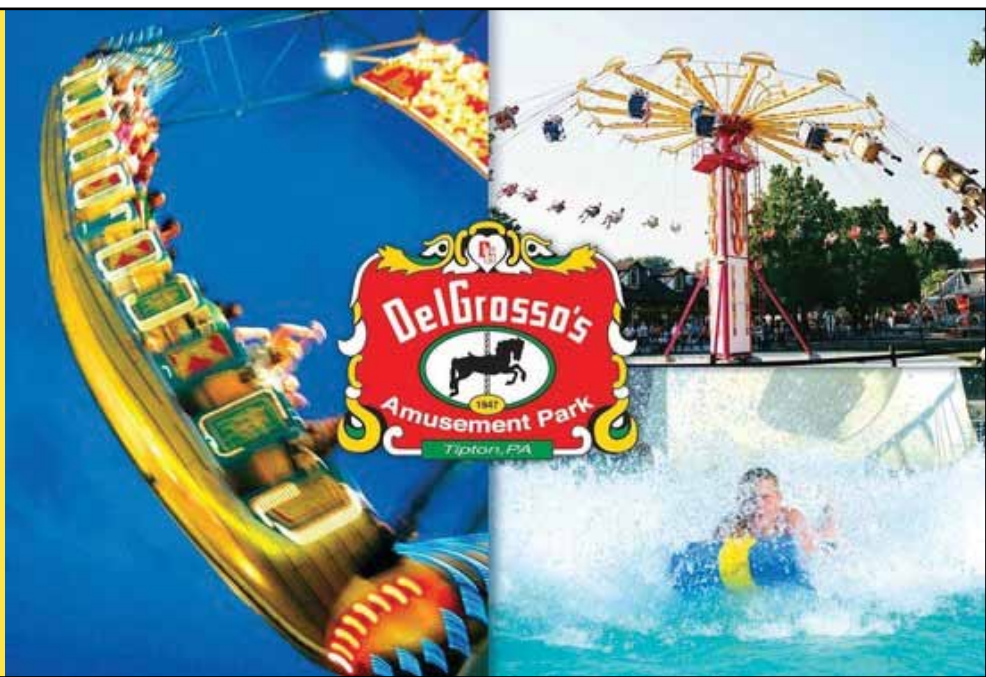
meetings.

- Serve on work groups/committees.
- Collaborate and promote HBCC initiatives such as Let's Move Blair County Day, the Active Living Steps Challenge, the Youth Connection Initiative, etc.
- Use the HBCC logos on your website, newsletters, etc.
- Provide funding or sponsorships.
- Include HBCC in local community efforts and/or let us provide a presentation for your community group.
- Complete surveys as part of our next needs assessment beginning in June 2021 and/or use the Community Health Needs Assessment report.
- Eat healthy and be active.

Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash

Save the Date!
August 5, 2021

Go to DelGrosso's website "Events" for more information:
www.mydelgrossopark.com



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Operation Our Town makes donation to support Blair County small businesses affected by COVID-19

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town held its 8th Annual Golf Tournament on September 14 & 15, 2020. The two-day event included a Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park and the US Foods Neighborhood BBQ at Park Hills Golf Club on Monday and the main Golf Tournament on Tuesday at Park Hills Golf Club.

The OOT Board and Golf Committee wanted a portion of the 2020 golf tournament funds to help those affected by COVID-19. So in lieu of sponsor gifts to golfers, gift funds were used to make a \$21,000 donation to the PA 30Day Fund, which provides forgivable \$3,000

loans to small businesses in Blair County who were affected by COVID-19.

According to Doug Wolf, Chairman of the PA 30Day Fund in Blair County, "Since its inception in June 2020, the PA 30Day Fund has provided financial assistance to over 600 businesses in 57 counties

of PA. In Blair County, which is the second largest individual county initiative in Pennsylvania, over 65 small businesses have received a much needed \$3,000 forgivable loan."

Doug added, "Now, thanks to the generous donation of \$21,000 from Operation Our Town, the Blair County faction



Pictured left to right: Brian Durbin (OOT Steering & Golf Committee Member), Michael A. Fiore (OOT President), Randy Feathers (OOT Board & Golf Committee Member), Jesse Ickes (Committee Member, Blair County PA 30 Day Fund), Doug Wolf (Chairman, Blair County PA 30 Day Fund)

of PA 30Day Fund has the resources to fund an additional 7 small businesses who are working hard to fight through the economic difficulties brought on by the COVID induced shutdowns and downturns."

Jim Foreman, Facilitator of the PA 30Day Fund in Blair County said, "Following the

announcement of Operation Our Town's generous donation made at the Annual Golf Tournament, several individuals and local businesses stepped forward to provide an additional \$40,000 to Blair County's PA 30Day Fund resources. So, combined with Operation Our Town's gift, that totals \$61,000 of additional funding which will be made available to 20 small businesses right here in Blair County."

Jim added, "Every dollar raised and mentioned above is being matched by a generous donor in Southeast PA. Those matching dollars will be used statewide to help small PA businesses throughout the Commonwealth, to include Blair County."

Doug Wolf and Jim Foreman expressed their gratitude for the donation, "Thank you Operation Our Town for your generosity and your meaningful support of Blair County in so many important ways."

Faith-Based Roundtable IT'S NOT WHAT WE HAD PLANNED

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

In January 2020, the members of the Operation Our Town Faith-Based Roundtable were sitting around a square table at Second Avenue United Methodist Church, making plans for our annual lunch n' learn. We had selected a new location for our event and had a topic that we thought would be beneficial to our community. In March, our plans changed. We found ourselves in limbo, locked down and isolated from our group that monthly, met to problem solve and pray for our community and specifically, for those impacted by addiction. The one thing you need to know about the members of this roundtable is that they are all about serving people, but how can you do that during a pandemic?

After taking a moment to regroup, we began meeting on Zoom, a bunch of non-tech savvy folks muddling through awkwardly, finding a way to share our concerns and new needs that were now coming to our attention as a result of COVID-19. Over the months,

we learned that overdose deaths were up over 30%. More and more men and women were showing up at rehab centers with only the clothes on their backs. Families were struggling financially, and many were in danger of being evicted.

As usual, the roundtable members could not allow these issues to go unaddressed. They began seeking out ways to get people reconnected to meetings, whether virtually or in-person. Several members created opportunities to get clothing to those in need and others volunteered to be trained as mediators for a new program aimed at reducing evictions. And during this, they provided support to each other, as we were personally impacted by positive cases and loss of family members to this dreadful virus.

No pandemic will stop this group from serving our neighbors. If you have a passion for helping others, we would love to have you join us.

Contact Lisa Hann at Lhann@familyservicesinc.net.

KEEP IT SAFE. KEEP IT GOING.

LINES ARE OVER-WAITED ORDER ON THE APP



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BUSINESS

Central PA Landlord Association Report

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 the Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable has been beneficial in coordinating landlord workshops, roundtable meetings, and reaching all segments of the community.

We normally hold our annual landlord educational workshop in conjunction with Operation Our Town and the Altoona Housing Authority in November each year, but had to cancel it in 2020 due to COVID-19. The OOT Housing Roundtable still wanted to provide information to landlords, so in lieu of the landlord workshop, a Landlord

Resource email was sent to landlords and agencies with helpful resource topics from professionals in their field. The topics included:

- Bed Bug Biology & Management
- Blair County Community Action Agency Programs
- City of Altoona Rental Inspections
- Fair Housing Regulations
- Keeping Domestic Violence Victims Safe/New Homeless Shelter Update
- Lead Remediation
- Magisterial District Judge Frequently Asked Questions
- Mold Identification
- Prepared Renters Program
- Section 8 Inspections
- Warning Signs of Illegal Activity in Rental Units

We hope to hold another landlord educational workshop in the fall of 2021. 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 guide is posted on our website. The following topics are listed in our guide with information and contact numbers:

- Blair County Municipalities
- Notice of Fair Housing
- Drug Activity-Rental Properties
- Section 8 Housing
- Student Housing
- Disability Resources
- Veterans
- Food Banks-Blair County
- Daily Meals-Blair County
- Blair County Adult Parole & Probation
- Central PA Landlord Association
- PA 211-Information Resource
- Blair County Medication Collection Box Locations

Check out our website at 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:
CentralPALandlords.com
William Kitt, President
814-695-2138

OOT Pharmacy Roundtable

By Greg Drew, RPh – Chairman, Pharmacy Roundtable;
 President, Value Drug Company

As we tuck another year behind us, I am very excited to relate the Pharmacy Roundtable's accomplishments during 2020. 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 attend 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 enhance the role of pharmacists, medical providers, counseling and treatment professionals, and law enforcement in the opioid crisis. The Roundtable brings 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, law enforcement professionals, and addiction treatment professionals dedicated to our principles, working collaboratively to help reduce the improper distribution of

opioids and addiction.

We are all making progress as we work together to control the scourge, especially considering the adverse impact of the current pandemic on accessibility to treatment. According to the IQVIA Institute for Human Data Science, prescription opioid use has declined by 60% from the peak in 2011. The decrease has been driven by changes in clinical use, as well as regulatory and reimbursement policies, especially in the high dose opioid products. One of the key roles of the Roundtable is education and awareness of the opioid epidemic and providing tools to help mitigate it. We appreciate the participation of our law enforcement partners who keep up on current trends they see in the community and partner with us to attack the diversion of prescription drugs.

We continued our publication of the Pharmacy Newsletter, which is distributed to pharmacists throughout the area, with two issues in 2020 leveraging information on the use of Narcan for opioid overdose

KEEPING YOU SAFE

Value Drug Company provides tools and resources to help our independent pharmacies fight the prevalence of opioid abuse in their communities.



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WWW.VALUEDRUGCO.COM

treatment. These messages also provided advice and tools for pharmacists to educate patients and healthcare providers. We worked with the University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy to provide pharmacist resources to educate patients on the dangers of short-term opioid use, including disposal options, risks of addiction, and alternative therapies.

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships (BDAP), a key participant in the Pharmacy Roundtable, has been training EMS and other first responders

on providing screening and brief interventions to assist in referral to treatment. Additionally, BDAP has obtained grants to further educate healthcare personnel, including pharmacists, of prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder. We will work with BDAP to schedule training seminars once the pandemic is behind us.

According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, prescription drugs remain the most responsible source of drug-involved overdose deaths and are the second

most abused substances in the United States. Despite the decrease in opioid prescription drug use, Blair County still reported 40 opioid related deaths in 2020 as of 12/7/2020. Clearly, our mission is far from over.

Thanks, once again, to our tireless committee members, assembling monthly at 7:15 AM on a Friday, to make our community a better place to live. And a big shout out to our Blair County pharmacists, champions for our patients as we fight the opioid crisis our country faces.

Check out our
NEW
 website!

OperationOurTown.org

Volunteer
 from **home**

CONTACT
Altoona

Visit our website @ CONTACTAltoona.com

LOCAL

2007–2020 OOT Prevention Grant Recipients

AASD Adult Education Program Altoona Area Public Library Altoona Area School District Altoona Area School District Foundation Altoona Boxing Club Altoona Housing Authority Altoona Parochial Catholic Youth Organization ArtsAltoona Bellwood-Antis School District Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School Blair Countians for Drug-Free Communities Blair County Adult Parole & Probation Blair County Chamber of Commerce Blair County Human Services Office Blair County Juvenile Probation Office Blair County Library System Blair County Prison Blair County Respiratory Disease Society Blair County Truancy Task Force Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships, Inc. Blair Regional YMCA	Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation Calvary United Methodist Church Catalyst Church Center for Independent Living of South Central PA Central Blair Recreation & Park Commission Child Advocates of Blair County City of Altoona Claysburg-Kimmel Cares Community Worship Center CONTACT Altoona Cops & Boxing Crossroads of the Altoona Area Duncansville National Night Out Against Crime Every Life Matters Pregnancy Support Service Evolution Expressions Family Intervention Crisis Services Family Resource Center Family Services, Inc. Garver Memorial YMCA Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation Hollidaysburg Area School District Home Nursing Agency Community Services IDA Community Development Corporation Joshua House, Inc.	Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church N.E.W.S. Worthy Network, Inc. Northern Blair County Recreation Commission Penn State Altoona Refuge Youth Network Roaring Spring Community Library Salvation Army Ski Gap Community Action Council Stepping Stones for Life Student Assistance Program Teen Link Connection The Beacon of Blair County Foundation-CPCF The Door Student Services, Inc. The Nehemiah Project The R.O.C.K. Tyrone Area High School Tyrone Area School District Tyrone Elementary School Williamsburg Borough Williamsburg Public Library Young Life of Central Pennsylvania Young Readers Council of Blair County-CPCF
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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, 937 Section 8 voucher units, and 126 non-subsidized units at Pleasant Village, with a staff of 34 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 Landlord’s 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, bed bugs, etc. The workshop helps agencies and landlords implement strategies to tackle those issues.

We normally hold our annual Landlord Education Workshop in conjunction with Operation Our Town and the Central PA Landlord’s Association in November each year, but had to cancel it in 2020 due to COVID-19.

The Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable still wanted to provide information to landlords, so in lieu of the landlord workshop, a Landlord Resource email was sent to landlords and agencies with helpful resource topics from professionals in their field.

The Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable has been meeting since 2007 and was created to identify solutions to drug activity and crime created by transient tenants. Throughout the years, the Roundtable progressed to serve an educational purpose. The Roundtable began to hold Landlord Education Workshops in 2010 and meeting more regularly to discuss common issues that landlords face from beginning to end. Since education has become the main priority, additional organizations, such as human service agencies that provide housing assistance, have partnered with the OOT Housing Roundtable to discuss and address current issues that they are seeing in our city and county.

Our city takes pride in taking a “pro-active” approach in housing. This means that landlords need to inspect their properties, fix deficiencies to meet regulations, and enforce their lease. The goal of the OOT Housing Roundtable is to find the issues that landlords need to know more about. We must find workable solutions to these issues and the best way to do it. That is why we are continuously trying to educate landlords so that they have the knowledge, resources, and tools they need to succeed and rent to responsible tenants.

If you are interested in serving on the OOT Housing Roundtable, please contact Mrs. Cheryl A. Johns, Executive Director of the Altoona Housing Authority, at (814) 949-2000, or Brad Kanuch, Administrative Office, at (814) 949-2016.



Partnerships key to Northern Blair Roundtable

By Sue Griep, Chairperson, Northern Blair Roundtable

Partnering with other organizations and working as a team to meet the needs of the northern end of the county to keep it a safe and healthy area is the goal of the Northern Blair Roundtable of Operation Our Town.

The Northern Blair Roundtable is a strong network of business, media, legal, education, social, church, and civic organizations who come together on a monthly basis in an effort to better the community. The group, chaired by Sue Griep, has been working on learning about the community, the programs and services available, and priority needs.

Meetings are held at various locations throughout the community to better acquaint the community with locations, services, and facilities. If it is not possible for the group to visit a location, a speaker will present at the Bull Pen Restaurant or via Zoom. Speakers in 2020 have included: Dave Snyder of Tyrone Borough Council; Dave Taylor of The Door; Peter Frantz of ArtsAltoona; and Tracie Ciambotti and Terri Harpster of the HOPE Center in Bellwood.

For the past few years, the group has been working on develop a Resource Guide for agencies to utilize to refer clients to appropriate services. The guide is available on the Operation Our Town website.

The committee also offers a yearly spring workshop in the community. Last year’s topic was Mental Health and Co-Occurring Issues. The workshop was to be a partnership between Operation Our Town, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships, and Blair County Mental Health offices. While it was cancelled due to COVID restrictions, we are looking to reschedule in the fall of 2021.

The group also started authoring a monthly column in The Daily Herald newspaper on pertinent topics of general knowledge or new services. Committee members rotate to pen a column about a topic or program significant to their agency.

One of the most exciting projects the group has been working on is the partnership between Tyrone Area High School’s Ag Department and Epworth Manor nursing facility to restart their greenhouse. The Tyrone Area High School Ag Program received a grant from Operation Our Town and the Tyrone FFA for the project. The goal is to provide educational opportunities for students to learn, utilize an unused greenhouse for food, and ultimately reap the benefits of this partnership by donating the proceeds of the fruits and vegetables grown to the Tyrone Food Bank.

The Roundtable also remains helpful in supporting the Tyrone Borough Spring Cleanup Day, as well as other initiatives.

“We are so thankful that the northern end of the county sees the benefit of partnerships for the betterment of our community,” Griep said. “We found if you ask for help, someone will respond. It’s what makes this area such a great place to live.”

For more information on the Northern Blair Roundtable, contact Shawna Hoover at Operation Our Town at shawna@operationourtown.org.



Pictured: Tyrone High School student, Libby Buck, setting up and planting the Hydro Tower in the school’s greenhouse.



Pictured: Growing Towers in the school greenhouse that Northern Blair Roundtable partner, Tyrone Area High School students, are using to grow produce that will be donated to the Tyrone Food Bank

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:

- **Allegheny Township Police Dept. (814) 695-9563**
3131 Colonial Dr. Duncansville, PA 16635
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- **Altoona Police Dept. (814) 949-2489**
1106 16th St. Altoona, PA 16601
24 hours per day / 7 days per week
- **CVS (814) 944-9224**
200 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 9:00pm
Saturday, 9:00am – 6:00pm
Sunday, 10:00am – 6:00pm
- **Giant Eagle Pharmacy - Altoona (814) 946-4267**
181 Sophira Ln. Altoona, PA 16602
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OOT: 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 three years. In the past, we were given air time each quarter on the morning "radio circuit" on each of the local radio stations via a live interview. In 2019, Forever Broadcasting began using a new format, which allowed me to record an interview that was aired periodically on Sunday mornings throughout the year. 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 2021 highlights include the Operation Our Town Grant Cycle, Operation Our Town Mini-Golf Tournament, and other community events! 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!

STATE CONTINUES EFFORT TO COMBAT OPIOID ADDICTION CRISIS

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

The opioid epidemic continues to hit Pennsylvania particularly hard. Every day, thousands of Pennsylvanians - mothers and fathers, children, neighbors - struggle to overcome addiction.

As of December 7, 2020, there were 4,458 drug overdose deaths recorded in Pennsylvania for 2019. Of this number, 83.9% (3,742) have been confirmed to be opioid related. In November, the Governor signed the 12th renewal of the Opioid Disaster Declaration.

Sadly, with the Covid-19 pandemic, I would expect the number for 2020 to be higher. This pandemic has exacerbated many of the social conditions, including unemployment, low incomes, and isolation, that contributed to the rise of the opioid epidemic. People are experiencing stress, anxiety, grief, financial worries, and a sense of uncertainty. For those battling addiction, quarantining and social distancing have resulted in disruptions of treatment and recovery services and limited access to mental health services and support.

According to preliminary data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 19,000 people died of a drug overdose in the first three months of 2020, nearly 3,000 more than the same time period in 2019.

If that rate stays constant or worsens, the U.S. will be on track for an all-time high number of overdose-related deaths in a calendar year.

With this knowledge, the state must develop more strategies to help those impacted by abuse. Although there are numerous bills, I will highlight four of them to be introduced in the Senate:



1) A pilot program to connect individuals in recovery with occupations through local workforce development boards. An important, yet often overlooked, side effect of this epidemic is the vicious cycle that many individuals fall into when trying to find and maintain steady employment with a history of a substance use disorder.

2) Permit Emergency Medical Services (EMS) providers to leave a dose package of life-saving naloxone with the on-scene

caregiver of a patient who overdosed on opioids and was revived by the EMS, providing a standing prescription has been issued by the Department of Health.

3) Eliminate the disparity in access standard for substance abuse center services between urban and rural areas. Currently, the access standard for out-patient and residential services must be within 30 minutes of travel time in urban areas, while it must be within 60 minutes of travel time in rural areas. Statistics from around the country show that the farther a person needs to travel to obtain treatment, the less likely he or she is to maintain that treatment regimen. This proposed legislation would standardize the travel time standard to 30 minutes for out-patient treatment for both urban and rural areas.

4) A piece of legislation I put forth removes the Caregiver Support Program monthly care plan cost cap that has not been increased since 1993. The financial impacts to caregivers, especially grandparents raising grandchildren due to the opioid crisis, have steadily risen.

We need to be resourceful about how to create new methods of assistance and continue existing support services for those struggling with addiction.



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Early Childhood Education Roundtable Report

By Rodney Green, OOT Early Childhood Roundtable Chair

2020 was...well...“it was what it was” to so many in our community. Like many organizations and groups, the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted and continues to disrupt the early learning care to children and families. Likewise, the lack of accessible and high quality childcare impacted businesses and the workforce of Blair County, which are so highly dependent upon quality childcare. These negative impacts are being felt deeply throughout Blair County.

Think about it. What happens when:

- You can't go to work because your child cannot go to school for an extended time?
- Your employer cannot find a replacement for you and has to curtail business or even close the business?

• Your childcare provider has to significantly increase their fees to cover the cost of childcare, making it unaffordable for many low-income, working families?

These are just a few of the challenging situations that the Early Childhood Education Roundtable identified as areas of need and assistance. Throughout 2020, the Roundtable worked with other partners such as the Blair Chamber and Early Learning Investment Commission to gather data and anecdotal information to better learn about needs of employers and childcare providers.

During the peak months of the pandemic, local childcare providers suffered dwindling enrollments and loss of income. The losses were so severe that

it threatened to collapse the local childcare industry. Some relief has been provided and local centers are now open, but with increased costs and the difficulty of recruiting staff. One can only hope that the leadership involved with local vaccination efforts will prioritize early learning workers as “essential workers.”

When an essential support system like childcare is threatened, it has major spinoff effects on employment, crime rates, and mental health issues. Having the knowledge that your children are safe and well cared for is foundational to healthy communities. During 2021, the Early Childhood Education Roundtable will continue to work on efforts to stabilize and expand on the provision of high quality early learning programs.



Operation Our Town K - 12 Education Roundtable Report

By Robert Gildea, Superintendent of Schools, Hollidaysburg Area School District

The Operation Our Town K-12 Education Roundtable, consisting of superintendents from the seven Blair County school districts, was confronted with unprecedented challenges during the 2020 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic. With the sudden and swift order for all Pennsylvania school districts to move to a remote learning platform on March 13th, not only were Districts forced to develop an effective virtual learning model to meet our students' diverse academic needs, but, equally as important, to also redefine a system to identify and address the mental health needs of our students who would no longer have access to on-site school services. It was with an increased urgency that our Blair County school districts directed our resources during the 2020 calendar year to address the mental wellness needs of our students, knowing the well documented correlation of future drug use by students who are exposed to childhood trauma and toxic home environments and whose mental wellness needs are not addressed at a young age.

In a continuing effort to ensure school safety and student wellness needs are being met, all Blair County schools continued the utilization of the Safe2Say hotline. Safe2Say Something is a youth violence prevention program run by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. The program teaches youth and adults how to recognize warning signs and signals,

especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others and to “say something.” 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. Depending on the severity of the concern, the report is forwarded to a school representative, local law enforcement, or both. Some Blair County school districts have initiated additional resources to monitor student activity on school issued devices in an effort to identify activity that may cause a risk to students.

In addition, numerous initiatives have been implemented in all Blair County schools to address the wellness needs of our students. The Fall 2019 Pennsylvania Youth Survey (PAYS) identified an alarming trend in the number of students who have feelings of depression, disconnectedness, and low self-worth, all of which can be factors that contribute to future substance abuse. According to the report, a number of scientific studies have identified a link between mental health problems, such as depression, and the use of alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATODs) during adolescence. Depression is the number one risk factor for suicide by teens, a risk amplified in teens self-medicating with ATODs.

The most common depressed

thought was “at times I think I am no good at all,” reported by 37.2% of students in Blair County. 40% of students reported they felt sad or depressed MOST days in the past 12 months. Overall, 16.6% of students had seriously considered attempting suicide, compared to 16.2% of students at the state level.

Mental health counselors, screeners, and trauma-informed education to better equip adults to identify students at risk, as well as other intervention measures, have been implemented in all Blair County school districts in an attempt to meet student needs regardless of the school setting.

Districts continue to implement the Student Assistance Program (SAP) by administering frequent triage meetings with school psychologists and building principals. SAP teams have continued to meet weekly (virtually) to address the mental health and drug and alcohol treatment needs of our students. Students continue to be referred for services, which include individual and group counseling with our outside agency partners (UPMC Behavioral Health of the Alleghenies, Blair Family Solutions, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships, and Impact Counseling Services). Information about these services were sent to parents and families, and also added to district websites. The information included Emergency Crisis

contact information (Suicide Prevention Lifeline, Crisis Text Line, and the UPMC Crisis Line).

In the Spring Cove School District, guidance counselors teach lessons through the Second Step Program. They have also been incorporating mindfulness exercises at the intermediate level, as well as student wellness lessons through our Botvin Lifeskills program and the use of Headspace for mindful thinking. Virtual assemblies this year have focused on student wellness and kindness. The school counselor teaches Signs of Suicide in 6th grade, The Dove Self-Esteem Project in 7th grade, and The Truth About Drugs in 8th grade. High School teachers have been trained to implement Too Good for Drugs and Violence. These courses address a wide variety of wellness topics, including anti-drug instruction, mental health, etc.

Community and School Based Behavioral Health (CSBBH) Core Team have been established to identify students at risk and to work directly with the family right in the schools to develop a plan to meet the wellness needs of the whole family.

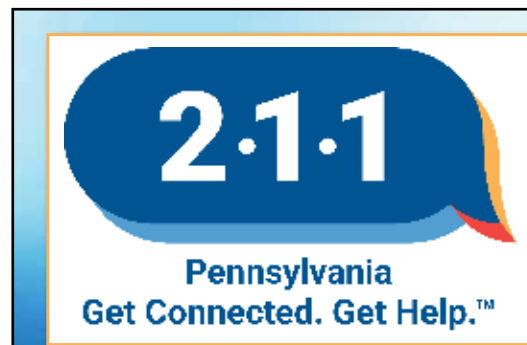
Counselors provide virtual counseling sessions, in addition to socially distanced face-to-face meetings with adults and students, as needed. Resources are shared with building employees regarding social, emotional, and mental health issues and we continue to refer students and families

to outside counseling services.

The school wellness counselor continues to be in the building daily to address mental health concerns of students and do daily check-ins with students and parents.

The Mindfulness Program was piloted by Altoona Area School District librarian, Mrs. Tanya Lucas, and funded by the AASD Foundation during the 2019-2020 school year. A mindfulness room was established inside the AAHS library. Students were introduced to the practice of mindfulness, training the brain to have focused attenuation and increased emotional regulation. The pilot groups included health classes, Friends of Rachel students, Community and School Based Behavioral Health students, students referred by school counselors, and several students from the AAJHS Autistic Support Class. A before school mindfulness class consistently saw 10-12 students attending daily. Once students attended and completed 10 sessions in mindfulness training, they were issued a mindfulness pass. The pass allows students access to the mindfulness room, as well as apps with guided meditations that can be used throughout the school day. More than 450 students and staff were introduced to mindfulness. The program is being expanded in the 2020-2021 school year.

See K-12/Page A18



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Recovery: navigation amidst a pandemic

Continued from A1

but those grass root supports such as 12 step recovery supports, SMART Recovery, Celebrate Recovery, and faith communities, are still being impacted. Most of our support groups are hosted by churches. Some of the churches have still not opened to allow these groups to return. The availability of the online support services are still available, but cannot replace the fellowship that is inherent and needed to sustain a healthy recovery. I, myself, have 33 years of recovery through a faith pathway and I can tell you, the isolation produced by the shutdown was real and I am still impacted today, as my church has only been able to be open for a short period during the pandemic. Unfortunately, the pandemic has impacted the work we had done locally and statewide to impact the overdose death rate. At the time of this article, we received notification from the Blair County Coroner a projected 78% increase in overdose deaths from 2019 totals during 2020.

From an SCA perspective, the response by the state and federal government was impressive. Regulations that could have completely left individuals without care in those first few weeks were removed. Examples of these regulations are Medicaid and uninsured funding of telehealth services (telephone/video conferencing-not allowed for these services). This allowed our treatment system to continue to maintain community-based services and

not leave individuals without connections and support. The SCA and provider system quickly adapted and were able to keep individuals in care during the last 10 months.

The PA Department of Human Services, Office of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Administration (OMHSAS) and the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP) were quick to look at the funding regulations for the exceptions to face-to-face services and address barriers to funding these exception services. They worked with the Behavioral Health Managed Care Organizations to ensure alternate funding payments to providers during the crisis.

Some of the barriers which were very real, especially in the rural communities and those of disadvantage due to poverty, were internet connections. Individuals who would have gone to different locations in their community

to use free Wi-Fi to make calls and text during the shutdown did not have this available to them. This left some without services and isolated.

Our capacity in residential facilities was impacted due to the need to organize the

admissions impacted. In fact, we saw a more critical level of substance use, especially alcohol, in the past 10 months, which resulted in higher levels of inpatient admissions being needed.

During the different waves of outbreaks in the communities, we received reports that our residential facilities are seeing outbreaks in their facilities. Anecdotally, it is being reported that most are asymptomatic, but due to the outbreaks and instructions to set up red/yellow/green pods, we are starting to see some impact on capacity to admit. The one frustration of the facilities are the testing resources. Labs are overwhelmed and testing can be days until results are received. This ties up the beds in the red pod, impacting admissions.

Most of our community-based providers have returned to face-to-face services. We initially saw engagement in telehealth services, but after

approximately 10 weeks, a significant drop off in engagement was noticed. In Blair County, we saw most of our providers returning to face-to-face services as soon as we went green, but still offering telehealth as needed. The concern for the recovering community drove these decisions. The challenges to maintain the services while trying to keep staff and clients safe and healthy are weighing heavy on the system.

The current environment continues to impact our recovery resources. Basic needs were disrupted, but we saw a coordinated effort to provide these basic needs (housing, employment, food, and clothing). We saw an increase in funding available to provide housing in hotels, which was temporary. This continues to be a significant need. Employment has continued to be disrupted, as in the general community. Churches increased their outreach for food distributions, which provided food options to the people we serve. Our office has a clothing closet, as well as using other community partners that support this resource. All of these resources continue to be available. As always, Blair County is truly blessed with numerous resources and genuine empathy of our partners to help serve our community, especially those who are disadvantaged due to poverty. I am truly grateful to all our partners who have activated over these last 10 months!



population into smaller pods in order to minimize the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak. PPE and testing was not made available to these residential facilities, leaving them scrambling to find resources. We did not see

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HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION: WORK GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

By Coleen Heim, Director

The following is a summary of work groups/committees and highlights from 2020:

The **Let's Move Blair County Committee** is implementing programs/activities to address obesity, encourage physical activity, and impact the incidence of diabetes. One of their goals is to encourage the integration of health and wellness into every aspect of community life by coordinating and collaborating with all other agencies currently working on this effort. The committee conducted an Active Living Steps Challenge during September – November 2020 with a goal of 100,000,000 steps. Participants surpassed that with 107,815,548



steps and we will be providing awards for the individual winner as well as for the small, medium, and large organization. Unfortunately, our Let's Move Blair County Day at Lakemont Park was cancelled due to the pandemic, but we are planning an even bigger event scheduled for June 24, 2021. In collaboration with South Hills School of Business & Technology, an interactive Active Living Brochure/Map was developed and copies are available for your school, business, or organization. It includes resources and

activities in Blair County.

In collaboration with HBCC, 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. A Workplace Wellness Toolkit was developed and is available to download from the Chamber's website. In addition, they hosted a series of "Chamber Chats" with topics and presenters focusing on making Blair County healthier.

The purpose of the **Substance Use & Physical Health Coalition** is to enhance communication and coordination between drug/alcohol and healthcare and medical providers. Under the leadership of Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships

(BDAP), the implementation of SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment) which includes substance abuse as an area screened during routine healthcare, has been a significant accomplishment. As part of the project, physicians, pharmacists, and other healthcare workers are trained to intervene and follow a protocol for referral to drug and alcohol services. The three healthcare facilities involved have conducted 45,555 screenings, 2,962 brief interventions, and

790 patients were referred to treatment. BDAP was asked to partner on a two-year national grant to implement SBIRT within pharmacies. Seven pharmacies in Blair County have implemented the program. There have been 3,500 screenings and 40 brief interventions. In addition, BDAP has received a federal grant to provide SBIRT training to emergency responders.

The mission of the **Pathways of Opportunity Network** is to foster a cohesive network to address social and economic inequities through educating the community, and accessing and sharing resources.

The committee continues to conduct poverty simulations and is available to conduct presentations for any group, business, or agency. In addition, they want to address food insecurity and explore assets to foster a healthier food environment. A sub-committee was formed to implement a pilot project to screen and provide healthy foods to patients at Altoona Family Physicians (AFP) and the Partnering for Dental Services Clinic. With the support from the Center for Independent Living, boxes of food and resources were distributed to patients.

Blair County was chosen to participate in the **Food Trust Farm to Early Child Care & Education (ECE) Program**. The Food Trust is a nonprofit organization with the priority to

improve access to healthy food and provide related information/resources through their Ready, Set, Grow Program. A kickoff Zoom meeting was held in July 2020 for ECEs and community partners. Because of closures and the pandemic, we are holding off on the project until the beginning of 2021 with the goal of strengthening Farm to ECE practices and policies in Blair County.

HBCC was invited to apply for a second **Rural Impact County Challenge** in cooperation with the National Association of Counties (NACo) and the Robert Wood Johnson (RWJ) County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Program. Blair County was one of twelve counties chosen to focus on housing needs by attending networking sessions with other communities around the country and receive resources. Although there are housing committees that have been meeting

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 Program to receive community coaching on efforts to reduce childhood poverty with an emphasis on youth connections. We created the **Youth Connection Task Force** to engage partners and implement ways to reach and provide pathways of opportunity for our community's youth. The Blair County Youth Connection Facebook page was designed for that purpose.

In cooperation with the United Way of Blair County and the School Attendance Task Force, we began implementation of the Be There School Attendance Challenge and Be There Buddy Mentoring Program. However, the challenges facing our schools, students, and families has led to a pause on this campaign for now. But the importance of students attending school, whether in person or virtual, will be one of the greatest challenges our community will face in the aftermath of the pandemic.

Continued on A16



AN INITIATIVE OF HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION

in our county, this would allow for a coordinated effort and exploration of new ideas.

The **Youth Connection**



Former Altoona Deputy Chief Tony Alianiello's grandson, Aidan, bringing pies to department on Thanksgiving.



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Criminal Justice Advisory Board Report *Continued from A3*

The second major highlight of the June 2020 meeting was that Ashley Gay Vocco from Family Services announced that our local CAC has moved up a level, and is one step closer to becoming an officially accredited CAC. The key factor was that a medical provider has been acquired for the CAC, and beginning on July 1, 2020, sexual assault exams can be accomplished on site. Other favorable news from Family Services was that CAC interviews were now being accomplished for cases beyond "emergency" situations (previously cut back due to the COVID emergency) and more standard cases were able to be scheduled on a regular basis.

During the June meeting, the CJAB group also voted to support a proposal by the Court and the Public Defender's Office to provide Coronavirus Supplemental Funding for the Court's need to protect

both employees and court participants from COVID. Some resources supported by CJAB were video resources (for both the Court and the Public Defender's Office), physical barriers and shields, protective equipment (personal and facilities), and sanitizers.

In July, CJAB introduced five new CJAB sub-committees that were established to support the recently initiated "Blair County Reentry Coalition." The five new sub-committees were: Employment, Housing, Education, Prison, and Resource Coordination. The "vision" of the Coalition was announced as "providing every incarcerated person with goals and knowledge so that they can safely return to the community as productive members of the community and remain offense-free." The Coalition intends that everyone being released from incarceration will be evaluated for what they need to be

successful. CJAB was also provided a presentation by the Specialty Courts Coordinator, Scott Schultz, regarding how the recent Medical Marijuana Act may be affecting the specialty courts and other CJAB partners. The CJAB board also voted to endorse a letter of support for the IP grant application.

In August, it was noted that the active criminal caseload was actually reduced, even in light of the COVID limitations upon the Courts. At the close of June, Blair County maintained an active criminal caseload of 1,669 cases, and that number was actually decreased to 1,604 active cases at the close of July. It was noted that the court's scheduling of extra all-day plea court dates in June really enabled all parties to move cases. The intensive use of alternative video appearances for court participants was also noted as a contributing

factor to the reduced active criminal caseload. Finally, a successful criminal trial term also led to numerous cases being disposed. Judge Doyle applauded the County's decision to invest in providing cell phones to the CJAB partner Public Defender's attorney staff. This extra means of communication provided to Public Defender counsel was cited as being a major factor in an overall improved service to the Public Defender clients, and has improved the appearance rate of this population.

CJAB partner Judy Rosser reported in August that placement into residential treatment throughout the Commonwealth has been very challenging due to the COVID emergency. She pointed out that a local facility, Cove Forge, has been affected with positive COVID test results. One facility, Concept 90, was reported to have had a

100% positive test response for both staff and patients. It was reported by the Specialty Courts Coordinator that the Specialty Court Judges had determined that participants of any of the Blair County treatment programs would not be able to use medicinal marijuana during their court-supervised treatment. Just as these programs can limit the use of addictive prescription medications as a term of participation in the programs, medical marijuana will be limited in the same way. The August CJAB meeting also brought the announcement that the CARES Act funding request was approved. Numerous technology items and physical protective barrier requests were a key aspect of the funding.

In September, CJAB participants voted to approve

Continued on A17



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LOCAL STUDENT WINS ESSAY CONTEST

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Congratulations to Courtney Irwin, an 8th grader at Altoona Area Junior High School, whose essay was chosen out of 80 entries as the winner of the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest! Courtney 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 Courtney’s essay on why people give in to peer pressure from those who use drugs and some of the best ways to avoid giving in to peer pressure:

You walk over to the lunch table and sit at your usual seat. Everybody is huddled over Stacy, acting suspiciously. “What is it?” You ask.

People shift to create a gap in the group. In Stacy’s hand, you see a black rectangle with a colorful tip. Your stomach sinks. You know what it is. It’s the newest trend, a Juul. They have been all over the news. The pods are filled with nicotine, a highly addictive drug.

“I got it from my brother,” Stacy whispers. “Wanna try?” She hands it to you while everyone stares, daring you to try it. How do you say no? What are you supposed to do?

As people grow older, they come across situations like these more often. Should you give in? Should you say no and be “lame”? While education evolves more every year, students should still be



Pictured from left to right: Barb Harpster (Media Consultant, Altoona Mirror), Joe Meadows (Partner, The Meadows Original Frozen Custard of Hollidaysburg), Courtney Irwin (Essay Contest Winner), The late Fred Imler, Sr (Former President, Imler’s Poultry)

properly educated on peer pressure. Minors are the most vulnerable to peer pressure, and should go into situations knowing how to react.

What is peer pressure and why do kids give in so easily? The dictionary defines peer pressure as influence from the members of one’s group. Not all peer pressure is bad. For example, a crowd encouraging an apology is fine. Convincing someone to do something they do not want to is wrong. Children give into peer pressure for many reasons. They could give into it because they want to fit in and are scared of being bullied.

Being educated on peer pressure is essential to

detecting it. Determining that someone is being peer pressured is hard. You might notice changes in personality, such as becoming more secretive, changes in attitude and language, and expressing emotions that are out of character. People may also spend more time with a new group. Drug use is a sign. If you notice any of these changes, pay attention for more.

Avoiding peer pressure is challenging because there are always going to be bad people who want you to do bad things. In most situations, you can use common sense. If something seems wrong, say no. You can make new friends. Being afraid of being

shunned is no reason to do something wrong. There will always be more opportunities to find friends, but there will be less opportunities to fix mistakes. Maintaining inner strength and self confidence is an important part of denying peer pressure. If you end up getting involved, talking to another person that stands with you might help. There is always a way out.

When your friends try to get you to Juul, you say, “No thanks.” They might call you lame, but because you are educated, you understand being considered lame is better than the alternatives. If they bully you, you can leave. Having the bravery to say no might encourage

others to say no, making room for positive peer pressure. You could inform an adult. While saying no to peer pressure takes strength, you will feel better in the long run.

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HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION WORK GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

Continued from A14

HBCC/Blair County received a \$20,000 RWJ Foundation grant, focused on sharing a successful program with another community for the purpose of replication and collaborative learning. The grant was used to replicate the Graduation Initiative/Connect like Crazy Program that was developed in the Tyrone Area School District and implemented in Altoona. A brochure and Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) were developed for distribution to other interested school districts.

The **Mental Health Work Group** is addressing unmet needs and working toward establishing or enhancing programs and strategies to more effectively serve children and families. This includes creating an awareness

of mental health and mental illness needs within the community, including the development of a suicide risk assessment app. Members of the work group are hosting Community Conversation about Mental Health. These conversations provide an opportunity for people to learn about mental health issues, including breaking down misperceptions and promoting recovery. 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 needs. The training is offered at no cost to schools, law enforcement, faith-based organizations, community groups, and service providers. Under the leadership of the Blair County Department of Social Services, an app was developed for Blair County,

as well as nationwide, in conjunction with the developers of the program. Data from the Columbia Protocol app indicated that 179 contacts from Blair County were made using the app. You can download the app by searching for Columbia Protocol.

The **Alliance for Nicotine Free Communities** is supporting programs to implement or strengthen policies to create a nicotine-free environment (e.g. smoke-free workplaces, clean air ordinances, smoking cessation programs, etc.). 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. Another mission is to educate individuals on the impact of tobacco and the use of e-cigarettes, as well as provide resources to those individuals interested in quitting. To date, The Lung Disease Foundation has conducted presentations for over 616 parents, school personnel, students, and business leaders. They applied for a grant to purchase and install vaping detectors in the Hollidaysburg Area School District.

The **Dental Care Work Group** is forming partnerships to enhance resources and access to dental care services for adults and children in Blair County. This includes screenings and the establishment of a dental home for children to have access to continued dental care. Another goal is to educate partners who can share oral health messages with individuals and organizations working with young children.

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

Altoona Area School District PD - 814-941-6137
Contact Person: William Pfeffer

Bellwood Borough Police - 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

Hollidaysburg Area School District - 814-695-4416
Contact Person: Resource Officer Wayne Bush

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: Chief David Rosamilia

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

Tyrone Borough Police - 814-684-1364
Contact Person: Interim Chief Jessica Walk

Williamsburg Borough Police - 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 Brad Codd

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

Penn State Altoona Police - 814-949-5222
Contact Person: Lt. Jason Salm

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

PA Game Commission- 814-643-1831
Contact Person: WCO Pfister, WCO Zaffuto,
and WCO College

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

Spring Cove School District PD - 814-473-2111
Contact Person: Chief Rick Brozenich

Blair County Prison - 814-693-3155
Contact Person: Warden Abby Tate

Blair County DA's Office - 814-693-3010
Contact Person: District Attorney Pete Weeks

Blair County Coroner Office - 814-940-5938
Contact Person: Coroner Patricia Ross



Criminal Justice Advisory Board Report

Continued from A14

a letter of support for the new Blair County Reentry Coalition. The letter of support was forwarded to PCCD for approval. It was also reported that Drug Court unsuccessful discharges of program participants was on the rise at a greater level than noted in 2019. This rise was attributed to the reduced personal interaction between the Judges, probation officers, and Drug Court participants. It was noted that CJAB participant Sheriff James Ott intends to establish a Crisis Intervention Team for his department. The Veteran's Court sub-committee was also making progress after some difficulties during the

COVID emergency, and the sub-committee has started to make progress in the area of determining Veteran mentor requirements.

The October meeting included a presentation by Jon Frank, Director of Juvenile Probation, regarding information that he previously presented at the "Needs-based Budget" Public Hearing. The presentation covered the "secure detention" situation in Blair County, the increase in alternatives to secure detention, the effect on new filings and community service due to COVID, and the status of juvenile restitution in Blair County. The County Court Administrator, Janice

Meadows, reviewed changes in the 2021 criminal court calendar that were instituted in order to better service the court and the court participants in light of the ongoing COVID emergency.

Exciting news was announced that the CAC has taken another positive step in that a new forensic interviewer was hired. This new interviewer, though hired on a casual, part-time basis, will assist in providing a stronger CAC capability. As a side issue, the CAC announced that after 3 years of operations, they have presently conducted over 500 interviews, demonstrating great strides in a short time.

The Blair County Reentry Coalition made an announcement that they have included an actual "reentrant" onto their planning committee. The recently formed coalition has also began approaching actual Blair County Prison detainees in regard to getting a first-hand review of the needs of reentrants, based upon the actual population's outlook. The Stepping Up Initiative announced that a full-time coordinator has been hired, and that this step should lead to increased activity for the program. The final issue discussed was the new requirements that have come into effect due to recent legislation that began effective

in early 2020 regarding Act 114 and Act 115. New responsibilities for some of the court participants were reviewed, and some open questions for the future were set to be discussed on a future agenda.

The court values all of the input from everyone who participates and contributes to CJAB. We should all be proud of the accomplishments made during the challenges of the past year and remain focused on collaborating to serve justice in our community in 2021.

Honorable Elizabeth Doyle was retained to the Blair County Court of Common Pleas in 2013.

It Pays to Pass: voluntary student drug testing program

Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The Operation Our Town Marketing Roundtable created the It Pays to Pass Program five years ago to encourage students in 7th through 12th grade 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 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 "Choose Life, Not Drugs" 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.

This past year presented some challenges with the 2020-2021 drug testing program due

to school closures from the COVID-19 pandemic. The schools reopened in the fall of 2020, which allowed the drug testing program to operate for a short time, until the schools closed again in mid-November. The Hollidaysburg schools resumed in-person learning at the end of January 2021, which allowed the drug testing program to operate again with



some intermittent closures.

The Junior High only had a handful of students sign up for the program for the 2020-2021 school year. 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.

Although the Junior High kids don't drive, they do get excited to use the gift cards for food when hanging out with their friends in town." The Senior High had 69 students sign up for the

program for the 2020-2021 school year. The Senior High randomly tests two students each week. Mary Haenig, 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 look forward and hope for a more normal 2021-2022 school year to continue the drug testing program. 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 for the 2020-2021 school year: Allegheny Township Police Association, P. Joseph Lehman, Inc., and Ventura Construction Services. We also offer a huge thank you to Sheetz for partnering with us to support this very important program!

CHOOSE LIFE! NOT DRUGS.

Operation Our Town K - 12 Education Roundtable Report

Continued from A12

The Altoona Area School District ELECT program has received Operation Our Town funds for the second year in a row in 20-21. The program has used funding from the 20-21 grant cycle to pay for meals for students enrolled in the program during one on one sessions held outside of the home and for meals provided during workshop sessions with groups of students. Emergency supplies have been purchased to drop off meal kits while sessions are being held virtually. There is education surrounding the selection of healthy foods, preparation of food, and making selections for infants and toddlers to eat. Operation Our Town has allowed the ELECT program to continue a hands-on learning experience that ELECT grant funding can no longer support due to reduced amounts of funding.

This is a great opportunity for young families and parents. The Healthy Blair County Coalition Mental Health Workgroup is continuing to conduct a feasibility study for an inpatient adolescent mental health care facility based on the needs in Blair County. Data is being collected, reviewed, and the findings will be presented at a future meeting (2021). The PAYS Survey also indicated the use of vaping devices, both regionally and statewide, are nearly twice the national average. 35% of Blair County twelfth grade students indicated vaping within the past 30 days. School districts continue to work with Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships to educate parents and students on the trend and the harmful effects of vaping. To safeguard the health and safety of students, the Hollidaysburg

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office@parkhillsgc.com for menus & more information



Area School District recently received 20 vape sensors through a grant made possible from the Ronald McDonald House Charities and the Lung Disease Foundation of Central PA. The vape sensors have been installed in restrooms at the Junior High and Senior High buildings to detect and deter students from vaping. Blair County school districts are unified in our sincere appreciation for Operation Our Town and the critical impact the organization has had on the safety of our students and our communities.

2020 OOT Golf Tournament Results

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town held its 8th Annual Golf Tournament on September 14 & 15, 2020. The two-day event included a Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park and the US Foods Neighborhood BBQ at Park Hills Golf Club on Monday and the main Golf Tournament on Tuesday at Park Hills Golf Club. All funds raised benefit local drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County thanks to the 39 teams and 98 sponsors! Many thanks, once again, goes to the OOT Golf Committee, Park Hills Golf Club, and all volunteers who helped to make the event a success. The Operation Our Town Mini-Golf Tournament was held on Monday, September 14th at Lakemont Park's Keystone Falls 18-Hole Mini-Golf Course. Participants were invited to the US Foods Neighborhood BBQ afterwards for great food and networking. The winning mini-golf team was Blair Companies Real Estate, which received a special gift. The mini-golf tournament is a fun team-building event for businesses and employees of all ages, and a great alternative for those who

are not regular golfers. US Foods sponsored the Neighborhood BBQ on Monday evening in conjunction with the golf tournament. The dinner was provided by US Foods and their chefs, and Travis Seymore of Alto Markets cooked several different flavors of wings provided by Imler's Poultry. Beverages were provided by Furrer Beverage. Dana Thompson and Thompson Pharmacy provided the patriotic theme décor for the event. The Neighborhood BBQ also included an update from District Attorney Peter Weeks. The late Anthony Alaniello, former Assistant Chief of the Altoona Police Department, was honored for his service, and a plaque was presented to his family. The evening ended with a 50/50 drawing, and golfers, sponsors, and OOT grant recipients enjoyed networking on the outdoor patio. 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, 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. After golf, the evening ended with a dinner on the outdoor patio, with steaks provided by Hoss's Miles. 3rd Place: Bruno DeGol III, Nick DeGol, Andrew DeGol, Mark Saltzburg. The overall Closest to the Pin winner was Mike Macionsky (in the hole). The winning teams all received special golf gifts. Save-the-Date for Operation Our Town's 9th Annual Golf Tournament that will be held on Tuesday, September 21, 2021 at Park Hills Golf Club. 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 drug 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!

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 drug





SEE SOMETHING? SAY SOMETHING!

REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY

PUSH OUT THE PUSHER™

693-3020



Department Updates: Year in Review

Continued from A4

LOGAN TOWNSHIP

Police Department – Chief David Reese

•LTPD is proud to announce that they're continuing their collaboration with the Blair County Opioid Prevention Task Force through the Strategies for Coordinating Overdose Prevention Efforts (SCOPE) First Responders grant. The SCOPE grant promotes using motivational interviewing to conduct referrals and "warm handoffs" to help patients access substance use disorder and/or mental health evaluation and treatment; and providing referrals to those who are in need of treatment or resources for substance abuse disorder. All LTPD personnel have attended basic awareness training to support the initiative.

•LTPD K-9 Officers Vazquez and Swander continue to provide excellent service to Blair County law enforcement. During 2020, both "Freddy" and "Ciro" assisted Blair County law enforcement partners in 21 separate K-9 related incidents.

•In September 2020, LTPD Officers were successful in investigating and arresting the persons responsible for perpetrating a shooting in the Greenwood area along Bellemeade Drive, which resulted in an injury. A team of LTPD officers worked doggedly for several days to take the responsible actors Justin

Lefevre and Rebecca Todd into custody without incident.

•LTPD Officers Chris Rosenberry and Tyler McConnell were recognized by Chief Reese with a Letter of Appreciation for apprehending homicide suspect Vasilios Pentsas on 11/09/20 along Bellemeade Drive. Pentsas was wanted by the Altoona Police Department for a homicide that occurred earlier in the evening on 11/09/20.

TYRONE BOROUGH

Police Department – Interim Chief Jessica A. Walk

•The Tyrone Borough Police Department, along with members of the Attorney General's Office and the Blair County Drug Task Force, conducted a Tyrone-based raid on 9/9/2020 and 9/10/2020. There were 24 targets that were charged with Possession with the Intent to Deliver and various other related drug charges, all from Tyrone & surrounding areas.

•Officer Winters and her K9 Getro conducted 24 K9 sniffs throughout Blair County, leading to numerous drug related arrests.

•The police department handled 4,623 calls for service.

•The police department made 340 criminal arrests.

•The police department issued 472 traffic citations.



Photo Courtesy of Blair County Sheriff's Office

Blair County Sheriff's Office

By Sheriff James E. Ott

Ways our office serves the community:

We are blessed to have great partnerships throughout the community, which allows our office to participate/organize a variety of community events. Here are a few examples of our involvements: Annual Kids, Cops, and Cones at Meadows Family Center; DEA National Drug Take Back Days; Countywide National Night Out Against Crime; educational events with many of the senior centers; provide threat assessment and training for various business and church groups, including first aid, CPR, and Stop the Bleed training.

We constantly encourage residents, groups, or organizations to contact our office to schedule presentations on a variety of topics, such as: drugs and drug addition, home safety, situational awareness, gun safety and LTC topics, and changes in the law, etc.

Special Accomplishments:

On July 18, 2020, I had the honor of being the keynote speaker at the Deputy Sheriff Academy Graduation Ceremony. It was very humbling to be able to speak to the graduating class, pointing out goals and concerns as they move forward in the career of Law Enforcement.

The office also participates in many of the county-wide and targeted impairment and drug activities, as well as traffic safety programs, these all promote safer communities and roadways for the public.

By the numbers

Our office is proud to provide the following statistics processed for 2020:

Civil and Criminal process received/served: 1,002
Personal property eviction-writs of execution: 104
Real estate executions: 57
Processed-issued license to carry firearms: 4,746
Warrants served/processed/closed: 2,467
License to sell firearms: 13
License to sell precious metals issued: 7
Protection from Abuse (PFA) opened/processed: 448

Services the Sheriff's Office provides:

Our office is responsible for prisoner transports for scheduled court cases, safety and security of the courthouse campus, process PFA's, real estate sales, conduct on view arrests for criminal violations, conduct traffic enforcement efforts, serve warrants, and assist all other enforcement agencies upon request.

Our office provides additional safety steps by providing screening and security at the main entrance of the courthouse campus. Here are the results of those actions:

- Number of citizens screened at entrance: 65,174
- Number of items X-rayed: 69,841
- Number of prohibited items declared: 166
- Number of items intercepted by our deputies (contraband, drugs, weapons): 440
- Number of firearms declared: 7

How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your community service?

Practicing social distancing, while remaining supportive to our citizens who wish to exercise their legal right to carry a firearm, we're honored

and excited to announce being the first Sheriff's Office in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to implement the ability to complete and submit application and payment for a license to carry online. This process has allowed our office to better serve its citizens and remain in compliance with legal rights. The link for this process can be found within the Sheriff category of the county website, under license to carry information, online application process. By our office piloting this online process of application for LTC by partnering with Permitium LLC, we have opened the door for several other Sheriff Offices across Pennsylvania to establish the same program and offer the same process to their citizens, thus providing a better means of serving our communities. To date, there are 17 Pennsylvania Sheriff Offices now offering this process as a result of our initiatives, with additional preparing to do the same.

We were able to provide additional service/protection to the Blair County citizens and businesses by expanding operations to 24-hour service during the very challenging COVID shutdown times, thus allowing deputies to be more visible throughout our communities at all hours of the day and night in an attempt to deter criminal activity.

Operation Our Town Mini Golf Tournament



**Great Prizes,
Food, & Fun!**



Save the Date!

**Monday, September 20, 2021
@ Lakemont Park**

Keystone Falls – 18 hole Mini-Golf Course



Schedule of Activities:

**4:00pm – Tee time for OOT Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park
5:00pm – US Foods Neighborhood BBQ at Park Hills Golf Club**

Mini-Golf Sponsorships:

Individual Mini-Golfer – \$25
Mini-Golf Foursome – \$100
Mini-Golf Tee Sign – \$100

All funds raised benefit local drug enforcement and prevention programs through grants from Operation Our Town.

2020 Blair County Police Dept. Drug Collection Boxes Data

LOCATION	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	TOTAL
ALTOONA POLICE DEPT.	49.5 lbs.	49 lbs.	196 lbs.	97 lbs.	391.5 lbs.
HOLLIDAYSBURG POLICE DEPT.	67 lbs.	32 lbs.	46 lbs.	40 lbs.	185 lbs.
LOGAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPT.	20 lbs.	8.5 lbs.	17 lbs.	3.5 lbs.	49 lbs.
TYRONE POLICE DEPT.	76 lbs.	21.5 lbs.	28 lbs.	72.5 lbs.	198 lbs.
TOTAL	212.5 lbs.	111 lbs.	287 lbs.	213 lbs.	823.5 lbs.

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships Weekly Group Meetings

SMART Recovery:

SMART Recovery can be used as an alternative, or in conjunction with 12 step meetings for people who are working to recover from addiction. It advocates choice, so that those seeking recovery can choose what works best for them from a variety of options.

SMART Recovery meets every Monday and Thursday night from 6pm-7:30pm

Medication Assistance Recovery Anonymous (M.A.R.A.):

If you, a love one, or a friend are like us and need the support or understanding of being on a maintenance medication during your recovery journey, come out and get involved.

Let us stand together throughout the recovery process and support one another.

M.A.R.A. meets every Tuesday from 6pm-7pm

Hope Group:

We are recovering family members and friends who have been adversely affected by the addiction of our loved ones. We are here to seek guidance and support. HOPE Group offers a safe haven for those who feel they are alone in this struggle.

HOPE Group meets every Wednesday from 5:30pm-7:30pm

Dual Diagnosis Anonymous:

DDA is a peer support group based on an authorized version of the 12 Steps of Alcoholics Anonymous plus an additional 5 Steps that focus on Dual Diagnosis (mental illness and substance abuse).

DDA meets every Wednesday at 5:30pm

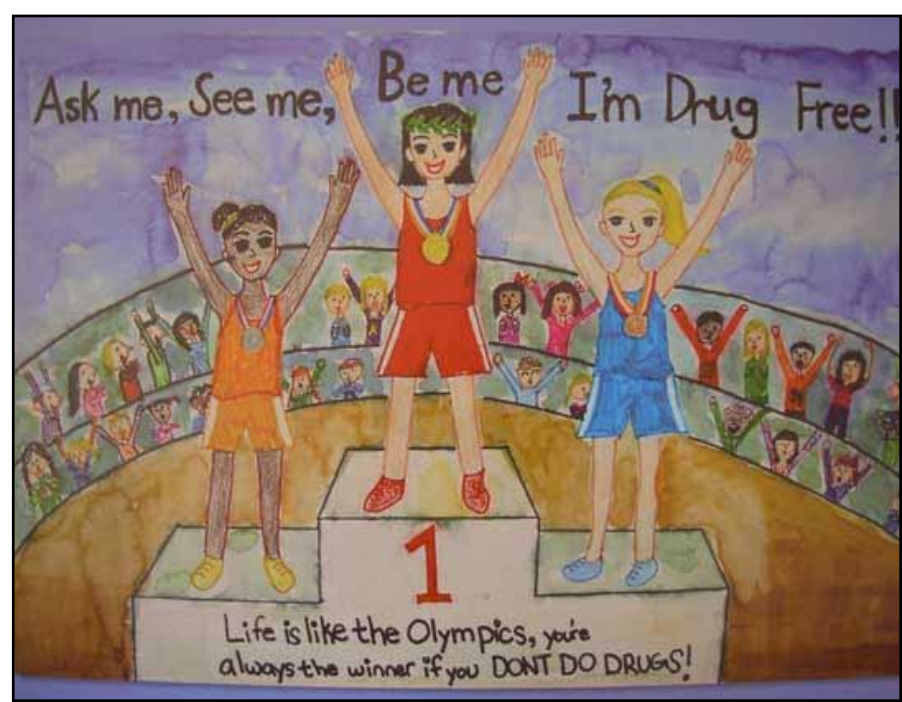
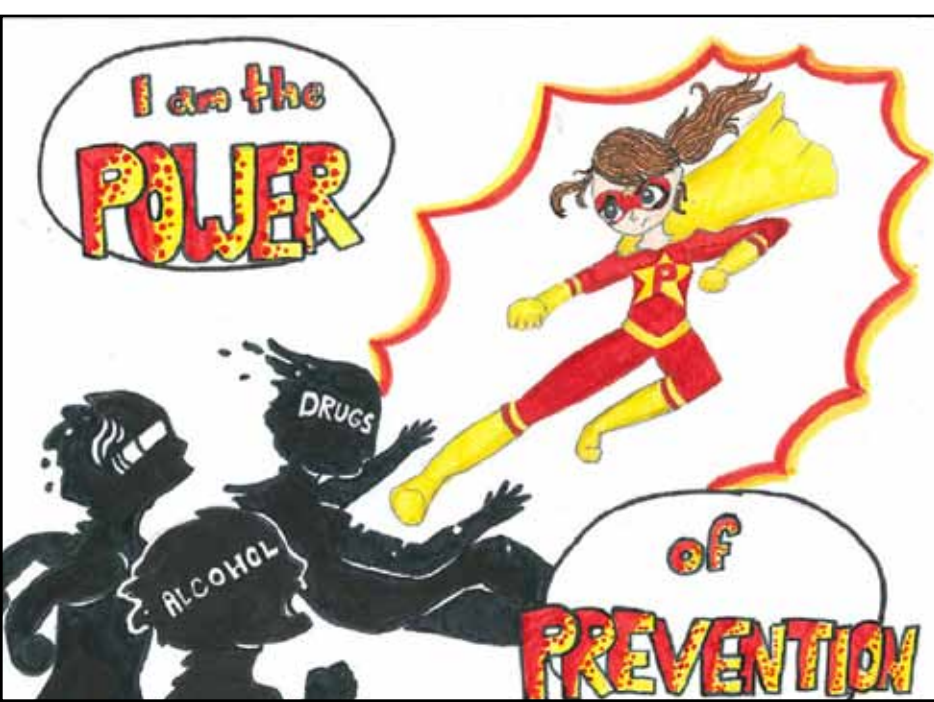
Healing Hearts:

Healing Hearts offers a safe haven for those who feel they are alone in this loss. It carries the message of compassion to those affected by addiction and the loss of their loved one.

Healing Hearts meets the 2nd and 4th Thursday from 6:00 - 8:00 pm



For more information on these groups and more, visit:
<https://www.blairdap.org/recovery/recovery-support-groups/>



IN THEIR OWN WORDS - STUDENT EXCERPTS

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The fight against drugs and crime begins with the youth in our community, because they are our future. This generation is facing many unique challenges and negative influences, so I wanted to share some of their thoughts and perspectives on drug use and peer pressure in their own words.

The following below are excerpts from the Top 10 essays that were submitted for our annual Essay Contest in November 2020 from Blair County junior & senior high school students that describe their thoughts and solutions to why people give in to peer pressure from those who use drugs and some of the best ways to avoid giving in to peer pressure:

Morgan, a 6th grade student at Altoona Area Junior High School, offered some wise words and suggestions for how peer pressure and drug use: "Peer pressure is not going away anytime soon. Understanding

why people give into peer pressure is just as important as knowing how to refuse it. Surrounding yourself with those who enjoy the same healthy hobbies you do and feeling like you have a support system is critical peer pressure defense. Someone feeling alone or like an outsider is more likely to give in. Remember that it is never just a one time thing. That one decision to try it just once can cause your life to change forever. It is important to remind each other that fitting in now is never worth sacrificing forever."

Branden, a 12th grade student at Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School, suggested the causes of peer pressure and proposed some solutions: "The root cause of peer pressure is fitting in among peers, in which rejection and bullying can result if one does not conform. Low self-esteem also influences those to become more susceptible to peer pressure. So,

the apparent solution seems to be to promote adolescents to become more independent with a high self-esteem. There are various ways to help build a teen's self-esteem and independence, but some strategies include teaching assertiveness skills, promoting self-improvement, and helping them develop positive self-talk. If adolescents can successfully participate in programs that assist and guide them in forming high self-esteem and independence as individuals, they will be more likely to resist peer pressure and protect their future from harmful activities like drug use."

Giavanna, a 12th grade student at Bishop Guilfoyle Catholic High School, explained how drug use and peer pressure can be caused by teens' use of social media: "Drugs are glorified on social media sites by numerous celebrities. Studies have shown that increased social media usage has led

to increased risk for having a mental illness like anxiety or depression. Unfortunately, most

"It's important to remind each other that fitting in now is never worth sacrificing forever."

Excerpt from essay submitted by AAJHS 6th grader, Morgan

young adults in America are active on social media daily, so this means that they most likely face negative thoughts or develop a negative self-image. Not only can social media make people develop issues, but social media also can offer solutions to the issues they cause. One resource says that kids who use social media are more likely to use drugs or alcohol. Drugs can be seen as an easy way for anyone to escape their depression, anxiety, or stress that is caused by their obsessive use of social media."

PHOTOS



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department



"Drive-by" birthday celebration with the APD

9TH ANNUAL **OUR TOWN** GOLF TOURNAMENT

Taking Back Our Neighborhoods

Save The Date!

September 20 & 21, 2021

PARK HILLS GOLF CLUB, ALTOONA

Schedule of Activities:

Monday, September 20th:

- 12:00pm – Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament
- 4:00pm – Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park
- 5:00pm – US Foods Neighborhood BBQ

Tuesday, September 21st:

- 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:

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 20th
- 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

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

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

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

Operation Our Town is now going into its 15th year of operation, and we're fortunate that we've been able to continue to provide funding for drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County, despite experiencing the harmful effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Our local and small businesses are the backbone of Blair County, and are the major source of funding that helps Operation Our Town to provide grants for drug enforcement and prevention programs. Many local businesses have been affected and continue to be negatively impacted by the shutdowns from the COVID-19 pandemic, but many have continued to support Operation Our Town, despite all of these issues.

In appreciation of the continued support from our small businesses, a \$21,000 donation from our 2020 Golf Tournament was made to the PA 30 Day Fund, which helped to provide forgivable \$3,000 loans to 7 small businesses in Blair County who were affected by COVID-19. According to Jim Foreman, Facilitator of the PA 30 Day Fund in Blair County, "Following the announcement of Operation Our Town's generous donation made at the Annual Golf Tournament, several individuals and local businesses stepped forward to provide an additional \$40,000 to Blair County's PA 30 Day Fund resources. So, combined with Operation Our Town's gift, that totals \$61,000 of additional funding which will be made available to 20 small businesses right here in Blair County."

Ongoing issues haven't changed and they always find different circumstances and levels of sophistication. This rings true for the current COVID-19 pandemic that we are experiencing, combined with the opioid epidemic that our area is still facing. In 2020, the majority of drug cases in Blair County were either for heroin or methamphetamine. 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.

Our Roundtables were still able to work on projects and community issues over the past year, but had to adapt in many ways by meeting virtually, cancelling or rescheduling events, and finding alternative ways to provide information. Our prevention grant recipients were also affected. Some had to request time extensions on their grants due to their events or programs being cancelled, while others had to find new and creative ways to deliver their programs and services safely.

This past year has tested all of us in some way and presented new challenges to overcome. As a community, we will continue to face new challenges in the future, but we can make a difference if we work together. Because of you, we are able to continue to touch thousands of people because of the generosity and support that the Blair County community continues to provide.

You can help take back our neighborhoods by volunteering or financially supporting the work of Operation Our Town. Visit OperationOurTown.Org.

Drug Testing Program Sponsors

Thank you to our 2020-2021 "It Pays to Pass" program partner and monetary sponsors:

Program Partner:



Program Sponsors:



Allegheny Township Police Association

COCOA WITH THE PO-PO



Cocoa with the Po-Po at the Green Bean Coffee House gave children the opportunity to interact with Altoona Law Enforcement.

Drug Prosecutor

continued from A6

largest seizure of fentanyl in the history of Blair County when it conducted a search of two residences pursuant to a lengthy investigation and several search warrants which resulted in finding approximately one hundred and fifty (150) grams of fentanyl.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the criminal justice system in Blair County experienced a significant influx in the number of bail modification petitions that were filed so that the bail of an incarcerated individual would be modified in such a way that would allow for his or her release from incarceration. Many of these individuals were charged with felony drug and/or firearm related offenses and subsequently released from the Blair County Prison on bail awaiting disposition of the case in the court system. The District Attorney's Office worked diligently to ensure that there was an objection to most of these bail modification petitions. However, such individuals were often released and later rearrested on serious offenses including burglary, robbery, possession of a firearm by a person who is legally unable to possess a firearm due to a prior felony drug conviction, and, most notably, attempted homicide.

In 2021, the Blair County District Attorney's Office will continue to join forces with local law enforcement to aggressively pursue drug investigations and those who engage in the distribution of controlled substances in its effort to protect the citizens of Blair County.

Drug Court: creating a balance

Continued from A5

supervision, the individual is subject to intense supervision by probation officers who are specially assigned to supervise the drug court participants. Prior to officially being sentenced into the program, the individual must undergo a drug and alcohol evaluation that determines a recommendation for a treatment plan. Once the individual is sentenced into the program, he or she must successfully follow this treatment recommendation, which typically includes an inpatient stay. The individual is also required to continue adhering to the course of treatment as outlined by the treatment professionals as he or she advances through the drug court program. Every two weeks, there is a group review of the individuals in drug court as each participant meets with the judge and other members of

the drug court team to provide an update as to what happened during the last two weeks in their lives.

Additionally, there are four phases in our drug court program that an individual must advance through in order to successfully graduate from the program. If an individual fails to follow the conditions of the program, there are a variety of sanctions that may be imposed by the judge, ranging from community service to a short period of incarceration. One may also be subject to revocation from the program should his or her violations be significant enough to warrant such result. Once an individual successfully completes and graduates from the three-year program, he or she is then subject to regular supervision for the remaining period, which is less intense supervision than

the drug court program.

While our drug court program emphasizes treatment and recovery of the individual, there is a close relationship that is formed between the participant, his or her probation officer, and the judge, unlike traditional sentences of probation or incarceration where the individual is brought before the court on the day of his or her sentencing and then sentenced. Additionally, many of the individuals who we allow into this program would be facing a significant period of incarceration at the Blair County Prison. However, being placed into this program reduces or eliminates the period of incarceration that he or she would normally be subject to based on the sentencing guidelines. This often incentivizes an individual to accept an offer to participate

in the program because he or she is permitted to remain in the community and sustain a support system that comes from their family and friends while learning how to maintain sobriety.

Despite what drug crimes look like at face value, there is a significant impact on society, communities, and families. The Blair County District Attorney's Office will continue to achieve a balance of punishment and rehabilitation of offenders.



District Attorney's Office

Continued from A5

is imperative that we return to roots and sentence those who traffic these deadly drugs to significant terms of incarceration. 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.



Photo courtesy of Altoona Police Department

Kidz Korner

POLICE OFFICERS

Police officers help keep our communities safe.

You can ask a police officer for help.

©ElementarySafety.com



Color Me!

Laugh Out Loud

Why did the cop go to the baseball game?
Someone "stole" second base!

What kind of jam does a police officer have on his sandwich?
a traffic jam!

Why was the detective at the beach?
There was a crime wave.

Word Search

Community Helpers

Find each word in the search.

Words go ↑, →, and ↘.

f	l	i	b	r	a	r	i	a	n
i	d	e	n	t	i	s	t	o	m
r	n	o	k	f	t	b	s	e	e
e	n	h	c	h	f	a	o	u	c
f	f	i	g	t	f	k	l	a	h
i	h	a	l	f	o	e	d	p	a
g	o	p	r	n	o	r	i	o	n
h	m	k	e	m	u	r	e	l	i
t	e	a	c	h	e	r	r	i	c
e	n	m	i	d	e	r	s	c	y
r	z	s	q	l	t	y	l	e	p

police officer

dentist

teacher

mail carrier

farmer

baker

firefighter

librarian

doctor

nurse

mechanic

soldier



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 that prevent and/or reduce drug abuse and/or crime in Blair County.

The donations listed in the donor categories below are cumulative.

\$10,000 and up: AIA Alera Group Alan Gehringer, Rhythm Systems Allegheny Supply & Maintenance Co., Inc. Altoona Area School District Foundation Altoona Curve – Lozinak Professional Baseball, LLC Altoona First Savings Bank Altoona Pipe & Steel Supply Company American Eagle Paper Mills Amtran Anonymous donor APR Supply Co. Arch Insurance Group Blair Candy Company, Inc.* Blair Companies* Bolger Brothers, Inc. Catalano, Case, Catalano & Clark-Radzieta Central PA Landlord Association Chester E. Grannas Family Foundation City Beverage of Altoona, Inc. Courtesy Motors D.C. Goodman & Sons, Inc.* Dean Patterson Chevrolet DeGol Organization 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 Groff Tractor & Equipment Harry K. Sickler Associates* H.F. Lenz Company Holiday Inn Express* Hoss’s – Willard E. Campbell Enterprises, Inc. Infinity Insurance Management Service John & Doug Wolf Jones Day Kooman & Associates, LLC Lawruk Machine & Tool Company, Inc. Lawruk Realty* Lee Industries, Inc.* Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.* McLanahan Corporation* M&T Bank* Newborn Enterprises, Inc. New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co.* New Pig Corporation* Nic’s Tobacco Outlet, Inc. Norfolk Southern Foundation North American Communications Northwestern Mutual NPC, Inc.* Park Hills Golf Club Patt Organization PNC Foundation Reilly Creppage & Co. Reliance Bank* Rotary Club of Altoona Say-Core, Inc. Seltzer Financial Strategies Sheetz, Inc.* Small Tube Products S&T Bank Stuckey Automotive The Hite Company Division of Mayer Electric* Thompson Pharmacy United Way of Blair County* UPMC Altoona* US Foods Value Drug Company Ward Trucking, LLC* Wolf Furniture* YTI Career Institute - Altoona	\$1,000 - \$4,999: 2nd Avenue United Methodist Church Allegheny Club of Hollidaysburg Allegheny Orthotics & Prosthetics All Things Automotive, Inc. Al’s Tavern Altoona Center for Nursing Care Altoona Housing Authority Altoona Mirror Ansley RV Arrow Land Solutions, LLC Atlantic Broadband Babst, Calland, Clements & Zomnir, PC Bickel’s Surplus Too, LLC Blair County Chamber of Commerce Blair County Golf & Driving Range – Madey Corp, Inc. Blair County Police Departments Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships Blair Medical Associates Blue Knob Valley Chainsaw Carving Competition Buccinese Society Bun Air Corporation Burgmeier’s Hauling, Inc. Burns White, LLC CBT Bank a Division of Riverview Bank Centre Concrete Company Cesare Battisti Mutual Benefit Association Cleveland Brothers Equipment Co., Inc. Cohen & Grigsby, P.C. Coldwell Banker Town & Country Real Estate Combined Insurance Construction Applicators Craig Fencing DelGrosso Family of Companies DelGrosso’s Amusement Park DiAndrea Media Discovery House Doing Better Business, Inc. Edward Jones Investments – Richard Logan Empire Communication Systems, Inc. Empower Business Solutions, Inc. Fenner Consulting Fiore Furniture Fraternal Order of Police Bald Eagle Lodge #51 Freedom Basketball Club, Inc. Fringe Benefit Group Golden Living Center – Hillview Good Advertising Helsel, Fiore, Sheeler Wealth Management Team Hollidaysburg Rotary Club Hollidaysburg, Inc. Housing & Redevelopment Insurance Exchange	\$1,000 - \$4,999: Keystone Real Estate Group, LP Koehle Maintenance Kranich’s, Inc. Lakemont Lions Club, Inc. Low Life Rider Chapter, Inc. Loyal Order of Moose, Altoona Family Center #74 Mama Randazzo’s, Inc. Mariska Eash Realtor, Stultz Real Estate Martin’s Food Market – Ahold Financial Services McAleer’s Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning Mock Creations Mountain City Law Dogs of Altoona Nason Hospital Olive Garden - GMRI, Inc. Omega Bank ORX Park Security Systems Penn State Altoona Pennsylvania Prison Warden’s Association PennTerra Engineering P. Joseph Lehman, Inc. Consulting Engineers Prevailing Wage Solution Center, LLC Priority Management & Associates Providence Presbyterian Church Ravine, Inc. Roaring Spring Blank Book/Roaring Spring Water Saint Francis University Sam’s Club #6460 Season-Aire, Inc. Secure-Tec, Inc. Senior Life Altoona Sheehan & Associates Shirley’s Cookie Company, Inc. Smith Transport, Inc. Solarshield Remodelers, Inc. South Hills School of Business & 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	Under \$1,000: 1st Summit Bank A-1 Paving AFSCME Local 906 – Hollidaysburg Veterans Home AFSCME Local 2188 – Altoona City Employees Allegheny Mountains Convention & Visitors Bureau Allegheny Township Police Association Alto Markets, LLC Altoona Auto Auction Altoona Catholic Nurses Altoona Center for Clinical Research, PC Altoona Honda Altoona Jewish Community School Altoona Police Narcotics Division Altoona Soft Water Appalachia IU8 ARC Federal Credit Union Associated Builders & Contractors, Inc. A. Thomas Farrell Law Offices Back in Action Physical Therapy & Fitness Center Backyard Burgers Baechle & Associates Architects Baltimore Life Insurance Beard Legal Group Beauchamp Plumbing & Heating, Inc. Bellwood-Antis School District Foundation Bellwood Fraternal Order of Eagles Bill Wertz & Sons Blair/Bedford Builders Association Blair Business Technologies Blair County Anesthesia, P.C. Blair County Beverage Blair County Children, Youth & Families	Under \$1,000: Blair County Crime Solvers Blair County Health & 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 Clear Creek Environmental Clip Art Salon Credit Control Collections Cresson Lions Park Association Cumming Motors, Inc. Daversa Pest Control Days Inn & Suites, Altoona Delozier Construction Despoy & 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 Evolution Counseling Services, LLC Excalibur Insurance Management Services Fairfield Inn & Suites–TownePlace Suites by Marriott Altoona Fairview United Methodist Church Family Pizza & Pub Family Services, Inc. Fiore True Value Hardware First Presbyterian Church First Stop Shop, Inc. Foster F. Wineland, Inc. Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #8 Frederick Lock & Key, Inc. Freedom Excursions by Scully, LLC Freedom RV Rentals, LLC Furrer Beverage Co., Inc. G.B. Wineland & Son, Inc. Geisinger Health Plan Gerard Ziegler, CPA G&G Auto Sales Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc. 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Lake Raystown Resort Law Office of Stephen D. Wicks Law Offices of Thomas M. Dickey Llyswen United Methodist Church Logan Lodge #490 F&AM Longstreth Brothers, Inc. Lumax Lighting Lung Disease Center of Central PA Mainline Medical Associates Manpower Marianna’s Fundraisers, Inc. Martin Oil Company Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc. McCloskey Builders, Inc. Mike’s Court Mike Servello Garage, Inc. M&M Roofing & Contracting, Inc. Moore Power Sales Moses & Associates, P.C. Mountain Lodge #281 – Free & Accepted Masons Mount Aloysius College – Physical Therapy Club Mueller’s Auto Recycling Musical Society Unter Uns Nimquin, Inc. Nittany Building Specialties, Inc. Okonak, Dean & Lechner, P.C. Old Canal Inn Overhead Door Company of Blair County Passarello Law Office PennCrest Bank Pennsylvania Highlands Community College Photo Flare Preferred Benefit Specialists Presbytery of Huntingdon PSECU Radiology Business Solutions, LLC Re/Max Results Realty Group R.H. Marcon, Inc. Riley, Inc. 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Individuals: 237 individual citizens.

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Professional and OOT Titles			
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