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Operation Our Town Reporter

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

Volume 14, Issue 4 - April 2022



OperationOurTown.org

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Small Tube Products
Stuckey Automotive
The Hite Company
Thompson Pharmacy
UPMC Altoona
Value Drug Company
Ward Trucking

Understanding Addiction, Mental Health & Co-occurring Disorders

Thursday, May 5, 2022

Session 1: 9:00am - 12:00pm OR

Session 2: 5:00pm - 8:00pm

at The Bull Pen Restaurant

(207 Jefferson Ave Tyrone, PA 16686)

Free to attend

Reserve your spot by contacting:

(814) 296-8730 or oot@operationourtown.org

Reservations preferred, but walk-ins accepted

****Please Register by Friday, April 29****

Sponsored by:



Mission

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



Month of April - Meetings

4/4	Booker T. Washington meeting	4:00pm	Central Blair Rec & Park Commission
4/5	Northern Blair Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Bull Pen Restaurant
4/20	Marketing Roundtable meeting	4:00pm	OOT office
4/21	Criminal Justice Advisory Board Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Blair County Courthouse
4/21	Faith-based Roundtable meeting	2:00pm	Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships & Zoom
4/22	Pharmacy Roundtable meeting	7:15am	Zoom
4/28	Housing Roundtable meeting	12:00pm	Al's Tavern



814-693-3020

Area police departments give year end review - A4

OOT: 15 Years of Making a Real Difference - A17



OUR TOWN TIMES

2022 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. XI

DRUG USE • NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH • COMMUNITY SUPPORT • EDUCATION • LAW ENFORCEMENT • VOLUNTEERISM

Opioid Addiction Crisis

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

Pennsylvania continues to struggle in the fight against opioids, despite efforts of the legislature and our communities. In 2020, there were over 5,000 reported drug overdoses in Pennsylvania. While final numbers are not yet in for 2021, projections look to have this year be on par with last. The opioid epidemic has impacted communities throughout Pennsylvania particularly hard. Thousands of Pennsylvanians including mothers, fathers, children, neighbors, and friends are struggling to overcome addiction. Sadly, the Covid-19 pandemic has only made this situation worse. This pandemic has exacerbated many of the social conditions, including unemployment, low incomes, and isolation that contributed to the rise of the opioid epidemic. This has led to increased levels of stress, anxiety, grief, financial worries, and uncertainty about the future. Quarantining and social distancing have resulted in disruptions of treatment and recovery services for those battling addiction, as well as limiting access to mental health services and support during this stressful time.

According to preliminary data from the Centers

BREAKING THE CYCLE

IT STARTS WITH PREVENTION

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

It was a dramatic increase in violent crime and drug use that brought about the formation of Operation Our Town in 2006. Criminal activity became the subject of daily news headlines: burglaries, violent crime, shootings, gang activity, and drug overdoses all escalated. A group of concerned citizens determined to find a way to fight back, formed an exploratory group. What they discovered was that most organizations, including law enforcement, did not have the resources needed to deter and reduce the criminal stronghold on our neighborhoods. It became clear that unless the community pulled together, we would lose our community to those profiting from drug and related criminal activities. Within a few short months, dozens of local businesses committed financial and other support to "take back our neighborhoods." Partnerships were forged between Operation Our Town and existing organizations in designated high crime neighborhoods across the nation. Weed and Seed has a modeled after the U.S. Department of Justice "Weed and Seed" program, which is a community-based strategy that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in designated high crime neighborhoods across the nation. Weed and Seed has a two-pronged approach in Operation Our Town was

See Breaking Page A22



Pennsylvania Get Connected. Get Help.™

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

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

www.pa211.org



814-381-0921

The 2022 Annual Report is now available!
To view the full report, click on the link below:

https://operationourtown.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/OOT_AR2022-2-14-22.pdf

Grant Recipient Highlight: Leaders of Tomorrow

By: Nick Gordon, PMSC AmeriCorps Member
with Operation Our Town



Wise people will learn from their successes and mistakes, while even wiser people have the ability to learn from the successes and mistakes of others. This is one of the reasons why mentorship is such an important part of prevention. Youth having the ability to learn from their failures, while also gaining guidance and advice from someone who has weathered the storms of life and overcame struggles provides an excellent opportunity to shape the Leaders of Tomorrow.

So what exactly is Leaders of Tomorrow? Well, it is a youth program serving ages eleven to seventeen, both male and female. The program takes place all year, and currently on Friday evenings from 5:00 pm to 7:00 pm with occasional Saturdays added for special events. Leaders of Tomorrow has a dedicated area provided in the Scorchin' Boxing Gym. The youth participate in game time, while also having an area to talk to each other and to the mentors. At Leaders of Tomorrow, youth also have the opportunity to participate in physical fitness activities through boxing, weight lifting, and cardio exercise.

There is no cost to join the program, and they are open to everybody within the eleven to seventeen age range. Their mission is to encourage Blair

County's youth to develop leadership skills, life skills, community involvement, and individual growth. One way that Leaders of Tomorrow accomplishes this mission is through participation in community cleanup and donations to homeless shelters.

Leaders of Tomorrow is unique because they bring in mentors from all walks of life that have been at a low point in one way or another and have risen above their problems to be better people. If you would like to volunteer as a mentor and share your story with the youth, they are more than happy to allow you to talk to them. Most of their volunteers are parents of their youth. For more information about any of the services Leaders of Tomorrow offers, or to learn more, please reach out at the contact info below.



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Monday-Friday 9:00am – 3:00pm

