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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 12 - December 2022



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

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## Our Town Times

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

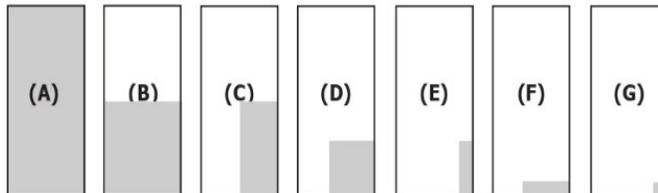


**Distributed at the Annual Blair County Chamber Operation Our Town Breakfast and throughout the year to local businesses and community organizations!**  
**SHOW YOUR SUPPORT AND COMMUNITY PRIDE!**

The 2023 report will provide an update to the readers from this past calendar year. We will hear from law enforcement, treatment providers, healthcare professionals, business leaders and others in our community about the impact Operation Our Town has made over the past 16 years and the importance of prevention.

Get the inside scoop from Operation Our Town Roundtables on their projects and efforts to help keep our community safe!

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Will you be submitting final artwork?  Yes  No

Use the same artwork from last year? (no charge) Yes  No

## Mission

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



REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY  
**PUSH OUT  
THE PUSHER**

**814-693-3020**

**2-1-1**

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**

## Month of December - Meetings

12/1

Housing Roundtable meeting

12:00pm

Al's Tavern

## Essay Contest Winner



Pictured left to right:

Barb Harpster (Media Consultant, Altoona Mirror), Joe Meadows (Partner, The Meadows Original Frozen Custard of Hollidaysburg), Holly Myers (Essay Contest Winner), Fred Imler Jr. (President, Imler's Poultry)

Congratulations to **Holly Myers**, a 6th grader at Spring Cove Middle School, whose essay was chosen out of 57 entries as the winner of the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest!

The winner 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.

See below to view her winning 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:

Peer pressure can be the reason why people give into drugs. Some feel lonely or have very low self-esteem in themselves. They feel drugs could be a way to make the hurt stop. Many see family members and friends do drugs and feel influenced, thinking it is okay to use them. Wanting to be in the "IN" crowd can be a factor as well. People will also try drugs not thinking about the consequences in the future and just want to have fun in the moment.

Peer pressure can be prevented in many different ways. Being a supportive friend to others that are going through tough times and finding yourself the same kind of supportive companion can be helpful in prevention. Keeping yourself busy with extracurricular activities is another way to avoid low self-esteem, which leads to peer pressure. Facing peer pressure is hard but it can be avoided by talking to a trusted adult, parent, or guardian. When a crowd of kids asks you to do drugs, think about the consequences of the future. Say NO to peer pressure and say YES to a drug free future.

# Grant Recipient Highlight: Renew Church BEN Blessed

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



*Photo courtesy of Bill Kibler, Altoona Mirror*

BEN Blessed's focus is serving the homeless community, though they will help anybody with a need that they can. The people they serve range from children to senior citizens and everybody in between. They typically drive the streets of Blair County 3-5 nights per week, year-round, looking for homeless individuals to serve. They also serve hot meals twice a month and assist with other needs and issues scheduled in advance or as calls of need come in.

As a street ministry, the majority of BEN Blessed's interactions take place outdoors as they travel all over the city of Altoona and surrounding areas. As a faith-based outreach, every service that they provide is free of charge and funded by community support. Their mission is to serve the homeless community of Blair County by meeting them where they are and providing for their basic needs while sharing God's love with them.

What does this mission in action look like in practice? BEN Blessed hands out backpacks of supplies, food, clothing, winter gear, tents, sleeping bags, and other essential supplies. They also offer ride services for various reasons, whether to make it to doctors' appointments, church or bible study, food banks and job interviews, or even to visit other agencies in order

to obtain help with needs BEN Blessed is unable to provide for directly.

One of the things that makes this organization stand out from others is that Josh Roland, the founder of BEN Blessed, once spent a winter homeless in Altoona. He can relate to those he serves on a more personal level because of this, and uses his own experiences to help others rise up out of their situation.

The ultimate goal is to continue working with the homeless until they can become reestablished in society. This means BEN Blessed aims to help out with stable housing, employment, as well as mental health and medical needs. For more information about any of the services BEN Blessed offers or to learn more, please reach out at the contact info below.



*Photo courtesy of Bill Kibler, Altoona Mirror*

**1201 11<sup>th</sup> Ave #3002 Altoona, PA 16601**  
**[www.facebook.com/benblessedaltoona](http://www.facebook.com/benblessedaltoona)**  
**Contact: Josh Roland**  
**Phone: 814-232-2988**  
**Email: [benblessedaltoona@gmail.com](mailto:benblessedaltoona@gmail.com)**

