



# OUR TOWN TIMES

2023 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. XII

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

## Fighting the Opioid Epidemic Will Take All of Us

By John Joyce, M.D., Member of Congress

Over the past several years, synthetic opioids like fentanyl analogs have found their way to every city, town, and neighborhood in our country. What began as a revolutionary pain management medication in 1959 has now spiraled out of control - becoming the infamous face of our nation's opioid epidemic.

While there is not one single cause nor one single solution to the fentanyl crisis, we must find ways to work together in order to fight addiction and save lives.

Now the leading cause of death among Americans between the ages of 18 and 49, fentanyl overdoses have become a far too common occurrence here in central Pennsylvania.

As a Member of Congress, I am working to keep these deadly drugs off of our streets, with a focus on securing our southern border, strengthening regulations against illegal drug manufacturing, and advocating for resources that support and promote rehabilitation for those battling opioid addiction.

To that end, I am deeply grateful for the work that Operation Our Town continues to do in the Blair County community.

The Drug Enforcement Agency has laid out a clear path of how fentanyl makes its way into our communities;



manufactured cheaply in Mexico, using Chinese-built pill presses, these drugs are disguised among other narcotics and then smuggled across our southern border.

Earlier this year, when I visited our Customs and Border Patrol Agents in McAllen, Texas, I saw firsthand the evidence of drugs being brought into our country, and eventually, our communities here in Pennsylvania. Our porous southern border has made every state a border state, and that is why I've co-sponsored legislation that supports effective border enforcement strategies, including new infrastructure and advanced technology to prevent illegal

See **John Joyce**/Page A5

## WHITTLE AWAY

### METHAMPHETAMINE: THE DEVASTATING EFFECTS

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Methamphetamine is a stimulant drug usually used as a white, bitter-tasting powder or a pill. Crystal methamphetamine is a form of the drug that looks like glass fragments or shiny, bluish-white rocks.

It is chemically similar to amphetamine (a drug used to treat attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and narcolepsy, a sleep disorder). Other common names for methamphetamine include chalk, crank, crystal, ice, meth, and speed. Crystal Meth, "ice," or "glass" is a man-made stimulant that includes the

drug pseudoephedrine. Methamphetamine is highly addictive and has no legal use. While methamphetamine can be made in small amounts by an individual, it most commonly enters the United States in large quantities via Mexico. Crystal Methamphetamine affects the central nervous system, causing a flood of dopamine which enhances

pleasure and causes euphoria. Eventually, as with most drugs, the user builds a tolerance and requires larger amounts or more frequent use to reach the same amount of pleasure.

**How do manufacturers make methamphetamine?**

Currently, most methamphetamine in the United States is produced by See **Whittle**/Page A22



## THE DANGERS OF FENTANYL

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

### What is fentanyl?

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse; National Institutes of Health; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid analgesic that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent. It is a Schedule II prescription drug, and it is typically used to treat patients with

severe pain or to manage pain after surgery. It is also sometimes used to treat patients with chronic pain who are physically tolerant to other opioids. In its prescription form, fentanyl is known by such names as Actiq, Duragesic, and Sublimaze.

### How do people use fentanyl?

When prescribed by a doctor, fentanyl can be

given as a shot, a patch that is put on a person's skin, or as lozenges that are sucked like cough drops.

The illegally used fentanyl most often associated with recent overdoses is made in labs. This synthetic fentanyl is sold illegally as a powder, dropped onto blotter paper, put in eye droppers and nasal sprays, or made into pills that look like other

prescription opioids.

Some drug dealers are mixing fentanyl with other drugs such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, and MDMA. This is because it takes very little to produce a high with fentanyl, making it a cheaper option. This is especially risky when people taking drugs don't realize they might contain fentanyl as a cheap but

See **Fentanyl**/Page A7

## HEROIN: KNOW THE SIGNS OF ADDICTION

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Heroin is an opioid drug made from morphine, a natural substance taken from the seed pod of the various opium poppy plants grown in Southeast and Southwest Asia, Mexico, and Colombia. Heroin can be a white or brown powder, or a black sticky substance known as black tar heroin.

### How do people use

### heroin?

People inject, sniff, snort, or smoke heroin. Some people mix heroin with crack cocaine, a practice called speedballing.

### What are the effects of heroin?

Heroin enters the brain rapidly and binds to opioid receptors on cells located in many areas, especially

those involved in feelings of pain and pleasure and in controlling heart rate, sleeping, and breathing.

### Prescription opioids and heroin:

Prescription opioid pain medicines such as OxyContin and Vicodin have effects similar to heroin. Research suggests that misuse of these drugs

may open the door to heroin use.

### Short-Term Effects:

People who use heroin report feeling a "rush" (a surge of pleasure or euphoria). However, there are other common effects, including:

- dry mouth
- warm flushing of the skin

*Continued on A25*



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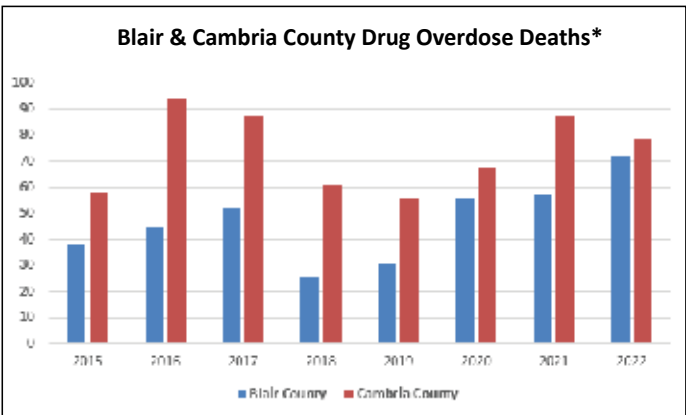
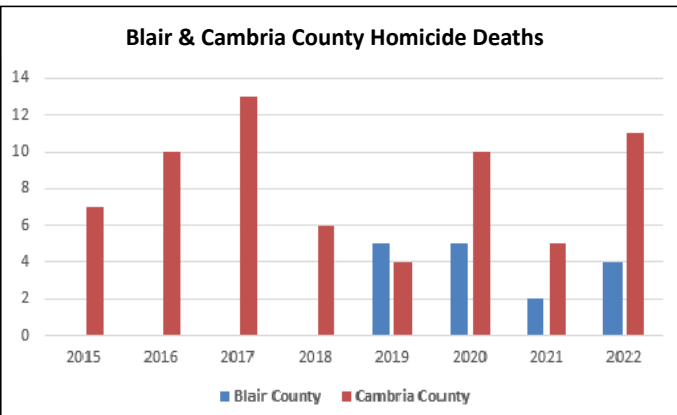
The OOT Office

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

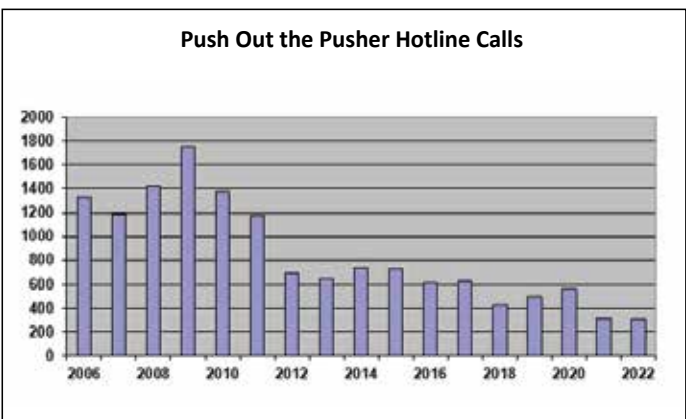
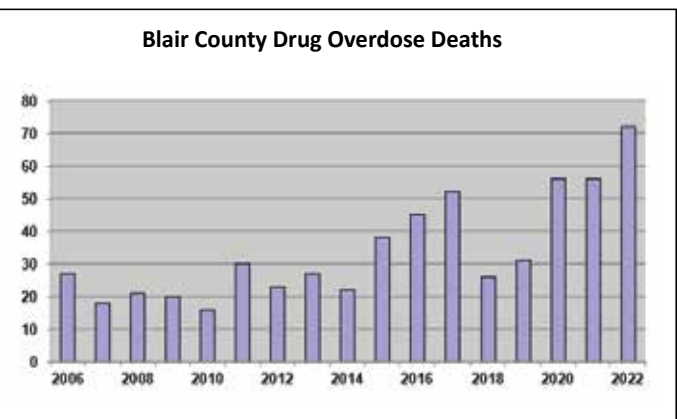


Police Report	A2
Community	A5
Business	A9
Local	A10

# POLICE REPORT



\* Cambria County had an additional 12-15 probable overdose deaths from 2022 that were pending toxicology results as of the printing of the Annual Report



Source: Blair and Cambria County Coroner's Office

FRATERNAL  
ORDER  
OF POLICE



BALD EAGLE  
LODGE #51

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

SERVING OFFICERS  
OF BLAIR, CENTRE,  
AND CLEARFIELD  
COUNTIES

# Narcan Opioid Overdose Resources

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug (i.e. prescription pain medication or heroin). Common opiates include: Percocet, OxyContin, Oxycodone, Norco, Hydrocodone, Codeine, Fentanyl, Morphine, Roxicet, Lortab, Opana, Suboxone, Methadone, and Heroin.

Also known by brand names "Narcan" or "Evzio," Naloxone is a non-narcotic and non-addicting prescription drug. It cannot be used to get high. For those who have overdosed on opioids, it can trigger safe and sudden withdrawal symptoms. When administered during an overdose, Naloxone blocks the effects of opioids on the brain and restores breathing within two to eight minutes to prevent death.

Members of the community, family members, friends, and bystanders may be prescribed Naloxone and can lawfully administer the drug to someone who is experiencing an overdose. Pennsylvania's

Physician General has written standing orders for the general public to be able to obtain Naloxone without a prescription from their doctor. Although not necessary in order to obtain the medication, it is recommended that individuals receive training to recognize the signs and symptoms of an overdose and to learn how to properly administer Naloxone.

Please see the link below for the recommended free Naloxone training video:

<https://www.pavtn.net/act-139-training>

Naloxone is provided free to the community at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships. If desired, Naloxone can also be purchased from a pharmacy. Pharmacies provide the medication without a prescription, simply go to the pharmacy counter and request the medication. Your primary care physician can write a prescription that you can take to a pharmacy of your choice as well. If purchasing the nasal spray, whether you obtain it

from the pharmacy directly or the prescription from your doctor, it is important to either purchase two doses or ask your doctor to write the prescription for two doses. This is because the effect of an opioid may last longer than the blocking of



Naloxone, which may require an additional nasal dose of Naloxone.

Act 139 is a law that allows first responders (law enforcement, firefighters, EMS) acting at the direction of a health care professional authorized to prescribe Naloxone, to administer the drug to individuals experiencing

an opioid overdose. The law also provides immunity from prosecution for those responding to and reporting overdoses. Additionally, individuals such as friends or family members in a position to assist a person at risk of experiencing an opioid-related overdose may receive a prescription for Naloxone.

Through the 'Good Samaritan' provision of Act 139, friends and loved ones are encouraged to summon emergency medical services by calling 911 in the event they witness an overdose. The law is meant to suppress the fear of arrest in calling authorities for an overdose event by offering certain criminal and civil protections for those that do. Law enforcement entities in other states that have implemented Good Samaritan protections for those who dial 911 in good faith have reported significant improvements in community relations.

As of December 19, 2022, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships has distributed

264 individual boxes of Narcan throughout Blair County and 277 individual boxes were ordered for outside agencies to distribute. An individual box includes 2 doses per box.

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships has distributed Narcan to the following sectors of the community:

- Blair County Prison
- EMS providers
- Schools
- Police Departments
- Community:
  - o Level of Care

Assessments, which are the drug and alcohol assessments that are completed by BDAP to coordinate individuals into treatment.

o Walk-ins, presentations, tabling events, HOPE Group, etc.

Please contact Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships at (814) 381-0921 or visit their website at [www.blairdap.org](http://www.blairdap.org) if you would like to have this life-saving resource available to you.

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

Save the Date!  
August 3, 2023

Go to DelGrosso's website  
"Explore" for more information:  
[www.mydelgrossopark.com](http://www.mydelgrossopark.com)



The Best ME  
Is Drug FREE!

# Law Enforcement Year in Review

By Jarod Quist, Supervisory Narcotics Agent, PA Office of Attorney General

## A NATIONAL LOOK

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that there were approximately 106,503 overdose deaths in the 12 months leading up to April 2022. Opioid related overdose deaths, the leading cause during the twelve months ending in April 2022, totaled 71,392. During the same time period, there were 25,474 deaths related to cocaine.

## BLAIR COUNTY

In 2022, there were 110 purchases of controlled substances in Blair County and the majority were either for heroin (fentanyl) or methamphetamine. The Blair County Drug Task Force continued to utilize saturation and interdiction details, executing approximately 25 search warrants on residences or vehicles. 56 defendants were

arrested, many of them with multiple criminal complaints.

In March 2022, the Office of Attorney General Bureau of Narcotics Investigation (OAG BNI) and the Blair County Drug Task Force completed an investigation with a search warrant of two residences that resulted in the seizure of heroin, crack cocaine, and \$12,000. In August 2022, BNI and the Drug Task Force seized methamphetamine, \$5,000, and a handgun to culminate an investigation with multiple controlled buys. In November 2022, BNI and the Blair County Drug Task Force seized a firearm and 95 bricks of heroin that had come into Blair County for distribution.

Two notable cases that were pending trial in 2022 resulted in one defendant taking a plea to be sentenced to a 20-year minimum for his role in the distribution of heroin/fentanyl, and the other defendant

entering an open plea and being sentenced to a 32-year minimum for his role in the distribution of methamphetamine, cocaine, and heroin/fentanyl.

## PARTNERSHIPS

The Blair County Drug Task Force continues to cooperatively work with law enforcement at the state and federal levels.

Law enforcement will also actively participate in partnerships with education, treatment, and medical professionals to combat this epidemic, and 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.



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department



# HONOR THE BADGE

## OperationOurTown.org

## Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) Report

By Honorable Elizabeth A. Doyle, Blair County President Judge

The Blair County Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) continues to coordinate the efforts of multiple agencies and people to benefit the Blair County criminal justice system. In January 2022, Cheryl Johns, Executive Director of the Altoona Housing Authority, discussed her agency's criminal background check policy and noted that landlords also must pass criminal background screenings. Her housing authority is the only one in the state with this practice in place. She reported that

the landlord workshops are popular and well attended. At this meeting, Sally Adams announced that over \$3 million was collected by the costs and fines department in 2021. The group discussed the need for crisis intervention training for police officers and Chief Merrill expressed his belief that a project is in the works.

In February, the group was provided with the Blair County Prison population numbers for the year 2021. Public Defender Montgomery initiated discussion on the proposed rule changes to the

state's bail system and criminal proceedings. Commissioner Laura Burke explained that she serves on the courts and corrections committee of the statewide County Commissioners Association and that her group would be reviewing the proposed changes and discussing a response. A \$37,000 grant was received for individuals in the reentry process, reentering society after being in prison. Scott Schultz reported that the problem-solving courts are in the process of adopting new medically assisted treatment policies to fall into compliance


with ADA regulations and in response to the recent Department of Justice efforts to have courts allow medically assisted treatment options.

In March, we discussed strategic planning for the future and Donna Gority provided two names and contact information for facilitators. Holly Dick shared information about the Veterans Administration Strength at Home program. The CJAB conference was held April 12th and 13th at the Penn Stater Hotel in State College. In its April meeting, the group had a presentation from Mr.

Andrae Holsey, local president of the NAACP. He invited members to visit his branch's website for membership applications, and to learn about upcoming community events and outreach efforts. The local branch is experiencing tremendous growth. The US Attorney for Western Pennsylvania was very complementary of Blair County's reentry efforts and programs in a recent visit. In June, CJAB conducted a retreat for strategic planning. Key initiatives of building greater collaboration,

See CJAB/Page A17

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



## BLAIR COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY PETER J. WEEKS

## BLAIR COUNTY: DISTRICT ATTORNEY

By Peter Weeks, District Attorney

The Blair County District Attorney's Office and Operation Our Town share a common mission of ensuring public safety. Now more than ever, 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 2022, the District Attorney's Office continued to prosecute dozens of defendants with a known

history of involvement with controlled substances. 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.

In 2022, the District Attorney's Office worked with the Altoona Police Department, who developed a team of officers led by Sgt. Chris Moser, to investigate drug overdose deaths. As a result of this team's hard work, we saw an unprecedented

number of drug death investigations solved and prosecuted this year. We also worked with the Tyrone Borough Police Department and Altoona Police Department to investigate two separate sex trafficking cases where defendants used controlled substances to facilitate sex-related crimes.

Many claim that drug trafficking and drug use are victimless and nonviolent crimes that unnecessarily burden our prison systems. This is simply not true. Drug use impacts society, communities, and families.

See District/Page A6

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## 2022 Year in Review : Dept. Highlights

### ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Michael Robison**

- The Department handled 3,955 incidents in 2022, slightly down from the 4,605 incidents we handled in 2021.
- 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.
- The Department investigated 274 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2022, slightly down from 288 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2021.
- The Allegheny Township Police thanks our community and programs like Operation

### ALTOONA

**Police Department – Chief Joseph Merrill**

- In 2022, the Altoona Police Department handled over 25,566 calls for service (an average of over 70 calls per day), made over 2,000 arrests, and responded to 255 drug overdoses.
- The department formed a Drug Delivery Resulting in Death investigation team of officers specifically trained to handle these incidents. 4 arrests were made in 2022 with 22 cases still ongoing.
- 25 APD Officers ran 6.7 miles through the City of Altoona, raising \$1,740 for the PA Special Olympics in the Law Enforcement Torch Run.
- 14 APD Officers jumped in the frigid waters of Canoe Creek for the Polar Plunge, raising \$5,888 for the PA Special Olympics.
- 52 APD Officers participated in the 2nd annual “No Shave



Pictured: Altoona Police Department at the Altoona Curve!



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department

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!

November” program, donating \$2,600 to the Amelia Sharer Foundation.

- The Fraternal Order of Police hosted the Guns vs. Hoses Charity Hockey game, donating \$4,373 to Family Services Incorporated.
- APD hosted numerous other charity events, including:

National Night Out, Home Run Derby at the Altoona Curve, Cocoa with the Popo, provided winter hats & gloves to local youth in the APD lobby, and placed 400 flags on Veteran grave sites at Fairview Cemetery on Memorial Day.

- On February 23rd, Sergeant George Bistline badge #61 passed away, after a brief battle with cancer. Sgt. Bistline served the City of Altoona Police Department for over 45 years.
- The department continued the Community Outreach program in which officers specifically visited city parks, pools, housing complexes, churches, and various neighborhoods to personally interact with the community.
- Christmas present donations were collected in the APD front lobby as the department teamed up with Professional’s Auto Body to provide Christmas morning for over 100 local children in need this holiday season.
- APD welcomed 11 newly hired officers in 2022 with ongoing recruitment and hiring efforts.

a major concern for the Department. Ptlm. Matthew Fleck received the 2022 Blair County Drug and Alcohol “Top Gun” award for departments in our category in Blair County for the second year in a row.

- The prevalence of alcohol and drugs continues to be a factor in a substantial percentage of incidents handled by the Department. Incidents involving individuals with mental health issues remained steady and challenged officers to find suitable solutions working with the resources available to them.
- Equipment upgrades for the Department included a new 2022 Police Cruiser and the replacement of our current Taser X26P’s to the newest version of Taser 7. We thank the Township Supervisors for their continuing excellent support of the Department.
- 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 2023!

Freedom Township are Drug, Theft, Domestic Assaults, and DUI.

- During the 2022 year, the drugs mostly observed were meth, heroin, fentanyl, prescription pills, and marijuana.
- The department also has a high number of ChildLine investigations that are investigations of suspected child abuse.
- The department continues to provide police services for Newry Borough on a purchase of service agreement.

### BLAIR TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Roger White**

- 2022 was a busy but safe year for the officers of the Blair Township Police Department.
- BTPD handled approximately 1,900 incidents in 2022, which is a slight decrease from 2021.
- 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.
- Impaired driving detection and enforcement remains

### FREEDOM TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Nathan Claycomb**

- The Freedom Township Police Department once again has had a very busy year with the calls for service increasing to 2,188 calls in 2022 over 2,031 in 2021.
- The police department has 3 full-time officers, 5 part-time officers, and 1 part-time secretary.
- This year, more than any other, I have noticed an increase of calls that require investigations and follow-ups.
- The crimes mostly seen in

### HOLLIDAYSBURG

**Police Department – Chief Christopher Storm**

Hollidaysburg Police Department is comprised of eight full-time officers, four clerks, and an Administrative Officer/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.

Below you will find statistics from 2022:

- 3,737 Calls for Service
- 231 Criminal Arrests
- 47 Juvenile Arrests
- 665 Traffic Citations
- 790 Vehicle Stops
- 21 DUI Arrests
- 94 Non-traffic Citations

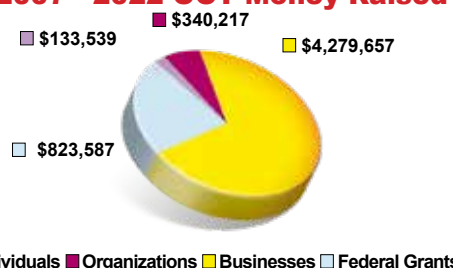
In 2023, Hollidaysburg Police Department is excited to continue the service to the community. Should you have any questions regarding the Hollidaysburg Police Department, please do not hesitate to call.

See Dept. Updates/Page A19

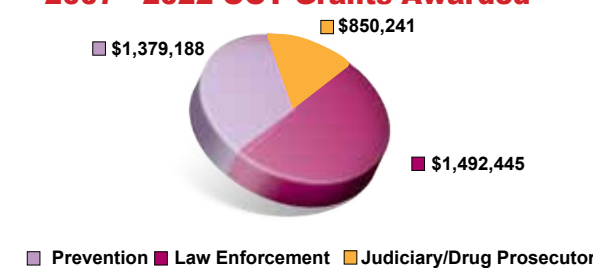


# COMMUNITY

## 2007 - 2022 OOT Money Raised



## 2007 - 2022 OOT Grants Awarded



# OOT: Roundtable Descriptions

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

## 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 purpose of integrating and recommending action to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the criminal justice system in Blair County.

## 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



Pictured: Understanding Addiction, Mental Health, and Co-occurring Disorders Workshop (Northern Blair Roundtable Event)

faith-based community partnerships in using God's gracious gifts to bring about positive change, hope, and spiritual health in the community.

## 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 minimize the likelihood of prescription drug diversion within Blair County and beyond through education to pharmacists, pharmacy staff, and prescribers, as well as striving to ensure the safety of pharmacy personnel and enhance relationships with law enforcement for collaborative synergistic partnerships. Drug disposal and opioid overdose treatment advocacy will be communicated throughout our efforts.



## OOT Night at the Curve!

Thursday, June 22, 2023  
6:00pm

Check out child fingerprinting and other special activities!

Visit the Operation Our Town table to learn more about OOT and how the funds they raise help fight drugs and crime in Blair County!

## JOHN JOYCE

Continued from A1

drug trafficking by cartels. Fentanyl analogs are roughly thirty times more potent than heroin, and even more addictive. Legal, doctor-prescribed fentanyl still has potential for abuse, but it is fentanyl analogs, substances that are pharmacologically similar to fentanyl, that often prove fatal.

To permanently ban fentanyl analogs, I was proud to work with my colleagues to be an original co-sponsor of the HALT Fentanyl Act (H.R. 6184) that would permanently get these drugs off of our streets, and enforce strict penalties on the people who move and sell this deadly poison in our communities. Further, I also sponsored the Stop Our Scourge Act (H.R. 9162), which would designate illicit fentanyl entering the U.S. from foreign countries as a weapon of mass destruction.

As we work to get these drugs off our streets, it's

Continued on A16

## Fighting the Good Fight - Update from Harrisburg

By State Representative Lou Schmitt

As we begin a New Year, let's look back at some of the legislation affecting law



enforcement that came out of the most recent legislative session of the Pennsylvania General Assembly that ended on November 30, 2022.

Well, it took four years – but it was worth the wait.

On November 3, 2022, Governor Wolf signed my House Bill 103 into law as Act 99 of 2022. Effective 60 days thereafter, a person

is guilty of a felony of the third degree if the person intentionally or knowingly causes or attempts to cause a law enforcement officer, while in the performance of duty and with knowledge that the victim is a law enforcement officer, to come into contact with blood, seminal fluid, saliva, urine or feces by throwing, tossing, spitting, or expelling the fluid or material. A person who commits such an offense is guilty of a felony of the second degree if:

(i) the person knew, had reason to know, should

have known or believed the fluid or material to have been obtained from an individual, including the person charged under this section, infected by a communicable disease declared reportable by regulation authorized by the act of April 23, 1956 (1955 P.L.1510, No.500), known as the Disease Prevention and Control Law of 1955; and

(ii) the communicable disease referenced in subparagraph (i) is communicable to the law enforcement officer by the method used or attempted

to be used to cause the law enforcement officer to come into contact with the blood, seminal fluid, saliva, urine or feces.

Under my new law, if a miscreant is convicted of assaulting a police officer with bodily fluid, that bad actor is now a felon and can be sentenced to up to 7 years in prison and a fine of up to \$15,000. And if that individual knows or has reason to know that the bodily fluid comes from an individual who is infectious, the penalty is up to

See Lou Schmitt/Page A20



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# Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation

By David Cunningham, President

Who's ready to party? Block party, that is! This year, the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp. is building on the success of our 2022 series of community block parties, and that's not all. We're also building another fantastic park!

Although we've hosted block parties, basketball tournaments, and community events in the past, 2022 was our busiest year yet with four different block parties located around the City. Our goal was to connect folks to the parks and the people right in their community. By spending an afternoon together with neighbors, you're strengthening community bonds that pay dividends all year long. Each party had its own unique character, but across them all we had live music, free food, games, art, contests, fire trucks, pinatas, giveaways, bubbles, and lots and lots of fun! Over 500 people joined us last summer. This summer, we're going bigger and better, so we hope to see you there too. You can find all of the dates and block party locations at AltoonaBlockParties.com. On the website, you can also suggest new activities or volunteer to help out!

Speaking of volunteers, did you know that the BTWRC is an entirely volunteer-run organization? We are a 501c3 non-profit dedicated to creating exceptional recreational spaces for residents of all ages and abilities. Since our founding in 2008, we've completed over \$1.2 million worth of

park projects within the City of Altoona, including Prospect Park along 15th Street; Hamilton Park on East Cherry Avenue; Iuzzolino Park on Maple Avenue; and of course, the Booker T. Washington Outdoor Facility at 19th Street and 13th Avenue. That facility's Don Witherspoon Basketball Court will be getting an exciting facelift this year, just in time for that community's block party! Throughout all this hard work, the support of



Pictured: 2022 Summer Block Party

Operation Our Town has been a key to our success. They've recognized the importance of parks to the overall health of a community, and the impact of their assistance, both financially and institutionally, has been immeasurable.

Year after year, we're continuously adding to and improving our previous park projects, but nothing is quite as exciting as the start of an entirely new park! This year, we're working to realize a brand-new playground in the Garden Heights area near Plank Road in Altoona. The existing site is a basketball court that has completely deteriorated over time and is virtually unusable.

At full build-out, the planned playground will feature a 2-5 year old play area, a 5-12 year old play area, a sensory dome, interactive panels, a drum circle, a sway bench, and a picnic pavilion. With assistance from parents and teachers at the nearby Journey Center and a dedicated group of caring individuals from the neighborhood, we hope to make the Garden Heights Park unrivaled in the City for inclusivity and accessibility.

Altoona City Council and the Central Blair Recreation Commission have already purchased equipment for the park, so our efforts this year will focus on raising funds to make the park the very best it can be.

We at the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp. are proud to be a part of the vibrant Blair County community, and with continuing support of groups like Operation Our Town, our wonderful volunteers, and citizens like you, we intend to keep making a great place even better. This is a party you won't want to miss! Thank you for your continued support!

# District Attorney

Continued from A3

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 2022, the recent trends continued and we saw a significant rise in fatal overdoses involving fentanyl, xylazine, methamphetamine, and heroin. The COVID-19 pandemic created an excuse for social activists to release dangerous individuals from prison and has stalled our ability to do trials. We continue to fight to prioritize those who prey on our community.

It is imperative that we return to our roots and sentence those who traffic these deadly drugs to significant terms of incarceration. This may not be the popular approach, but it is the time tested method that has reduced crimes of violence within our community.

The District Attorney's Office is also faced with an unprecedented staffing crisis as the low pay and demanding work has resulted in only 5 of the ten prosecutor positions being staffed. 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, drug-free Blair County.



# THE FIGHT AGAINST CRIME AND DRUGS CONTINUES

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

This year, Pennsylvania continues in its battle against crime and the underground and illicit drug use that is ravaging our families and our communities at tragic levels. As we have begun to exit the Covid-19 pandemic and return to life as we knew it, the trend of increasing drug use sadly has followed us forward.

I recently read about a disturbing new trend where drug dealers are cutting their fentanyl and other drugs with Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, making Narcan, Naloxone, and other emergency opioid overdose medication ineffective. This makes a tough situation worse for police and emergency medical services as they continue to try and combat this epidemic on the frontlines.

Upticks in crime have behaved no differently recently as crime rates have remained high all across the state. This has resulted in cities, towns, and local governments taking extraordinary action, such as Philadelphia's making permanent their 10 p.m. curfew for minors. Our towns, big and small, are trying desperately to keep their communities safe.

In our battle against drugs and violence, Operation Our Town and organizations like them are an invaluable resource to push back against this troubling trend. They provide support and resources to our communities and law enforcement as they continue

in their fight. Millions of dollars have been given by these groups over the years, and their support continues today.



As a General Assembly, we too can take action to support our community groups, law enforcement, and emergency medical professionals through our advocacy and legislative accomplishments.

Going into 2023, we will begin a new session, which will mean all previous legislation will need to be

reintroduced if there is still interest in prior bills. A new session also means new members and new ideas. I believe that in the coming

year, we will continue to make strides to help fight the drugs and violence that are hitting our communities. This is not a Republican, Democrat, male, female, young, or old issue. This problem is something that has impacted so many lives and many understand the gravity of the situation.

Four important pieces of

legislation went into law this past year to help with our current epidemic:

Act 101 of 2022 clarifies that a person cannot be denied admission to a treatment facility based solely on a negative drug test and authorizes the creation of local suicide and overdose fatality review teams.

Act 111 of 2022 helps prevent deadly overdoses by removing fentanyl test strips from the definition of "drug paraphernalia" which are prohibited and carry serious penalties.

Act 135 of 2022 extends Good Samaritan protections for the use of new opioid overdose reversal drugs in advance of their anticipated federal approval. The ready availability of opioid reversal medicine has saved untold lives in Pennsylvania. From January 2018 to January 2022, the Department of Health reports more than 67,000 doses of Naloxone have been administered by EMS with still tens of thousands more administered by others to overdose victims. Yet during that same timespan, more than 41,000 emergency room visits were reported for opioid overdoses. And the number of overdose deaths in Pennsylvania remains alarmingly high with 5,089 deaths reported in 2020 and another 4,317 deaths in 2021.

Act 158 of 2022 requires first responders—including law enforcement and emergency

medical services – to report overdoses into an electronic statewide system that will be developed and maintained in consultation with the Department of Health.

Two other pieces of legislation that were passed that will help our law enforcement include Act 99 of 2022 and Act 165 of 2022:

Act 99 of 2022, sponsored by Representative Schmitt, better protects law enforcement officers against harassment by strengthening penalties against criminals who intentionally spit on or throw bodily fluids at officers. Stronger penalties are included in this law to those who knew, should have known, or believed such fluid or material had been obtained from an individual who was infected by a communicable disease.

Act 165 of 2022 further protects law enforcement officers by prohibiting the release of a public safety official's home address or telephone number.

These are just some of the legislative steps that the General Assembly has taken over this past session. We look forward to this new session as a chance to continue to work towards a safer and drug-free community.

It will take time, effort, and cooperation by many to achieve this, but I am hopeful and will continue to do all I can towards this goal until it is realized.

See Something? Say Something! 693-3020

# Fentanyl Dangers *Continued from A1*

dangerous additive. They might be taking stronger opioids than their bodies are used to and can be more likely to overdose.

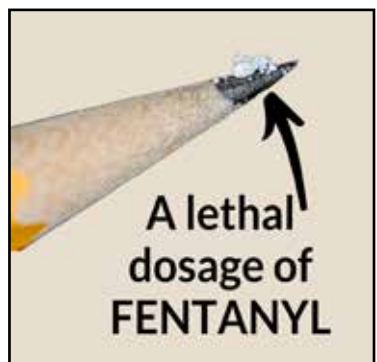
## How does fentanyl affect the brain?

Like heroin, morphine, and other opioid drugs, fentanyl works by binding to the body's opioid receptors, which are found in areas of the brain that control pain and emotions. After taking opioids many times, the brain adapts to the drug, diminishing its sensitivity, making it hard to feel pleasure from anything besides the drug. When people become addicted, drug seeking and drug use take over their lives. Fentanyl's effects include:

- extreme happiness
- drowsiness
- nausea
- confusion
- constipation

- sedation
- problems breathing
- unconsciousness

## How can a fentanyl overdose be treated?



When people overdose on fentanyl, their breathing can slow or stop. This can decrease the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain, a condition called hypoxia. Hypoxia can lead to a coma and permanent brain damage, and even death. As mentioned above, many

drug dealers mix the cheaper fentanyl with other drugs like heroin, cocaine, MDMA and methamphetamine to increase their profits, making it often difficult to know which drug is causing the overdose. Naloxone is a medicine that can treat a fentanyl overdose when given right away. It works by rapidly binding to opioid receptors and blocking the effects of opioid drugs. But fentanyl is stronger than other opioid drugs like morphine and might require multiple doses of naloxone.

Because of this, if you suspect someone has overdosed, the most important step to take is to call 911 so they can receive immediate medical attention. Once medical personnel arrive, they will administer naloxone if they suspect an opioid drug is involved.

Naloxone is available as an

injectable (needle) solution and nasal sprays (NARCAN and KLOXXADO). Friends, family, and others in the community can use the auto-injector and nasal spray versions of naloxone to save someone who is overdosing. People who are given naloxone should be monitored for another two hours after the last dose of naloxone is given to make sure breathing does not slow or stop.

## Can fentanyl use lead to addiction?

Yes. Fentanyl is addictive because of its potency. A person taking prescription fentanyl as instructed by a doctor can experience dependence, which is characterized by withdrawal symptoms when the drug is stopped. A person can be dependent on a substance without being addicted, but dependence can sometimes

lead to addiction.

Addiction is the most severe form of a substance use disorder (SUD). SUDs are characterized by compulsive drug seeking and drug use that can be difficult to control, despite harmful consequences. When someone is addicted to drugs, they continue to use them even though they cause health problems or issues at work, school, or home. An SUD can range from mild to severe.

People addicted to fentanyl who stop using it can have severe withdrawal symptoms that begin as early as a few hours after the drug was last taken. These symptoms include:

- muscle and bone pain
- sleep problems
- diarrhea and vomiting
- cold flashes/goose bumps

*Continued on A11*

**SEE SOMETHING?  
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# RISE FOR RECOVERY BUILDING RECOVERY CAPITAL IN BLAIR COUNTY

By Drew Neel, Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships

Rise for Recovery is a recovery community organization that focuses on bringing awareness, advocacy, and supporting the Blair County recovery community. It currently is under the Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships umbrella, but is primarily attended and supported by persons in recovery, family and community members, and providers.

What we do:

- Provide hope to those who are still untreated
- Educate the public on the disease of addiction and that it is treatable
- Provide awareness that people in recovery are living a productive, happy life
- Facilitate partnerships and resources that support recovery and improve the quality of life
- Recognize and strengthen the different pathways of recovery
- Advocate for a community that facilitates recovery

Rise for Recovery focuses on the faces and voices of recovery in the community. Our work includes advocating

to address stigma, workforce development, promoting opportunities and activities to support activities for fellowship and connection for individuals in early and long-term recovery that strengthen pathways for recovery.



This past year, we had a viewing of the film Anonymous People followed by a panel discussion, Arts in Recovery, Recovery Walk and Rally, attended Recovery Advocacy Day at the capital in Harrisburg, promoted the purple light campaign during recovery month, and held a Recovery Extravaganza. We meet monthly to discuss ways in which the organization can

assist and move forward in creating and strengthening recovery capital within the community. We meet once a month on the second Wednesday of each month at 2:00pm at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships.

Moving forward, we are planning to make the already established events bigger and better, and we're hoping to plan and implement other events to support the fellowship of recovery for the individual and family. We're also in the beginning stages of planning a Recovery Community Center.

We're looking for community involvement to continue the growth of this work locally. Recovery is ingrained in the local community and we continue to build the local capacity to unite the faces and voices that support this effort.

For more information about Rise for Recovery and how you can get involved, please contact Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships at (814) 381-0921 or visit our website at [www.blairdap.org](http://www.blairdap.org).

# Faith-Based Roundtable WE CAN BE A LIFELINE

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

When sitting down to write about this year with the Faith-based Roundtable, my mind went to a very old hymn "Throw Out the Lifeline." The lines, "There is a brother whom someone should save; Somebody's brother! Oh, who then will dare to throw out the lifeline, his peril to share?" spoke to what those who serve on the Roundtable are trying to do.



We spent 2022 coming together to talk about the most urgent needs of those in our community who have been impacted by drug use, frequently resulting in homelessness. We quickly realized that entire families were being impacted and that homelessness and housing issues were not going away, and we began bringing resources to the table to address the needs of our "brothers" and

sisters in Blair County.

Our group of 10-12 regulars shared information on food resources, shelter, clothing, and support services. We brainstormed ideas on how to get the word out to those in need and how to fill the gaps in communities where the resources don't exist. We have been blessed to have representation from Tyrone and Williamsburg and are always seeking representatives from all communities in Blair County.

We learned about resources available to first responders who deal with the impact of overdoses in our community and how we can support them. No one should have to tell a parent that they have lost their son or daughter to drugs, but it happens too often.

What seems to be needed most is for us to come alongside those who need a lifeline and let them know they matter and there are people who care. We meet at the Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships office on the 3rd Thursday of the month at 2pm. Come join us and be a lifeline to someone who desperately needs one!

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# BUSINESS

## Central PA Landlord Association Report

By Heather Crusinberry, President

The Central PA Landlord's Association is a non-profit group of independent property investors, owners, and managers. We educate and assist landlords with issues such as compliance, tenant relations, and regulations on a local, state, and federal level.

The CPLA is changing the image of today's landlord. We care about safe, affordable housing while maintaining suitable homes for 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 to help in their business venture. Our landlords meet once a month to hear guest speakers such as attorneys, magistrates, fair housing representatives, and an array of other professionals in the area. 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.

The CPLA in accordance with Operation Our Town and the Altoona Housing Authority hold a Landlord Workshop annually to continue our efforts to educate landlords on hot topics in our profession. This is also an opportunity to answer any questions or address concerns that landlords are having in our ever-changing field. The 2022 Landlord Workshop was a huge success! We had in attendance nearly 70 people, and experimented with breakout sessions for attendees to choose what topics they wanted more information on. The topics covered were:

-Magisterial District Judge Frequently Asked Questions  
-Warning Signs of Illegal Drug Activity  
-How to Use the UJS Portal  
-Blair County Community Action Agency Programs  
-Center for Community Action Programs and ERAP 2  
-Landlording 101 (Tenant screening, Home Modifications, City Codes)  
-Section 8 (AHA & COBRAH)  
-Eviction Process  
-Fair Housing Regulations  
-Affordable Housing Challenges Discussion

The CPLA and the OOT Housing Roundtable developed a Quick-Tip Resource Guide for landlords so that they can have access to different organizations that can assist them or their tenants in their real-estate business. The Resource Guide is a valuable tool that connects landlords to resources related to landlords. The guide is posted on the CPLA 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

We would like to encourage all landlords to join our association to help continue our success in supporting and educating landlords. There are many benefits to joining the Landlord Association, but our biggest asset is landlords helping landlords.

Monthly meetings occur the 3rd Tuesday of the month at 7:00 p.m.

Contact the CPLA:  
[www.centralpalandlords.com](http://www.centralpalandlords.com)

## OOT Pharmacy Roundtable

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

Although the pandemic has subsided, the impact it has had on opioid and other drug use certainly has not, which makes our work more important than ever. This year, we focused our efforts on finding ways for pharmacy and pharmacists specifically, to help our community avoid prescription opioid misuse and addiction, while providing the opportunity for rescue medication to be used in the case of overdose.

The group gets together monthly on Friday mornings at 7:15AM and includes members from different channels of pharmacy, addiction support and treatment, law enforcement, and the medical community. This cross-section provides us great insight into the various areas that we might be able to help.

Opioid use disorder affects over 16 million people worldwide, with over 2.1 million of these in the United States, according to the National Institutes on Health. This results in over 120,000 deaths worldwide annually attributed to opioids. There are currently plans on the part of many government entities, from the federal government to local towns and cities, to use funding from the global opioid legal settlement that will pour billions of dollars in settlement funds into education for, and support and treatment, of those affected by the opioid crisis. Particularly important is the medication-aided

treatments to help addicts become less dependent on opioids. Pharmacists will play a significant role in the counseling of these patients regarding how to use their medications.

The roundtable published and distributed three Pharmacy Roundtable Newsletters to distribute to area pharmacists. These newsletters provide information pharmacists can use in their daily practices and educates them on locations and events for medication disposal, as well as how to access support and treatment for their patients. There are currently 15 permanent medication drop boxes in Blair County, which we highlight often, and this year added a message of "Thank you for being part of the solution" at the drop boxes.

During the year, members of the roundtable also took part in events to educate others about opioid use and abuse at the Northern Blair Operation Our Town Roundtable, the Blair County Association for the Blind, and the Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships Overdose Task Force. We also continued our program with several area independent

community pharmacies to supply counseling on the dangers and risk of addiction from even small quantity, short-term (acute) prescriptions, including the opportunity for patients to obtain naloxone to be prepared for opioid overdose.

In 2023, the roundtable will focus on how pharmacists can help more in providing naloxone and promoting its use in overdose prevention working in concert with Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships. Thanks to all the Pharmacy Roundtable

members who give selflessly of their time and energy to help make our community a safer place to live. Also, a big shout out to our Blair County pharmacists, who are champions for our patients as we fight the opioid crisis that our country faces.



# Discovery House

duncansville comprehensive treatment center

Discovery House/Duncansville Comprehensive Treatment Center provides medically supervised, medicated assisted treatment to individuals who are seeking to overcome an addiction to or dependence on opioids such as heroin, fentanyl, or pain pills.

Medicated assisted treatment can help recovering individuals remain free of cravings and other withdrawal symptoms that can negatively impact the rehabilitation and recovery process.

If you would like more information, please call us and speak with one of our caring staff members.

Discovery House/Duncansville Comprehensive Treatment Center  
3438 Route 764, Duncansville, Pennsylvania 16635  
814-944-7000 Ext.450



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**Miller** Fred  
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# LOCAL

## 2007-2022 OOT Prevention Grant Recipients

18th Street Community Church  
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 of Blair County  
Family Services, Inc.  
Garver Memorial YMCA  
Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation  
Hollidaysburg Area School District  
Home Nursing Agency Foundation  
IDA Community Development Corporation  
Joshua House, Inc.

L.O.T. (Leaders of Tomorrow)  
Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
N.E.W.S. Worthy Network, Inc.  
Northern Blair Recreation Commission  
Overflow Church  
Penn State Altoona  
Refuge Youth Network  
Renew Church  
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. at 2nd Ave  
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

## 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, fair housing regulations, illegal activity, and new ways to navigate the ever-changing housing industry, etc. The workshop helps agencies and landlords implement strategies to tackle those issues.

Operation Our Town held the annual Landlord Educational Workshop on 11/4/22. There were over 70 individuals in attendance. The Housing Roundtable decided to change the format of the workshop to include breakout sessions this year. This gave individuals in attendance an option on which session they wanted to attend. These individuals consisted of landlords, agency members, and community leaders. The major topics this year included Honorable Paula Aigner to discuss the judicial process, Jessica Fisher, Esq. to discuss the eviction process, and Payton Gutierrez, Esq. to discuss fair housing regulations. Another important topic was ERAP (Emergency Rental Assistance Program), this year it was taken over by Center for Community Action. They wanted to go in depth and educate local landlords on how the process works.

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 started 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 help solve and address current issues that they are seeing in our city and county. During the year, agency members are welcome to discuss programs or services available to the community. This helps landlords and agencies partnered with the OOT Housing Roundtable to get the word out about the services available. 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 Officer, at (814) 949-2016.

## Blair County Agencies Who are Partnered with OOT

**Allegheny Township Police - 814-695-3333**  
Contact Person: Chief Michael Robison

**Altoona Police - 814-949-2489**  
Contact Person: Chief Joseph Merrill

**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 Rodney Estep

**Freedom Township Police - 814-695-8545**  
Contact Person: Chief Nathan Claycomb

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

**Hollidaysburg Borough Police - 814-695-3711**  
Contact Person: Chief Christopher Storm

**Hollidaysburg Area School District - 814-695-4416**  
Contact Person: N/A

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

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

**N. Woodbury Township Police - 814-793-4897**  
Contact Person: OIC Lance Morris

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

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

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

**UPMC Police - 814-889-2121**  
Contact Person: Chief Greg Servello

**Pa State Police - 814-696-6100**  
Contact Person: Sgt. Tom Snyder

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

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

**James E. Van Zandt VAMC Veterans Affairs Police - 814-943-8164**  
Contact Person: Chief David McCallay

**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

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

**Spring Cove School District PD - 814-473-5344**  
Contact Person: Chief Rick Brozenich

**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

**PA Fish & Boat Commission - 717-486-7087**  
Contact Person: Frank Mehalko



# 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.



## Blair County Medication Drop Off Locations:

### ► Allegheny Township Police Department (814) 695-9563

3131 Colonial Dr. Duncansville, PA 16635  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► Altoona Police Department (814) 949-2489

1106 16th St. Altoona, PA 16601  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week

### ► Blair County Courthouse (814) 693-3000

423 Allegheny Street Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► Blair Township Police Department (814) 696-3846

375 Cedarcrest Drive Duncansville, PA 16635  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► CVS (814) 944-9224

200 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours

### ► Freedom Township Police Department (814) 695-8545

131 Municipal Street East Freedom, PA 16637  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► Giant Eagle Pharmacy - Altoona (814) 946-4267

181 Sophira Ln. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours

### ► Greenfield Township Police Department (814) 239-5313

477 Ski Gap Road Claysburg, PA 16625  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► Hollidaysburg Police Department (814) 695-3711

401 Blair St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 11:00pm

### ► Logan Township Police Department (814) 949-3364

100 Chief Logan Circle Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm

### ► State Police-Troop G - Hollidaysburg (814) 696-6100

1510 N Juniata St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week

### ► Tyrone Borough Police Department (814) 684-1364

1100 Logan Avenue Tyrone, PA 16686  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm

### ► VA Medical Center (814) 943-8164

2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:30pm

### ► Walgreens Pharmacy (814) 944-3236

508 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours

### ► Williamsburg Police Department (814) 832-2022

305 E. 2nd St. Williamsburg, PA 16693  
Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, 9:00am – 3:00pm  
Wed, 8:00am – 4:00pm

## Project Supported by:



## Fentanyl

*Continued from A7*

- uncontrollable leg movements
- severe cravings



### How is fentanyl addiction treated?

Like other opioid addictions, medication with behavioral therapies has been shown to be effective in treating people with a fentanyl addiction. Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships can support families and individuals who are seeking help for a substance use disorder. Their services are free to individuals and families. They offer case management services that will provide a free evaluation,



navigate any insurance issues, and make referrals to treatment services. If you or your loved one needs assistance, please call Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships at (814) 381-0921.

## BLAIR COUNTY COMMISSIONERS — RED RIBBON WEEK PROCLAMATION SIGNING

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town has been partnering with the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School SADD (Students Against Destructive Decisions) Club for 12 years by attending the Blair County Commissioners meeting in October to have the annual Red Ribbon Week Proclamation signed.

Bruce Erb, Blair County Commissioner said, “The Blair County Board of Commissioners is proud to support Red Ribbon Week. We’ve had a great relationship with the HAHS SADD group over the years, and it’s an honor for us to have them join us as we issue the Proclamation. Student representatives have the opportunity at our meeting to address us and the public on their efforts in our community. We are both proud of them and appreciative of all they do toward making Blair County drug-free.”

Sarah Garman is the Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School SADD Advisor. “This year, after two years off, it was nice to be able to work with Operation Our Town and the Blair County Commissioners on signing the Proclamation again. While it might be a short ceremony, it makes a huge statement to our community and to the kids who take part. In my opinion, the Proclamation brings hope

to the community in knowing that high school students are working to combat drug abuse in our community in various ways,” said Sarah.

This year is Sarah’s sixth year as SADD Advisor. In those six years, she has seen the club increase in size from



about four or five members during her first few years to twenty members this year. Activities for Red Ribbon Week have varied throughout the years to include evening events as well as school hours. This year, they planned several theme days and gave out candy with a message. During their Safe Trick or Treat event, SADD gave out pencils and pop-its bracelets with a drug-free message, as well as red ribbons. On Thursday of Red Ribbon Week, they finished off the week with a Wear Purple event and showed Chris Herren’s “The First Day” film.

The Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School SADD Club’s mission is to address the overall health and wellness of the individual. In the

spring of 2023, they will be sponsoring their annual Wellness Fair. In the last few years, the fair has grown to include small group sessions as well as organizations set up in the gym. Last year, over 200 students attended the fair with over 15 different organizations in attendance. SADD is hoping to increase their fair this year to include more small group sessions and to include an evening time for parents to come in and learn about what local organizations are available to serve their families’ needs.

Please see the Proclamation wording below from the 2022 Red Ribbon Week Proclamation signing:

WHEREAS, Alcohol and drug abuse in this Nation have reached epidemic stages; and

WHEREAS, Substance abuse is particularly damaging to one of our most valuable resources, our children, and a contributing factor in the three leading causes of death for teenagers – accidents, suicides, and homicides; and

WHEREAS, It is imperative that visible, unified prevention education efforts by community members be launched to eliminate the demand for drugs; and

WHEREAS, The National Red Ribbon Campaign offers citizens the opportunity to demonstrate their commitment to drug-free lifestyles (no use of illegal drugs, no illegal use of legal drugs); and

WHEREAS, The National Red Ribbon Campaign will be celebrated across America during Red Ribbon Week, October 23-31, 2022; and

WHEREAS, Business, government, parents, law enforcement, media, medical institutions, religious institutions, schools, senior citizens, service organizations, and youth will demonstrate their commitment to healthy, drug-free lifestyles by wearing and displaying red ribbons during this week-long campaign; and

WHEREAS, The community of Blair County, PA further supports the efforts of the Red Ribbon Campaign;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, the Commissioners of the County of Blair of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, do hereby proclaim October 23-31, 2022 as RED RIBBON WEEK, and encourage its citizens to participate in drug prevention education activities, not only during Red Ribbon Week, but all year long, making a visible statement that we are strongly committed to a drug-free Blair County.

# 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 Media, Inc./Altoona Market local radio stations for over five years.

Bill Kurtis, Public Service Director at the station, assisted me with suggestions on how to present our information in an efficient and timely manner. The public service messages that we record are aired on all six Forever Media, Inc./Altoona Market radio stations: WFGY-fm, WALY-fm, WRKY-fm, WWOT-fm, WFBG-am,

and WTNA-am. "Silke is such a pleasure to work with and very knowledgeable about OOT," said Bill Kurtis.

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 Media, Inc./Altoona Market 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!

On the Forever Media Sunday Morning Community Spotlight, we provide 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. We will also highlight some events in 2023, such as the Operation Our Town Prevention Grant Cycle, Operation Our Town Night at the Altoona Curve, Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Park, and the Operation Our Town Mini-Golf Tournament!

Operation Our Town is thankful for its partnership with Forever Media, Inc./Altoona Market, which has provided us with an excellent resource to get information out to the communities in our area!



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MariskaRealtor@hotmail.com

## Operation Our Town K - 12 Education Roundtable Report

By Edward G. DiSabato, Superintendent, Bellwood-Antis School District

I am pleased to begin my tenure as the new representative of the Operation Our Town K-12 Education Roundtable. This committee is made up of the superintendents of the seven Blair County School Districts. This group continues to work together with the best interests of the students and families we serve.

As a lifetime resident of Blair County, I am pleased to be returning to the community in a professional capacity and to have been chosen to participate in this outstanding community outreach program. All my local colleagues are focused on working together to make a positive impact on our community and provide a safe environment for the children and families we serve. I have watched and admired the outstanding work of Operation Our Town and been impressed with the work and the focus of the group. As the newly

appointed Superintendent of Schools at Bellwood-Antis School District, I am eager and excited to begin my term representing the educational community in this important endeavor. I look forward to building positive relationships and working with Operation Our Town as we continue their outstanding work.

Significant efforts have been made in our local districts regarding learning loss and the mental wellness needs of our students. We recognize the documented correlation of future drug use by students who are exposed to trauma and whose needs are not addressed at an early age.

Our districts continue to provide for school safety and student wellness by utilizing the Safe2Say hotline. Safe2Say Something is a youth violence prevention program run by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. The

program assists our youth with helping to recognize warning signs and signals from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others. This 24-hour hotline enables anyone to call in a concern regarding school or personal safety. These concerns are forwarded to schools and law enforcement based upon the severity of the concern. Districts can reach out to the students in need and provide the level of assistance required.

Districts in our community continue to address student wellness with the assistance of mental health counselors, social workers, and trauma informed screeners to better assist our students and staff with identifying at-risk students within our districts to meet student needs, regardless of the school setting.

Districts continue to implement the Student Assistance Program (SAP)

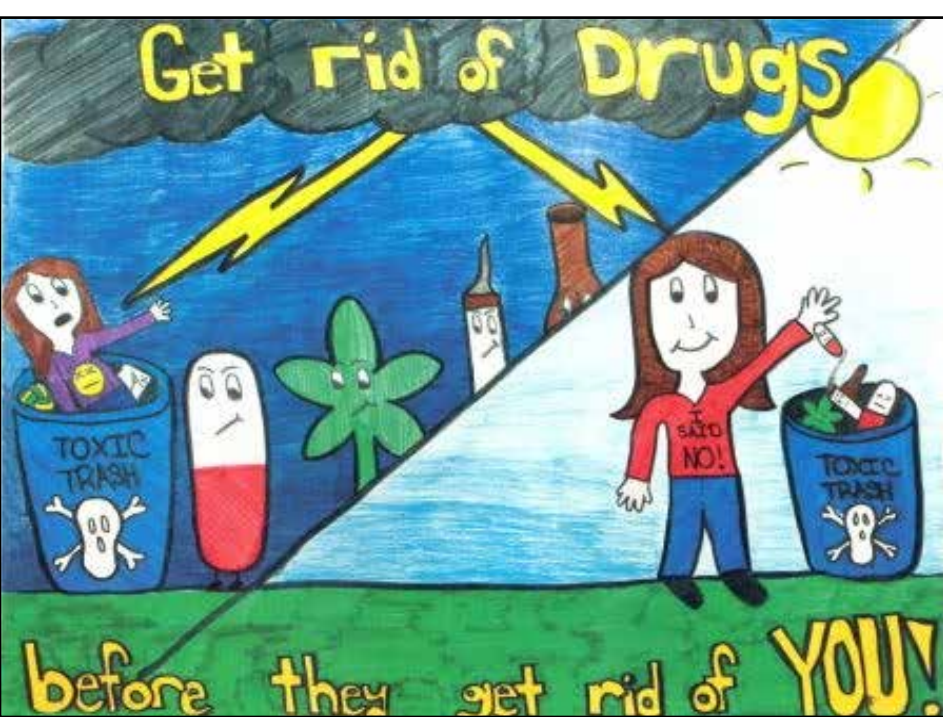
by adhering to the continued meetings to address the mental health and drug and alcohol treatment needs of our students. Students are referred for services, which could include individual and group counseling with our outside agency partners (UPMC Behavioral Health, Blair Family Solutions, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships, and Impact Counseling Services). This information is shared with parents and can be found on district websites.

In addition to the efforts mentioned, the AASD Adult Education Program's grant "HSE: Pathway to a Bright Future" provided 49 GED Scholarships to 21 Blair County adults enrolled in the AASD Adult Education Program whose goal was to earn their High School Equivalency credential. Operation Our Town funds were also used to purchase

266 GED official practice test vouchers for learners to take practice exams in preparation of the actual exam.

An example of the remarkable success of this program is Hakim who moved to Altoona years ago to make a better life for himself. To do so, he knew he would need to attain his HSE credential. When Hakim enrolled, he wrote "the only way I can fail is if I stop trying." He is a true example of determination and persistence and a great example to never stop trying!

The Operation Our Town K-12 Education Roundtable continues to meet monthly in a collaborative effort to ensure the health and wellness of our children and increase the likelihood that they lead a drug-free life and become productive members of our community.



# OPIOID SETTLEMENT TRUST SEEKS TO OFFER HELP WHERE MOST NEEDED

By State Representative Jim Gregory, 80th House District



The trust established to oversee disbursement of payments from opioid manufacturers and distributors aims to expand access to treatment for those harmed

by the companies' role in the addiction crisis. With CVS and Walgreens settling lawsuits in late 2022, the trust now gains even more responsibility in Pennsylvania.

***"I sought and received appointment to the Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust because I know all too personally how the pharmaceutical industry has ruined families and claimed lives."***

All of Pennsylvania's 67 counties signed onto the national settlements with Cardinal, McKesson, AmerisourceBergen and Johnson & Johnson. As

trustees, we helped counties with the process by which they received their first payments in the fall of 2022. Eligible uses for that money include expanding the use of overdose-reversal medications, treating incarcerated individuals, collecting data and research, training, and starting or supporting drug courts and diversion programs.

CVS and Walgreens (the two largest pharmacy chains in the country) as well as Walmart reached settlements with states just before the holidays, meaning millions of additional dollars will be coming into the mix.

The trust is important to ensure settlement money is spent wisely and prudently – and remains focused on people with substance abuse disorder.

I'm one of 13 trustees, and I can assure you we all take our responsibility very seriously. I field calls and emails every day about steps we can take to combat the torment of addiction. I'm a person in long-term recovery

myself; know that my door is always open to those who need support.

Treatment is a challenge like none other. Treatment comes in many forms, as we recognize there is not a one-size-fits-all approach to a disorder that affects each person differently. But, what we do know is that treatment works and treatment saves us.

The Opioid Misuse and Addiction Abatement Trust is tasked with confirming funds are distributed fairly and consistently, providing feedback to local governments on approved uses, and ensuring funds are used transparently and effectively.

We've lost a half-billion Americans to opioid deaths, including the 12 Pennsylvanians who die every day on average. Those 12 people are our friends, our relatives, our neighbors, and the people in the rooms with us. Please join me in continuing the fight to get to the day we'll celebrate when 12 becomes zero.

## 2022 OOT Prevention Grant Recipients

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 2023 Grant Cycle will open on May 1, 2023 with a deadline for grant applications on June 2, 2023. 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 (with revised date of 4/27/2021) must be used to apply for funding. To access the updated grant applications, please visit [www.operationourtown.org](http://www.operationourtown.org) and click on the Grants tab on the homepage.

A total of over \$59,000 in grants were awarded by

Operation Our Town during the 2022 Grant Cycle to the following 17 prevention programs:

**AASD Adult Education Program: HSE: Bright Futures**

2212 Sixth Avenue, 2nd Floor, Altoona (814) 329-0253

Funding awarded will be used to invest in the future of Blair County adults who lack a high school diploma by awarding HSE (High School Equivalency) scholarships

to pay for the cost of GED subtest exams necessary to earning their High School Equivalency Credential.

**AASD ELECT Program: ELECT (Education Leading to Employment & Career Training)**

1201 8th Avenue, Altoona (814) 946-8365

Funding awarded will be used to provide nutritious meals and snacks for pregnant and parenting teens at educational events and workshops, and

provide engagement support to paternal figures that are ineligible for the program but involved in their children's lives.

**Altoona Area School District Foundation: Project SOAR (Study, Overcome, Achieve, Reward)**

1404 6th Avenue, Altoona (814) 243-0235

Funding awarded will be used for supplies and program materials for students that

*Continued on A25*

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# HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION: WORK GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

By Coleen Heim, Director

The Healthy Blair County Coalition (HBCC) is a partnership of individuals and organizations working to promote the social, economic, emotional, and physical well-being of residents. Our mission is to assess facets of a healthy Blair County by sharing resources, engaging local partnerships, and implementing strategies.



The Let's Move Blair County Committee began a SparkBlair County initiative which was part of the SparkAmerica Fit City Challenge. In the fall challenge, Blair County ranked number four out of 109 cities across the country with 27 teams and 262 individuals that logged 638,005 active

minutes. Our Active Living Brochure is a guide for healthy activities in Blair County. The next Let's Move Blair County Day is on Saturday, June 10, 2023.

The Mental Health Work Group is continuing to focus on mental health issues, which were identified as the top challenge within households and by key stakeholders responding to the community health needs assessment. Training is available to any organization on the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS) which supports suicide risk assessment through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask to help identify whether someone is at risk for suicide. Seventeen trainings have been conducted with 491 people trained. The Columbia Protocol App is being updated with the new 988 initiative. This locally developed

App was adopted by The Department of Homeland Security. The Suicide Prevention Strategic Planning Committee is meeting regularly to enhance screening methods, create awareness of suicide prevention efforts, and improve reentry/post-care. They are also supporting programs being implemented by the Suicide Prevention Task Force.



Task Force conducted a series of focus groups with youth to obtain their perceptions of bullying and ways to help. As a result, they are planning to launch a Let's Move Into Kindness Project as a result of bullying/cyberbullying concerns. The Chamber

of Commerce's BASICS Subcommittee is planning two Truancy Summits in January-February 2023. Stakeholders are being invited to revisit past protocols and the Be There Initiative that were in place to address truancy and chronic absenteeism but were halted because of the pandemic.

The Food for Life Committee is addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy eating. With support from volunteers, fresh produce is being distributed weekly to selected patients at Altoona Family Physicians (AFP) and Partnering for Dental Services. In addition, staff from Penn State Extension Office will be doing cooking demonstrations at AFP, sharing resources, and hosting grocery tours. A cookbook was developed to provide individuals with simple and healthy recipes for the specific produce they are receiving.

The Substance Use &

Physical Health Coalition continues to meet to enhance communication and coordination between drug/alcohol and healthcare providers.

The Alliance for Nicotine Free Communities supports programs to reduce nicotine use in collaboration with the Lung Disease Foundation of Central Pennsylvania. The work group will continue to address the use of vaping/e-cigarettes by providing training and also resources to those individuals interested in quitting.

In partnership with the Blair County Library System, a Social Media Awareness Planning Committee will be sponsoring two community events in April 2023 to address addiction/dangers of social media, internet, cell phones, etc.

Contact Coleen Heim, Director for more information at 814-317-5108 ext. 305. Website: healthyblaircountycoalition.org

## Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The sixth annual Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park and Laguna Splash was held on August 4, 2022. For each coupon that was redeemed that day, \$3.00 was donated to Operation Our Town. A total of 796 coupons were redeemed that day, resulting in a donation of \$2,388 to Operation Our Town, which is the largest amount raised from Operation Our Town Day!

Operation Our Town had a booth at the main entrance to the park and distributed "Choose Life, Not Drugs" wristbands, drug prevention information, and provided a drug-free pledge banner to sign to get a free OOT t-shirt. Child fingerprinting was also provided by PA State Police Trooper Chris Fox. Officer Traci Winters and her K9 Getro from Tyrone Borough Police Department conducted a drug sniffing and bite demonstration

outside the main entrance for park guests to watch.

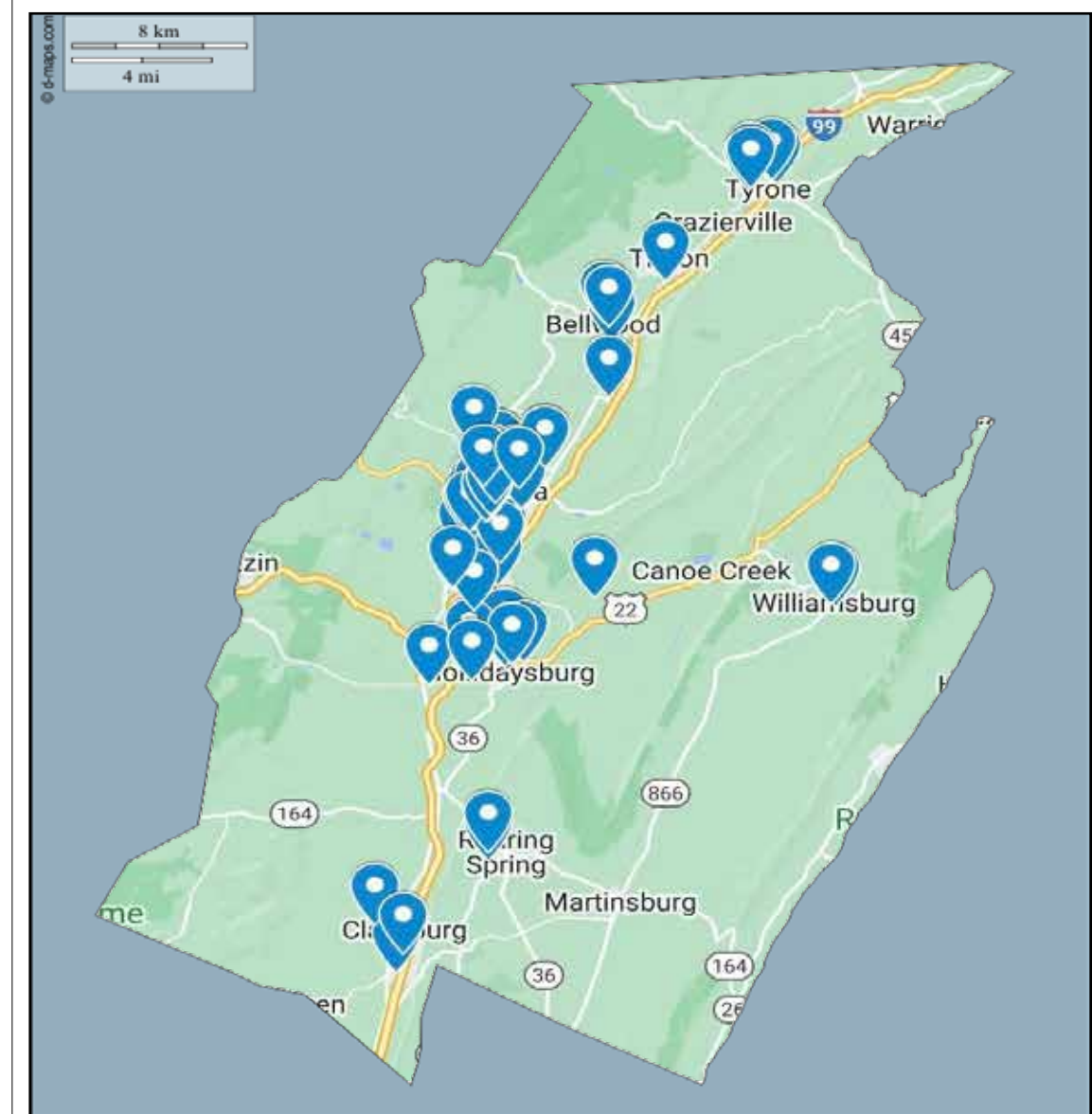
The owners and management team at DelGrosso's Park value the opportunity to work with community groups. Operation Our Town Day at the park allows families to come together and enjoy time while experiencing the Operation Our Town presentations. "If we have just one of our park guests make a drug-free decision after hearing what they learned during the day, then it was worth it," says Amy Mearkle – Director of Marketing for DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash.

Mark your calendars for August 3, 2023 for the seventh annual Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Park! We thank DelGrosso's Amusement Park for their continued partnership and support, and look forward to another fun-filled day!



## OOT Grant Recipients Map

By Nick Gordon, PMSC AmeriCorps Member with Operation Our Town



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## Early Childhood Education Roundtable Report

By Rodney Green, OOT Early Childhood Roundtable Chair

The Operation Our Town Early Childhood Education Roundtable has been meeting every month, in one form or another, since September 1, 2011. During that time, we have seen many of our goals come to fruition in one form or another. Here are just a few examples:

- We hosted three Early Learning Summits that have been attended by numerous business officials, government officials, and early learning leaders.

- We conducted numerous "Early Learning Walkabouts" at local early learning centers. These walkabouts encouraged small

groups of business CEOs to tour centers to see firsthand the impacts on investing in high-quality early learning.

- We met with local HR personnel to create awareness for benefit program offerings that could support employees with childcare needs. One program of note is the use of Dependent Care Flexible Spending accounts.

- We were successful in getting a grant to conduct and publish a Blair County Needs/Opportunities Assessment for Early Learning.

- We worked closely with the Pennsylvania Early Learning Investment Commission (ELIC) and have

been successful in getting the Governor's office to expand and appoint members from our region.

- Individuals met and dialogued with local legislators, asking them to consider various incentives such as increasing subsidies to the PA STARS and Pre-K Counts system, and for a state tax credit - similar to the federal tax credit - for families to deduct childcare expenses.

Building upon those experiences, in 2022, we decided to hold our first ever Early Learning Symposium. On April 6, 2022, the symposium was

held at the Devorris Center for Business Development. Symposium participants were a diverse group of twenty-five individuals, including childcare providers, affiliated agency representatives, employment professionals, and educators from local school districts and higher education. The symposium utilized focus groups to discuss and brainstorm solutions for the staffing shortages and safety concerns that have been the primary culprit for denying the provision of affordable and quality early learning services. What did we learn? A lot!

Three basic themes emerged from these

discussions:

1. The cost of basic childcare for low and middle income families has become unaffordable.

2. The staffing shortages and financial challenges associated with the pandemic and inflationary pressures are severely impacting the availability of childcare services.

3. Regulatory relief and significant modification to the current childcare state subsidy thresholds is needed if childcare capacity is to be increased.

Using those findings, the Roundtable is looking ahead

Continued on A20



## Eleventh Street Tower

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## Green Avenue Tower

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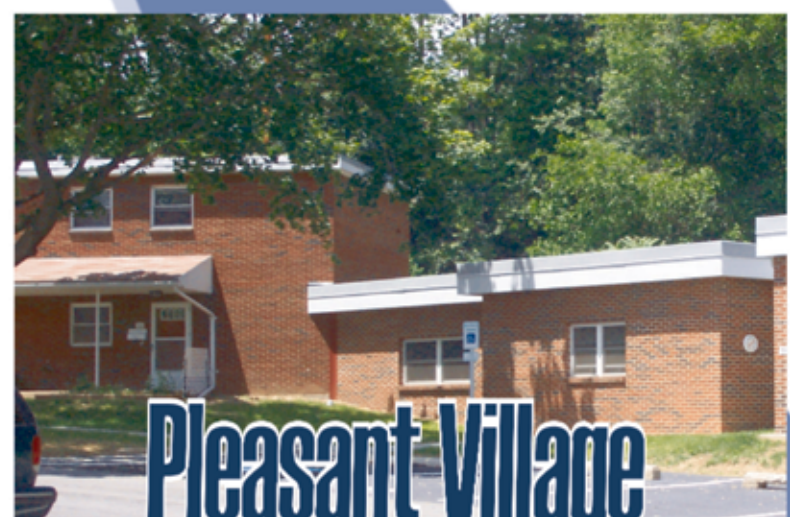
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# LOCAL STUDENT WINS ESSAY CONTEST

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

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

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



Pictured from 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)

prevented in many different ways. Being a supportive friend to others that are going through tough times and finding yourself the same

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.

# JOHN JOYCE

Continued from A5

important to remember we also need to focus on supporting those here at home who struggle with addiction. In Congress, I have become a staunch advocate for policies that punish illicit manufacturers, traffickers, and dealers, while encouraging the victims of addiction to be provided the resources they need to heal and re-enter our communities.

This year, I was proud to direct resources to expand recovery-to-work programs into our communities. Additionally, UPMC has been awarded a \$100,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to restart its Recovery to Work program and expand into our district. As a Co-Chair of the GOP Doctors Caucus, a Member of the House Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health, and a Member of the House Republican Healthy Futures Task Force, I am committed to finding solutions that will work for our Commonwealth

and country. Since 2007, Operation Our Town has allocated over a million dollars for drug education and prevention programs in the local community. I applaud their efforts and look forward to continuing to share in their mission as I represent Blair County in Congress.

We have all been affected by the opioid crisis, and I encourage you to contact my office at (814) 656-6081 or visit my website at johnjoyce.house.gov to share your ideas on how we can work together to fight against the fentanyl crisis that we face.



# NEW AMTRAN BUS DESIGN: SEE SOMETHING? SAY SOMETHING!

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town has announced the unveiling of their fifth bus wrap designed by DiAndrea Media of Altoona. The wrap appears on an AMTRAN bus that



can be seen driving around throughout the Altoona area. This year’s design features the tagline “See Something? Say Something!” with the Blair County Push Out the Pusher

drug hotline number (814) 693-3020 and is colorfully illustrated as a reminder to report drug activity if you see it in your neighborhood.

Phil Devorris, Board Member of Operation Our Town, said, “Law enforcement, public services, and volunteers all work together to help people in our community and keep it safe from harm. Our community is special because people look out for one another. I’m proud to see this bus wrap as a friendly reminder of that community spirit.”

Jim Walstrom, Supervisory Narcotics Agent – Retired, PA

Office of Attorney General, said, “The Push Out the Pusher Drug Hotline is a very important tool to assist law enforcement in their efforts to combat illegal drug activity in Blair County. The Push Out the Pusher Drug Hotline allows the citizens to be our eyes and ears on the street, 24/7. No one knows what goes on in your own neighborhood better than you do.”

AMTRAN is proud to support Operation Our Town and appreciates the opportunity to be involved in this project. Josh Baker, Deputy CEO of AMTRAN, said, “AMTRAN and Operation Our Town have

partnered once again to unveil their 5th bus wrap design that appears on an AMTRAN bus and can be viewed throughout Altoona. This year’s design is as colorful as it is powerful. The theme of “See Something? Say Something!” reminds us all that we can be part of the solution to stop drug activity in our community and assist in mitigating the negative consequences that can result from drug activity. AMTRAN is proud to continue its long-standing support and partnership of Operation Our Town, and shares in the vision of a safer, drug-free tomorrow for Blair County.”



OperationOurTown.org

KEEP IT SAFE.



KEEP IT GOING.



# Keeping You Safe

Value Drug Company provides tools and resources to help our pharmacists fight the prevalence of opioid addiction and misuse in their communities.



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## CJAB (Criminal Justice Advisory Board) Report

*continued from A3*

community safety, and access to funding were identified. In August, the board continued its review and revision of the strategic plan. The group voted to have meetings bi-monthly. In September, there were reports from subcommittee meetings, and it was reported that there is a possible grant for women's reentry programs. The prison population had reached 340 inmates in the previous week, with 50 to 60 being female inmates who could benefit from reentry programs. Ashley Gay Vocco, from Family Services, Inc., discussed a training grant

for officers about human trafficking, in which stops for drug detection can also include searches for human trafficking. Amy Marten-Shanafelt discussed the HOPE Drop-In Center for homeless people. Judge Doyle emphasized the importance of family ties in crime deterrence and how these can be considered in sentencing; Warden Tate discussed the opportunity for parents and children to have contact, even though the parents are incarcerated. She indicated a lack of meeting rooms for this valuable program.

An extensive discussion

ensued among all participants about the inadequacy of the current jail facility. Chief Merrill discussed the need for modern juvenile detention facilities. He feels there is an unquestioned need for a larger, modern county prison, including juvenile detention. Overcrowding remains an issue. There is no approved space for juvenile detention, meetings, or an adequate medical area. Those present at the meeting voted to adopt a resolution in support of the construction of a new Blair County Prison facility. This was drafted and will be sent to the County Commissioners

and the prison board.

In November, a report was submitted by Frank Scherer, the new Central Region CJAB Specialist with Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency. He reported that there are links to funding opportunities. The educational workshop for landlords and local agencies regarding housing was well attended. Judy Rosser reported on personnel changes in her agency, Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships. That group's yearly dinner took place with honored guest, Judge Timothy M. Sullivan, drug court judge, and other

award winners. It was reported that barriers for housing persist for people involved with the criminal justice system. Clark Sheehe from juvenile probation discussed the difficulties of accessing private psychologists and counselors. There is a major lack of juvenile psychiatric beds throughout the whole state. It was reported from the specialty courts that Judge Bernard will be presiding over drug court going forward after Judge Tim Sullivan's retirement at the end of December. The next CJAB meeting is scheduled for January 19, 2023.

## 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 seven 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 to not give in to peer pressure if they are asked to try drugs or alcohol.

Each year, the Hollidaysburg School District provides a packet to all Junior and Senior High students and families to sign up for the district's voluntary drug & alcohol testing program. Students and parents must complete the consent packet. Upon turning in the consent

packet, the students are given a "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 screen, they are given a \$25 Sheetz gift card provided by Operation Our Town through the sponsorship of local businesses. Parents are notified of the test and the results. If a student does not pass the test, a non-punitive system is used. They are not punished at school, however, they must sign up for drug counseling or a rehab program. They are also referred to the school SAP (Student Assistance Program) team.

In the Junior High, 157 students signed up to participate in the program in the 2022-2023 school year. The Junior High randomly tests one student each week. Christine Snyder,

Hollidaysburg Junior High School Nurse who administers the drug testing for the Junior High said, "The program helps to promote healthy behavior in the Junior High population. Positive lifestyle choices are very important for students

participate in the program in the 2022-2023 school year. The Senior High randomly tests four students each week. Mary Haenig, Hollidaysburg Senior High School Nurse who administers the drug testing for the Senior High

them say they will use the gift card for gas."

We are truly grateful for the support of the following local businesses and organizations that have contributed monetary donations to sponsor the purchase of the Sheetz gift

"IT **PAYS\$**  
TO PASS



of this age as they are often trying to fit in with their peers. The students are very excited to be chosen for testing and are thrilled about receiving a Sheetz gift card!"

In the Senior High, 95 students signed up to

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

cards for the 2022-2023 school year: Allegheny Township Police Association, P. Joseph Lehman, Inc., and Stiffler McGraw. We also offer a huge thank you to Sheetz for partnering with us to support this very important program!

# 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 a goal of the Northern Blair Roundtable of Operation Our Town.

The Northern Blair Roundtable is a strong network of business, media, legal, education, social services, 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, programs and services available, and identifying priority needs.

Meetings are held monthly at The Bull Pen restaurant in Tyrone. In early 2022, we received presentations from the following Operation Our Town Roundtables to help create more collaboration and connection between the Roundtables: Heather

Crusinberry - OOT Housing Roundtable, Lisa Hann - OOT Faith-based Roundtable, and Sherri O'Donald - OOT Pharmacy Roundtable.

The group has been working on poverty, homelessness, transportation, and employment/educational needs. COVID has stymied many of the opportunities to work on these vital needs in our community. Some of the



actions that the Roundtable has been able to accomplish is to develop an online Resource Guide for agencies to refer clients to appropriate resources.

The group has also

traditionally held a yearly spring workshop in Tyrone. In the past, the group has held a morning session for professionals and an evening session for community leaders and residents. Topics have included Bullying/Suicide Prevention; Landlord Tenant Regulations; and Stop the Bleed/Active Shooter. In May 2022, we held a workshop on Understanding

Addiction, Mental Health, and Co-occurring Disorders, in conjunction with Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships and PeerStar Support Services. We'll be offering another educational workshop in the

spring of 2023.

The group also started authoring a monthly column in the Tyrone Daily Herald that highlights pertinent topics of interest for the area or new services. Committee members rotate to pen the column about a program or topic significant to their agency or organization.

Uplift Tyrone was created in an effort to help people learn new skills and/or sharpen their knowledge of various life improvement topics. Uplift Tyrone was created in partnership with Every Life Matters Support Services, who is on the Northern Blair Roundtable and stepped forward to help this workshop idea come to fruition. Kickoff picnics were held for community members throughout the summer at City Hotel Park to gather their input on classes/resources that they would like to learn more about. The first workshops were held on budgeting

and home maintenance in September 2022. We will start offering more workshops again in the spring of 2023, but will be tweaking aspects of the program and trying to bring more partners on board.

In late 2022, we started focusing on partnering with four identified sectors of the community (police department, school district, ministerium, hospital) to have in-depth conversations with each of them about working together and identifying any needs that we can be of help. The first conversations were held with Chief Jessica Walk of Tyrone Police Department and Superintendent Leslie Estep of Tyrone Area School District. We'll continue these conversations with other sectors of the community in 2023.

For more information about the Northern Blair Roundtable, contact Shawna Hoover at [shawna@operationourtown.org](mailto:shawna@operationourtown.org).

## CHOOSE LIFE! NOT DRUGS.

# 2022 OOT Golf Tournament Results

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town held its 10th Annual Golf Tournament on September 19 & 20, 2022. The event included the annual Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park and the "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry 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 our 119 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 at Lakemont Park's Keystone Falls 18-Hole Mini-Golf Course. A total of 9 teams participated, and the winning mini-golf team was Evolution Expressions, which received a special gift! Participants were invited to the "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry afterwards for great food and networking. 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. The "Our Town" Appreciation Night was sponsored by Imler's Poultry on Monday evening in conjunction with the golf tournament. The dinner was provided by Imler's



Poultry and beverages were provided by Furrer Beverage. Dana Thompson and Thompson Pharmacy provided the beautiful theme décor for the event. Randy Feathers was recognized for his service to the OOT Board of Directors, as he retires

as a Board Member. Stuckey Automotive and Value Drug Company were both recognized with 10-year donor awards for donating \$10,000 per year for 10 years to Operation Our Town. District Attorney Peter

Weeks provided an update from the District Attorney's Office. Attendees were invited to showcase their chipping skills in a fun Chip a Duck game. The evening ended with a 50/50 drawing, and golfers, sponsors, and OOT grant recipients

enjoyed networking on the outdoor patio.

The main Golf Tournament was held on Tuesday, September 20th 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. City Beverage provided the beverages for golfers 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 dinner on the outdoor patio provided by Park Hills Golf Club.

A total of 45 golf teams participated. The winning golf teams were: 1st Place: Matt Neumeyer, Darryl Owens, Harry Benjamin, John Ventura. 2nd Place: Ron Hinish, Garth Honsaker, Ed Smith, Michelle Day. 3rd Place: Nick Gates, Mark Condrin, Matt Spangler, Mike Macionsky. The Closest to the Pin 2nd Shot winner was Damian Williams. The winning teams all received special gifts!

Please consider supporting OOT 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 crime in Blair County. Please contact Shawna Hoover at (814) 296-8730 or [shawna@operationourtown.org](mailto:shawna@operationourtown.org) for more details on this year's tournament!



# DON'T BRING DRUGS TO BLAIR COUNTY



# Department Updates: Year in Review

Continued from A4

## LOGAN TOWNSHIP

### Police Department –

#### Chief David Hoover

- LTPD Officers responded to 7,702 calls for service in 2022.
- K9 Freddy responded with handler Alex Vazquez to 11 calls for service, including two separate searches of postal packages at the request of USPS Agents, in which Freddy had a positive alert to the presence of narcotics both times; an assist to another agency for an individual that fled from officers on foot; as well as three (3) school/locker searches and two (2) K9 presentations/demonstrations (Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center and Foot of Ten Elementary School).
- K9 Ciro responded with handler George Swander to 4 calls for service, including an assist to another agency for a search of a vehicle from a traffic stop, which resulted in a positive alert; as well as three (3) school/locker searches; an assist to the DEA with a property search; and a K9 presentation/demonstration at Holy Trinity Catholic School.
- On July 19, 2022, Patrolman Tyler McClellan made a field contact with an individual in a car that seemed out of place. Upon speaking with the individual, Patrolman McClellan observed several items that were indicators of drug use.
- Further investigation and a search warrant yielded:
  - 12.64 bricks of suspected Fentanyl (632 packets stamped “Roxy”) professionally packaged and wrapped in newspaper
  - \$1,869 US currency
  - 11 grams of Methamphetamine
  - Multiple scales
  - Large amount of packaging material
  - 2 two-way radios (used for transporting narcotics)
- All charges were waived to the Court of Common Pleas at the Preliminary Hearing.

## TYRONE BOROUGH

### Police Department –

#### Chief Jessica A. Walk

- The Tyrone Borough Police Department, along with members of the Blair County Drug Task Force, conducted drug investigations and conducted surveillance on several homes that were believed to be involved in drug activity and several arrests were made with field contacts and traffic stops.
- Officers and members of the Drug Task Force also conducted several saturations throughout the year.
- 5/2/2022 - Traffic stop yielded 24 grams of meth and 20 grams of heroin laced fentanyl.
- 11/23/2022 - A surveillance detail led to a traffic stop which yielded 4,741 packets of heroin, 3.5 grams of meth, and a firearm.
- The police department had 98 drug related arrests for the year.
- The police department handled 4,423 calls for service.
- The police department made 289 criminal arrests.
- The police department issued 197 traffic citations.
- The K-9 was used for numerous K-9 sniffs throughout Blair County, Huntingdon County, and Centre County, leading to several arrests.



Photo Courtesy of Logan Township Police Department

# Blair County Sheriff's Office

By Sheriff James E. Ott

## Name of your Sheriff:

Sheriff James E. Ott

## Names and titles of command and supervisor staff:

Chief Deputy Christopher Tatar, Lieutenant Kermit Alwine, Sergeants R.J. Peo and Justin Bennett; Corporals Timothy Mearkle, Bethany Cocola, David Dauria

The following reflect what full complement would be if fully staffed. Sadly, the majority of law enforcement nationwide face this same crisis. We continue to struggle to retain staff and attract qualified interested applicants when there are many other opportunities available that present better, more sustainable wages in today's climate.

# of full-time deputies: 26

# of part-time deputies: 2

# of K-9 deputies: 1

# of office staff: 3

## Ways Our Office Serves The community:

We continue to be blessed with 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. Additionally, we have been able to restructure the process for securing weapons prior to screening at

## By the numbers

Our office is proud to provide the following statistics for 2022:

	Opened/New	Closed/Old
Civil and Criminal process received/served:	1,723	2,116
Personal property eviction-writs, Garnishment:	278	300
Real estate executions:	151	133
Processed-issued license to carry firearms:	3,799 NEW	2,632 RENEW
Warrants served/processed:	2,209	2,271
License to sell firearms:	16	
License to sell precious metals issued:	10	
Protection from Abuse (PFA) opened/processed:	1,565	1,758

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: 192,107

Number of items X-rayed: 101,795

Number of prohibited items declared: 176

Number of items intercepted by our deputies (drugs, weapons, etc.): 1,170

Number of firearms declared: 3

the entrance of the courthouse for more convenient and safer handling. We have also added a prescription medication drop off box inside the front entrance of the courthouse so that citizens and employees can have a safe and proper way of disposing unwanted or unused prescription medications.

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

## Special Accomplishments:

The office continues to participate 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. For the 5th consecutive year, our office has been recognized by AAA for our traffic enforcement efforts in keeping our roadways safe.

## Services the Sheriff's Office provides:

Our office is responsible for prisoner transports for Common Pleas Court, safety and security of the courthouse campus, process and service PFA's, including weapons retention related to PFA's, real estate sales, and issue license to carry. We also conduct on view arrests for criminal violations, traffic enforcement efforts, serve warrants, and assist all other law enforcement agencies upon request. We now have a QR Code that will take you to the online application process using your smart device:



SCAN ME

# Operation Our Town Mini Golf Tournament



Great Prizes,  
Food, & Fun!



# Save the Date!

Monday, September 18, 2023  
@ 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 – “Our Town” Appreciation Night at Park Hills Golf Club

## Mini-Golf Sponsorships:

Individual Mini-Golfer – \$50

Mini-Golf Foursome – \$200

Non-profit Rate for OOT Grant Recipients – \$100

Mini-Golf Tee Sign – \$100

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

# 2022 Blair County Police Dept. Drug Collection Boxes Data

LOCATION	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	TOTAL
ALTOONA POLICE DEPT.	120.28 lbs.	101.1 lbs.	227 lbs.	29.5 lbs.	477.88 lbs.
HOLLIDAYSBURG POLICE DEPT.	44 lbs.	36 lbs.	48 lbs.	51 lbs.	179 lbs.
LOGAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPT.	22 lbs.	17.5 lbs.	26 lbs.	11.8 lbs.	77.3 lbs.
TYRONE POLICE DEPT.	37.6 lbs.	66.7 lbs.	34.6 lbs.	46.9 lbs.	185.8 lbs.
TOTAL	223.88 lbs.	221.3 lbs.	335.6 lbs.	139.2 lbs.	919.98 lbs.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS - STUDENT EXCERPTS

By Nick Gordon, PMSC AmeriCorps Member with Operation Our Town

Prevention of drug abuse and crime in Blair County starts with our youth. We can impact a generation by

High School, painted a picture of what might happen if youth succumb to peer pressure and use illegal drugs, suggesting,

to say about “standing up” and “standing out” when it comes to illegal drugs and peer pressure:

**“Even if someone is using peer pressure and making you feel awkward, remember, you don’t have to do it. You don’t have to be their friend. Think about it, most people give into peer pressure just to feel like they’re fitting into the crowd. It is ok to stand up for what you believe in and stand out from the crowd. You need to stay true to yourself and make the best decision for you and not other people.”**

*Excerpt from essay submitted by AAJHS 6th grader, Riley*

Sylvie, an 8th grader at Altoona Area Junior High School, leaves us with some profound thoughts about the chances we get in life and a way to maximize those by choosing wisely.

“I like my life and I’m not going to throw it away because I was bored one day. Everyone has a chance at anything in the whole world. I know for a fact if I did any kind of drugs, that could alter my chance. But I’m not taking that risk. I need all the chances I can get. At the end of the day, it is your life and you get to choose what actions you do, so just choose wisely.”



listening to their thoughts on the matter, which is exactly why we want to share some of the highlights from our 2022 essay contest finalists.

Natalie, a 6th grade student at Altoona Area Junior High School, did a great job of explaining the importance of being intentional about who youth hang out with, in order to educate her peers, stating,

“...when you become close to someone or even see them often, you will start to act like them. In the sense that you might talk like them, use words that they use a lot, you might use body language similar to theirs and even start to think like them. Which isn’t always a bad thing, except when you are hanging out with people that you probably shouldn’t aspire to be like.”

Brionna, an 8th grade student at Altoona Area Junior

“You wake up in a hospital. The last thing you remember is being out late because of a party. Your friend is pressuring you to take drugs. You’re brought to the hospital where you will have to face the consequences of doing that action by having to explain everything that had happened. The look on your parents’ faces of your choices that previous night. You let your friend take over your thoughts into doing something out of the ordinary. There will be instant regret on your face, questioning why you would ever do that? Now, you may have wanted to be “cool” around this friend, but you let them get in the way of you being safe.”

Riley, a 6th grade student at Altoona Area Junior High School, took the approach of giving words of wisdom for her peers. Here’s what she had

## Lou Schmitt

*continued from A5*

10 years in prison and a fine of up to \$20,000.

During the course of shepherding House Bill 103 through the legislative process, I was contacted by a myriad of law enforcement officers who told me their stories of being assaulted with bodily fluids – mainly being spit on – by criminals. Until now, those individuals could only realistically be charged with disorderly conduct, a summary offense. My legislation changes that. Big time.

Other new laws of note:

Act 59 of 2022 – Increases gradings for DUI offenses and requires consecutive sentencing for repeat DUI offenders.

Act 60 of 2022 – Expands the penalty when a police animal is injured or killed by individuals while they are engaged in the commission of a felony.

Act 61 of 2022 – Creates the offense of institutional sexual assault of a care-dependent person.

Act 75 of 2022 – Strengthens penalties on those who sexually extort their victims to such a degree that the extortion leads to serious bodily injury or death.

Act 95 of 2021 – Creates the offense of evading arrest or detention on foot and harming a police animal while evading arrest or detention.

Act 48 of 2021 – Adds criminal offenses for those who use their position of trust to exploit older adults or care-dependent individuals and provides investigational and

prosecutorial jurisdiction.

Act 53 of 2021 – Provides for enhanced sentencing for child pornography if the victim is under 10 years of age or prepubescent and creates the Task Force on Child Pornography.

Finally, it was with a heavy heart that I co-sponsored HR 193, a condolence resolution honoring the service and legacy of Lieutenant William Lebo, a Lebanon City Police Officer who was killed in the line of duty on Thursday, March 31, 2022, at the age of 63. Lt. Lebo was set to retire from the police department on May 1.

Lt. Lebo was born in Vicenza, Italy on May 22, 1958, while his father was stationed there with the US Army. He resided in Lebanon County for the rest of his life. He began his service to the City of Lebanon Police Department in September of 1982. William was promoted to Sergeant in 2002 and later to Lieutenant where he spent the last 10 years managing the patrol platoons. While responding to a domestic disturbance on March 31, 2022, Lt. Lebo tragically lost his life.

He is survived by his wife, Lora, his daughter, Corinne, and his mother, Rina, as well as his brothers, Richard Lebo and his wife Denise, and Jerry Lebo and his wife Colleen, and three nephews, their spouses, and children. He is predeceased by his father, Sterling Lebo, and his sister, Patricia Lebo. Lest we ever forget.

# CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

*Continued from A14*

to opportunities in 2023. One goal that we have spotlighted for 2023 is the creation an Early Learning Improvement Grant program. We have been fortunate to have several concerned business leaders commit to create the Early Learning Investment Fund. Through their generosity, the fund has grown to the point where we believed it was time to disburse some of those monies. The goal of the fund is to support and create



more early learning programs in our county. Therefore, the Early Childhood Education Roundtable has created a targeted Request for Proposals (RFP) that will be directed to Blair County early learning providers. The RFP will seek out fund requests that can be used for one-time, non-reoccurring expenditures. We have confidence that the Early Learning Improvement Grant program will enhance the provision of quality early

learning services in Blair County. It is hoped that it will be “The tide that lifts all boats” strategy that will benefit all.



# Tee Off Against Drugs - Student Golf Tournament Results

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

In addition to the main golf tournament, Operation Our Town held its Annual Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf

OOT Student Golf Tournament sponsors: Sheetz, Tom Yurochko Youth Golf Fund, and The EADS Group.



Tournament on September 21, 2022 at Park Hills Golf Club for high school golf teams from Blair and surrounding counties.

In an effort to include as many schools as possible and ensure a quicker pace of play for the students, the event was moved to its own day and changed to a morning and afternoon shotgun start. A total of 39 teams (156 students) from 25 school districts participated! We would like to give special thanks to the 2022

Sheetz provided snacks, water, and Gatorade for the students and coaches to enjoy throughout the day. To start off the event, Sheetz provided delicious To-Go breakfast sandwiches for the morning student golfers and coaches. For lunch, Park Hills Golf Club provided burgers & fries for the morning and afternoon student golfers and coaches, Travis Seymore of Alto Markets cooked wings provided by Imler's Poultry,

and students enjoyed ice cream provided by Ritchey's Dairy. Sheetz provided a To-Go dinner of various deli sandwiches and chips for the afternoon student golfers and coaches to take on their way home.

The Student Golf Tournament included an exciting prize for the winning golf teams. A \$2,500 grant was awarded to the winning boys and girls teams to be used for a school program or designated to a charity of the school's choice that is aimed at the education and prevention of drug use. The winning boys team was State College Area High School and the winning girls team was Penn Cambria High School!

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

## PHOTOS



Photo Courtesy of Blair County Sheriff's Office



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department

**2022-2023  
Drug Testing  
Program**



**Thank you to our 2022-2023 Program Sponsors:**

Allegheny Township  
Police Association



**Save The Date!**  
September 18 & 19, 2023

PARK HILLS GOLF  
CLUB, ALTOONA

### Schedule of Activities:

#### Monday, September 18th:

- 8:00am – Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament
- 1:00pm – Tee Off Against Drugs Student Golf Tournament
- 4:00pm – Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park
- 5:00pm – "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry

#### Tuesday, September 19th:

- 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

**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

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

- Signage displayed during the event on September 18th
- School District of the winning boys and girls team will receive a \$2,500 grant to be used for a school program or designated to a charity of the school's choice 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

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

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

Operation Our Town is in its 16th year of operation and will be starting into our 17th year in November of 2023. We're fortunate and appreciative of the continued support from our local businesses and community at large that has continued to provide funding for drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County, despite the harmful economic effects of the pandemic.

As we start to come out of the pandemic, many of our ongoing issues have worsened. Lethal drugs such as fentanyl are coming across our border at alarming rates. In 2022, the majority of drug buys in Blair County were either for heroin/fentanyl 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.

The Law Enforcement Roundtable is continuing to work on different ways to attack the supply of drugs, including heroin/fentanyl and methamphetamine, through ongoing special operations which include conducting search warrants, buy-bust operations, and saturation

patrols. The Pharmacy Roundtable is continuing to partner with several local in our community. The



## Taking Back Our Neighborhoods

pharmacies on a counseling and disposal initiative to educate short-term opioid therapy patients on the risk of dependency, consideration of Narcan, and provide disposal packets to control the diversion of prescription opioids.

The remainder of our roundtables all work together

Early Childhood Education Roundtable is working to support early childhood programs and providers with financial assistance from an Early Childhood Investment Fund. The K-12 Education Roundtable is ensuring that student wellness needs are being identified and addressed through

mental health counselors, social workers, and SAP teams. The Marketing Roundtable is communicating and promoting OOT activities and projects to educate the community on the drug problem and how they can become involved, such as the new Amtran bus wrap with the message, "See Something? Say Something!"

The Community Revitalization Roundtable is working to decrease blight in Altoona through utilizing various tools and resources, and a newly developed land bank. The Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) is focusing on key initiatives of building more collaboration among CJAB members, improving community safety, and enhancing funding for future CJAB efforts. The Faith-based Roundtable is working to identify the most urgent needs in the community and connect those in need with food resources, shelter, clothing, and support services. The Housing Roundtable is educating landlords and working to identify housing solutions through their annual Landlord Workshop. The Northern Blair Roundtable is working to address the needs in the Northern Blair community

by meeting with different sectors of the community to see how we can work together and assist with any needs.

Through our prevention grants, we are supporting many community and neighborhood-based programs that are doing important community outreach to the youth and families that need it the most. Our prevention grant recipients are the most important asset we have, because they realize that the key to gaining control of drug abuse begins with working with youth and their families, which is the core of where positive change can begin.

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

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

REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY

**PUSH OUT**

THE PUSHER

OperationOurTown.org

**693-3020**

# Whittle Away: Methamphetamine

*Continued from A1*

transactional criminal organizations (TCOs) in Mexico. This methamphetamine is highly pure, potent, and low in price. The drug can be easily made in small clandestine laboratories, with relatively inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients such as pseudoephedrine, a common ingredient in cold medications. To curb this kind of production, the law requires pharmacies and other retail stores to keep a purchase record of products containing pseudoephedrine, and take steps to limit sales.

Methamphetamine production also involves a number of other very dangerous chemicals. Toxic effects from these chemicals can remain in the environment long after the lab has been shut down, causing a wide range of health problems for people living in the area. These chemicals can also result in deadly lab explosions and house fires.

## How do people use methamphetamine?

People can take methamphetamine by:

- smoking
- swallowing (pill)
- snorting
- injecting the powder that has been dissolved in water/alcohol

Because the "high" from the drug both starts and fades quickly, people often take repeated doses in a "binge and crash" pattern. In some cases, people take methamphetamine in a form of binging known as a "run," giving up food and sleep while continuing to take the drug every few hours for up to several days.

Law enforcement may encounter persons "high" on methamphetamine when they are feeling euphoric,

hallucinating, or paranoid due to the direct use of meth or due to a user having been awake for days. The use of methamphetamine may require a use of force not typically necessary to take the same person, when sober, into custody, putting the individual and officers in danger of injury or worse.



## How does methamphetamine affect the brain?

Methamphetamine increases the amount of the natural chemical dopamine in the brain. Dopamine is involved in body movement, motivation, and reinforcement of rewarding behaviors. The drug's ability to rapidly release high levels of dopamine in reward areas of the brain strongly reinforces drug-taking behavior, making the user want to repeat the experience.

## Short-Term Effects

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

- increased wakefulness and physical activity
- decreased appetite

- faster breathing
- rapid / irregular heartbeat
- increased blood pressure and body temperature

## Long-Term Effects

People who inject methamphetamine are at increased risk of contracting infectious diseases such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. These diseases are

transmitted through contact with blood or other bodily fluids. Methamphetamine use can also alter judgment and decision-making, leading to risky behaviors such as unprotected sex, which also increases risk for infection. In addition, continued methamphetamine use causes changes in the brain's dopamine system that are associated with reduced coordination and impaired verbal learning. In studies of people who used methamphetamine over the long-term, severe changes also affected areas of the brain involved with emotion and memory. This may explain many of the emotional and cognitive problems observed in those who use methamphetamine.

Although some of these brain changes may reverse after being off the drug for a year or more, other changes may not recover even after a long period of abstinence. A recent study even suggests that people who used methamphetamine have an increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease, a disorder of the nerves that affects movement.

after being off the drug for a year or more, other changes may not recover even after a long period of abstinence. A recent study even suggests that people who used methamphetamine have an increased risk of developing Parkinson's disease, a disorder of the nerves that affects movement.



## Can a person overdose on methamphetamine?

Yes, a person can overdose on methamphetamine. An overdose occurs when the person uses too much of a drug and has a toxic reaction that results in serious, harmful symptoms or death. Methamphetamine overdose can lead to stroke, heart attack, or organ problems such as kidney failure, caused by overheating. These conditions can result in death.

## How can a methamphetamine overdose be treated?

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

- restoring blood flow to the

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

## Is methamphetamine addictive?

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

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

## How is methamphetamine addiction treated?

While research is underway, there are currently no government-approved medications to treat methamphetamine addiction. The good news is that methamphetamine misuse can be prevented and addiction to the drug can be treated with behavioral therapies. The most effective treatments for methamphetamine addiction so far are behavioral therapies, such as:

- cognitive-behavioral therapy, which helps patients recognize, avoid, and cope with the situations likely to trigger drug use
- motivational incentives, which uses vouchers or small cash rewards to encourage patients toward development of medicines and other new treatments for methamphetamine use, including vaccines, and noninvasive stimulation of the brain using magnetic fields. People can and do recover from methamphetamine addiction if they have ready access to effective treatments that address the multitude of medical and personal problems resulting from long-term use.

**SHEETZ**

# WHY THE SHEETZ NOT



## BUTT DIAL A BURGER?

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# COMMUNITY REVITALIZATION UTILIZING NEW TOOLS TO FIGHT BLIGHT IN ALTOONA

By Mayor Matt Pacifico, City of Altoona  
Rebecca Brown, Director of Codes and Inspections  
Diana White, Director of Community Development

2022 has seen positive steps in the fight on blight. The difficulties and hardships of the last several years have lessened, and while continued vigilance is encouraged, the challenges brought on by the pandemic have been largely overcome. Altoona is a resilient City with strong residents who show perseverance in adversity. The City recognizes the challenges faced by many property owners during these unprecedented times, and unique approaches were implemented in our flight on blight.

Blighted, abandoned, and vacant properties constitute a danger to the public, lead to an increase in crime, create a negative effect and appearance in our neighborhoods, and impact both adjacent property owners and the community as a whole, resulting in loss of real estate tax revenue. Significant resources are dedicated to enforce action against the owners of these properties. The City has continued to utilize the services of our Assistant Solicitor as the Assistant District Attorney, bringing misdemeanor charges against repeat code offenders. This has proven effective in achieving compliance on many properties with Code violations. Under Senate Bill 940, if a property, dwelling, or structure is declared condemned, the City files an order with the County that is considered a legal notice to all prospective buyers of the property. Most properties are condemned for violations that can be corrected rather quickly,

but dangerous structures are included in the order.

Altoona uses a significant portion of its federal funding to help prevent and eliminate blight. The City has long supported these programs, benefitting low to moderate income residents. Nine single family homes and eight multi-family properties were rehabilitated using federal funds this year. Sadly, not all homes can be saved. The City demolished 11 properties this year, two on an emergency basis.

This year, the Altoona Redevelopment Authority contracted with Cook's Painting & Renovation to renovate the abandoned



Pictured: 623 N. 5th Ave. (Before)



Pictured: 623 N. 5th Ave (After)

McCrary Building downtown into a food market and upscale apartments. The project will be completed within three years and will help revitalize the downtown area.

Pennsylvania state law now allows municipal redevelopment authorities to establish a land bank

within municipal borders. A so

reduces community deterioration, improves neighborhood quality, fosters economic development, and enhances redevelopment as well as reinvestment. Since the passage of PA Act 33, the Altoona Redevelopment Authority acts as the City's Land Bank. Currently, the board is working with a consultant to finalize and update the Land Bank's operating procedures and policies. One advantage of the Land Bank is its ability to purchase judicial sale properties frequently bought for low prices by absentee landlords. The properties would then be rehabilitated

for sale as owner occupied units. In addition, the Land Bank aims to redevelop vacant parcels to stabilize and invest in its older neighborhoods. Recently, the City, County, and Altoona Area School District approved legislation for a city-wide Local Economic Revitalization Tax Assistance Act (LERTA) and residential LERTA. This will allow all City homeowners (and commercial property owners) to take advantage of improving their properties with a 5-year discount period on property taxes for any new improvements made. This will give us another way to encourage residents and property owners to invest in their properties and help to revitalize neighborhoods by improving our housing stock. We can be proud of our community, and remain committed to working with you to continue to keep Altoona a City on the rise.

# OOT Night at the Altoona Curve

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The second annual Operation Our Town Night at the Altoona Curve was held on June 30, 2022. For those who purchased their June 30th Curve game tickets through the Operation Our Town Night order form, a portion of those ticket sales was donated to Operation Our Town, resulting in a donation of over \$150 to Operation

Our Town! Operation Our Town had a booth on the concourse and distributed drug prevention information, "Choose Life, Not Drugs" wristbands, and Curve staff distributed 60 Push Out the Pusher yard signs at the exits of the ballpark. Two Sheriff's Office Deputies from the Blair County Sheriff's Office fingerprinted 32 children

during the game. "The Altoona Curve were excited to partner with Operation Our Town again in 2022. The Curve fully support the mission of promoting healthy neighborhoods and protecting the citizens of Blair County from illegal drug use and the crime that results from it. We are looking forward to partnering up again in 2023 in order

to raise more money for a great cause," said Nate Bowen, General Manager of the Altoona Curve. Mark your calendars for June 22, 2023 for the third annual Operation Our Town Night at the Altoona Curve! We thank the Altoona Curve for their continued partnership and support, and look forward to another great event!



# Thank you for being part of the solution.

Project Supported by:



# OOT IN THE COMMUNITY



Pictured: Blair Co. Sheriff's Deputies at OOT Night at the Curve



Pictured: Penn Cambria - 2022 Girls Student Golf Winners



Pictured: 2022 Mini-Golf Winners



Pictured: Sheetz Fellows volunteers at the 2022 RV Expo



Pictured: "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry



Pictured: 2022 Mini-Golf Tournament



Pictured: 10th Annual Golf Tournament

# Heroin: The Effects

*continued from A1*

- heavy feeling in the arms and legs
- nausea and vomiting
- severe itching
- clouded mental functioning
- A back-and-forth state between conscious and semiconscious

## Long-Term Effects

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

- insomnia
- collapsed veins for people who inject the drug
- damaged tissue inside the nose for people who sniff or snort it
- infection of the heart lining and valves
- abscesses
- constipation and stomach cramping
- liver and kidney disease
- lung complications, including pneumonia
- mental disorders such as depression and antisocial personality disorder
- sexual dysfunction for men
- irregular menstrual cycles for women

## How can a heroin overdose be treated?

When people overdose on heroin, their breathing often slows or stops. This

can decrease the amount of oxygen that reaches the brain, a condition called hypoxia. Hypoxia can have short and long-term mental effects and effects on the nervous system, including coma and permanent brain damage.

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

Naloxone is available as an injectable (needle) solution and nasal sprays (NARCAN and KLOXXADO). Friends, family, and others in the community can use the auto-injector and nasal spray versions of naloxone to save someone who is overdosing.

## Is heroin addictive?

Heroin is highly addictive. People who

regularly use heroin often develop a tolerance, which means that they need higher and/or more frequent doses of the drug to get the desired effects. Those who are addicted and stop using abruptly may have severe withdrawal.

## How is heroin addiction treated?

A range of treatments including medicines and behavioral therapies are effective in helping people stop heroin use. It's important to match the best treatment approach to meet the particular needs of each individual patient.

Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships can support families and individuals who are seeking help for a substance use disorder. Their services are free to individuals and families. They offer case management services that will provide a free evaluation, navigate any insurance issues, and make referrals to treatment services. If you or your loved one needs assistance, please call Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships at (814) 381-0921.

# 2022 GRANT RECIPIENTS

*Continued from A13*

have been identified to receive financial assistance to pursue a post-secondary education, given that they meet program guidelines and participate fully in the program.

**ArtsAltoona: Empowering Arts for Men in Recovery**  
2212 Sixth Avenue, Altoona (814) 201-7004

Funding awarded will be used to offer creative arts instruction to men in recovery from drug addiction. Lessons will incorporate the use of art to build confidence, self-esteem, communication skills, relieve stress, and encourage creativity and imagination.

118 E. Spruce Court, Altoona (814) 949-8838

Funding awarded will be used to fund educational materials, incentives, healthy snacks, field trips, and individual assistance to youth at-risk enrolled in three after-school programs held within the low-income housing developments of Evergreen Manors, Fairview Hills, and Logan Hills.

**Home Nursing Agency Foundation: Healing Patch**  
20 Sheraton Drive, Altoona (814) 947-7027

Funding awarded will be used to assist with the supplies associated with peer support



Pictured: 2022 Operation Our Town Grant Recipients

**Big Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County: S.M.A.R.T. (Students & Mentors Achieving Results Together) School-based Mentoring Program**

891 23rd Street, Altoona (814) 944-6129

Funding awarded will be used to help create and support matches between mentors and mentees in all of the SMART School/Site-based Mentoring Programs throughout Blair County; thus providing children with meaningful relationships to help reduce the likelihood of substance abuse, criminal mischief, school absenteeism, and violence.

**Blair Regional YMCA: Family Y-Nite**

1111 Hewitt Street, Hollidaysburg (814) 695-3204

Funding awarded will be used to help low-income families attend family-based activities that bring families together in a fun, safe, affordable, and drug-free environment which provide food, resources, art, music, and crafts for all.

**Central Blair Recreation & Park Commission: Youth Sports Program Supplies**

2101 5th Avenue, Altoona (814) 949-2231

Funding awarded will be used for new program supplies and equipment for the following youth sports programs: playground program; elementary, instructional, and happy hoops basketball; elementary, instructional, and junior high girls' volleyball; instructional/indoor and elementary soccer.

**Child Advocates of Blair County: CHOICES Summer Program**

319 Sycamore Street, Altoona (814) 330-4068

Funding awarded will be used to purchase supplies and incentives for a youth summer program at Evergreen Manors that will include educational topics & agency speakers, as well as topic related crafts, games, and activities.

**Evolution Expressions: Arts for Healing Program**

1331 12th Avenue, Suite 300, Altoona (814) 934-2781

Funding awarded will be used to provide quality, strength-based, preventative, therapeutic programming for youth with the purchase of art supplies for trauma-focused arts related activities to help at-risk youth combat the effects of trauma through the use of art techniques.

**Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation: After School Program**

groups held twice monthly during the school year for Blair County children and their families who have suffered the death of a loved one, as well as grief related books for their Lending Library.

**Overflow Church: Jefferson Park Neighborhood Outreach**  
127 5th Avenue, Altoona (814) 577-6196

Funding awarded will be used to provide supplies for neighborhood outreach events at Jefferson Park such as community clean-up days, cookouts, trunk or treat, and Easter egg hunts.

**Renew Church: Ben Blessed – Homeless Outreach Ministry**  
2212 Sixth Avenue, Altoona (814) 232-2988

Funding awarded will be used to provide daily hot food delivery and non-perishable food items, self-care items such as toiletries, clothing, and hygiene products to minister to the increasing homeless population within Blair County.

**Roaring Spring Community Library: Mending Patches**

320 E. Main Street, Roaring Spring (814) 224-2994

Funding awarded will be used to provide a free hands-on and creative drop-in, self-directed, and formal program teaching at-risk youth how to mend, alter, and upcycle their clothing.

**The R.O.C.K. at 2nd Avenue: The R.O.C.K. (Reaching Out to Community Kids)**

130 2nd Avenue, Altoona (814) 943-2072

Funding awarded will be used to purchase food and program supplies for youth in Pre-K to 12th grade and provide a home-cooked meal, gym/physical activities, arts & crafts, and age-appropriate small groups that encourage healthy living.

**United Way of Blair County's Family Resource Center: Parent Education Programs: Parents as Teachers & Parent Education Classes**

208 Hollidaysburg Plaza, Duncansville (814) 317-5567 ext: 405

Funding awarded will be used for program supplies and educational materials for the parent education programs Parents as Teachers (evidence-based home visiting) and Parent Education Classes.

**Young Life of Central PA: Young Life Camp**

117 Quince Court, Hollidaysburg (814) 312-2061

Funding awarded will be used to help high school students attend Young Life Camp who financially cannot afford the cost of camp otherwise.



# Our Kids Deserve to Be Happy, Healthy, & Safe.



Stuckey Automotive Is a Longtime Supporter of Operation Our Town + Their Mission to Promote + Protect Healthy Neighborhoods from Illegal Drug Use + Resulting Crime.

**Stuckey Automotive - Here for Every Mile.**



# Kidz Korner

Color Me!



## K-9 Lucille Fun Facts

- Labradors like me are great Arson dogs because we have strong noses!
- I smell out different kinds of scents to help find clues from fires!
- When I “alert” my trainer, I get a treat reward! Who doesn’t love treats?!
- My job is very important and I am on duty all the time to help.
- I support an 11 county area and travel a lot.
- Arson dogs love to work and are very outgoing and happy!

## Word Search

D	R	U	G	F	R	E	E	M	O	S	T	V	F	B	T	D
J	T	V	X	R	E	D	R	I	B	B	O	N	O	E	N	O
U	S	E	T	Z	F	Y	I	O	Z	V	J	E	P	S	P	N
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Y	Y	R	U	E	B	F	O	A	F	O	D	G	P	E	D	R
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DRUG FREE

JUST SAY NO

BE SMART

THINK

PROUD

RED RIBBON

DANGER

STAY AWAY

WINNER

DON'T START

TELL

SAFE

## Word Scramble

IORNPTEAO ROU NTOW

USTJ AYS NO

BILAR NUOYTC

LWA NFMEERCONET

ODNT ATRST

DURG FERE

TYAS SFAE

BHGTIR FTURUE

# 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.

<b>\$10,000 and up:</b> AIA Alera Group Alan Gehringer, Rhythm Systems Allegheny Brain & Spine Surgeons, P.C. Allegheny Supply & Maintenance Co., Inc. Altoona Area School District Foundation Altoona Blair County Development Corporation 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 Best Line Equipment 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 DelGrosso Foods, Inc. Delta Health Technologies, LLC* E.B. Endres, Inc. Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona Fine Line Cabinets, Inc. 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Seltzer Financial Strategies Sheetz, Inc.* Silk Mills Properties, 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* Willard Family Foundation YTI Career Institute - Altoona	<b>\$5,000 - \$9,999:</b> 1st Summit Bank AGSM Ventures, LLC Allegheny Trucks, Inc. AmeriServ Financial Bavarian Aid Society Benzel’s Bretzel Bakery, Inc. Bernard Albert Good Post 8685 Blair County District Attorney’s Office Burns White, LLC Business Planning Service, LLC Centre Concrete Company Concordia Society DelGrosso’s Amusement Park Empire Communication Systems, Inc. Galliker Dairy Company Inco Beverage, Inc. Irwin Financial, Inc. Jane & Lee Hite Family Keller Engineers, Inc. Kunzler & Company McQuaide Blasko, Inc. Mountain Research, LLC Northwest Savings Bank Pennsylvania Skill PennTerra Engineering Pepsi Bottling Group, LLC Roaring Spring Paper Products Stiffler, McGraw & Associates, Inc. Top to Bottom Office Interiors Xanitos, Inc. Young, Oakes, Brown & Co.  <b>\$1,000 - \$4,999:</b> 2nd Avenue United Methodist Church ABC, Central PA Chapter 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 Bedford Regional Urology 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. 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Individuals: 249 individual citizens.

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<b>Shawna Hoover</b> Executive Coordinator	<b>Ron McConnell</b> Assistant Teaching Professor, Penn State University, OOT Board Member		
STEERING COMMITTEE			
<b>Rodney Green</b> Leadership & Special Education Consultant Chairperson, OOT Early Childhood Education Roundtable	<b>Greg Drew, R.Ph</b> President, Value Drug Company Chairperson, OOT Pharmacy Roundtable	<b>Donna Gority</b> Former Blair County Commissioner OOT Government Representative	<b>Cheryl Johns</b> President, Altoona Housing Authority Co-Chairperson, OOT Housing Roundtable
<b>Tom Brandt</b> Regional Director, PA Office of Attorney General, Bureau of Narcotics Investigations & Drug Control Chairperson, OOT Law Enforcement Roundtable	<b>Brian Durbin</b> Partner, Durbin Companies Co-chairperson, OOT Housing Roundtable	<b>Joseph Grappone, Esq.</b> Grappone Law Office Solicitor	<b>Heather Crusinberry</b> President, Central PA Landlord Association Co-Chairperson, OOT Housing Roundtable
<b>JR DiAndrea</b> President, DiAndrea Media, Inc. Chairperson, OOT Marketing Roundtable	<b>Zane Gates, MD</b> PeopleOne Health OOT Health Representative	<b>Lisa Hann</b> Executive Director, Family Services Incorporated Chairperson, OOT Faith-based Roundtable	<b>Matt Pacifico</b> Mayor, City of Altoona Chairperson, OOT Community Revitalization Roundtable
<b>Honorable Elizabeth Doyle</b> Blair County President Judge Chairperson, OOT Criminal/Judicial Roundtable	<b>Edward DiSabato</b> Superintendent, Bellwood-Antis School District Chairperson, OOT K-12 Education Roundtable	<b>Sue Griep</b> Former Blair County Victim/Witness Coordinator Chairperson, OOT Northern Blair Roundtable	<b>Judy Rosser</b> Executive Director, Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships OOT Human Services Representative
		<b>Peter Weeks</b> Blair County District Attorney OOT Law Enforcement Roundtable	