



# OUR TOWN TIMES

2024 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. XIII

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

## The Universal Fight on Drugs

By State Representative Jim Gregory, 80th House District

In my capacity as state representative for the 80th Legislative District, I've prioritized drug treatment and recovery legislation. In my pursuits, I've met many like-minded people who have helped reinforce the necessity of the fight in my mind. One such person I've met, is Carlos Del Valle who works for Prevention Point Philadelphia which seeks to address the public health challenges caused by widespread drug use, especially homelessness, the spread of diseases, discarded syringe waste, and overdose deaths.

Carlos and I are passionate about two things: our sports teams and saving lives from drug use. Recently, while Carlos was on the ground working in the neighborhood of Kensington, Philadelphia, he and I had a discussion about a number of topics that I would like to share. The dangers of drug use are not isolated to specific areas, they are prevalent in places urban and rural like Philadelphia and Blair County; across the Commonwealth and the nation. While there are similarities between rural and urban areas, there are also differences. Carlos discussed with me how in Philadelphia, there exists an open-air drug market and the effects of substance use may be easily seen in the streets. In places like Blair, however, usage may be much more discreet.

On an average day working for Prevention Point, Carlos and his co-workers check to make sure there are life-saving medications on the street and seek to get people indoors



wherever possible – especially as we get into the colder weather. He also needs to be able to distinguish between people who have overdosed and those who are sedated, which can look like an overdose. One of the larger concerns now is the presence of illicit Xylazine, an animal tranquilizer, in street drugs which can cause deep sedation and skin wounds that, if left untreated, can lead to complications.

We also discussed the relevance of the holidays and people recording videos in areas where drug use is evident. The holiday season is multifaceted. While it is helpful people are more charitable and likely to help during the holidays, it can also add

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# PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS

## Fentanyl & Xylazine - The Deadly Duo

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

### Fentanyl and xylazine are now front and center, but why?

A brief look into the history of opioids with Dr. Zane Gates of Gloria Gates CARE:

The opioid crises have been a problem in the US since 1960, but after the Vietnam War, the crises moved from mainly big cities to small and

rural areas over the entire US. In the 1980's, the popularity of opioids diminished because of the emergence of crack cocaine that was much cheaper, easily accessible, and much easier to use. After Ronald Reagan's war on drugs decreased the supply of cocaine, making it much more expensive, heroin became the drug of choice again, because it was much

cheaper and easily accessible. The opioid crises took a turn after the abuse of OxyContin, because these drugs were covered by insurance, and "pill mills," doctor's offices that wrote large volumes of the medications for cash rewards by patients, made heroin take a back seat. The pills were injectable by crushing them and had a "cleaner" high according

to addicts, which made them the preferred drugs. After the government cracked down on OxyContin and prescription opioids, making them difficult to obtain, the black market started to develop alternatives, which is when fentanyl became incorporated into heroin because it was cheaply made, increased the potency of the

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# SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN SCHOOLS

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

Blair County community school district leaders meet regularly to discuss concerns and issues that are negatively affecting our students. One issue that has been a regular point of discussion has been the use of vapes by students in and around our schools. Each of us shares our concerns and/or strategies that we are using to combat this recent trend. The following is

a synopsis of how we are facing and combating this issue locally. Substance abuse/vaping issues in schools are serious concerns that can have a significant impact on students' well-being, academic performance, and overall school environment. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach involving educators,

parents, students, and community members. Substance abuse among students in schools has emerged as a critical issue that demands attention. The misuse of drugs and alcohol not only jeopardizes the individual student's well-being, but also poses a significant threat to the overall academic environment of a school. At a recent OOT K-12

Education Roundtable discussion, local school leaders expressed their concern regarding the number of vapes confiscated in school and the increase in illegal substances found in vapes. THC and other narcotics have been found locally. Dr. Betsy Baker, Superintendent of Spring Cove School District stated, "Vapes are easy to conceal,"

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# E-CIGARETTES AND VAPING: THE DANGER

By Sherri Stayer, Lung Disease Foundation of Central Pennsylvania

E-Cigarettes and vapes became extremely popular around 2014. These products use an "e-liquid" that, in most cases, contains nicotine derived from tobacco, as well as flavorings, propylene glycol, vegetable glycerin, and other ingredients. The liquid is heated through the mechanism to create

an aerosol that is inhaled. Once the few ingredients identified on their labels are heated to create the aerosol, like in science class when chemicals come together, other chemicals such as formaldehyde, ammonia, silicates, metals, and cancer causing agents are formed. Our lungs are not meant to inhale anything other than

air, let alone these dangerous chemicals. These devices come in many different shapes and sizes with some resembling pens or USB devices. Big Tobacco lies. So did JUUL. JUUL perpetuated old tobacco industry lies. Philip Morris, maker of Marlboro cigarettes, owned a 35% stake in JUUL. With

many adults kicking the cigarette smoking habit, they were looking for ways to sustain their financial stability.

While JUUL and others claimed their devices were to help adult smokers switch from tobacco to e-liquids, they were creating ads and flavors attractive to recruit

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[www.operationourtown.org](http://www.operationourtown.org)

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# POLICE REPORT

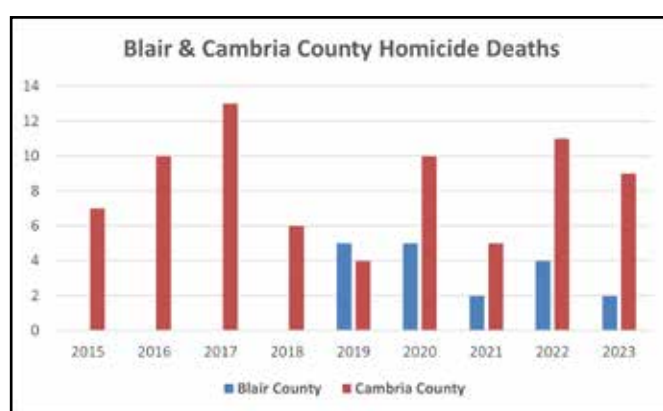
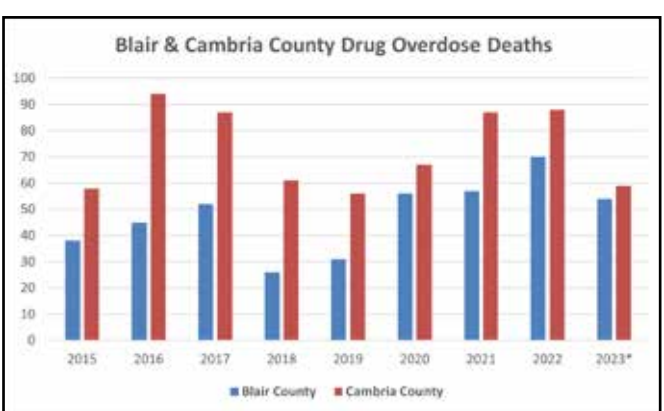
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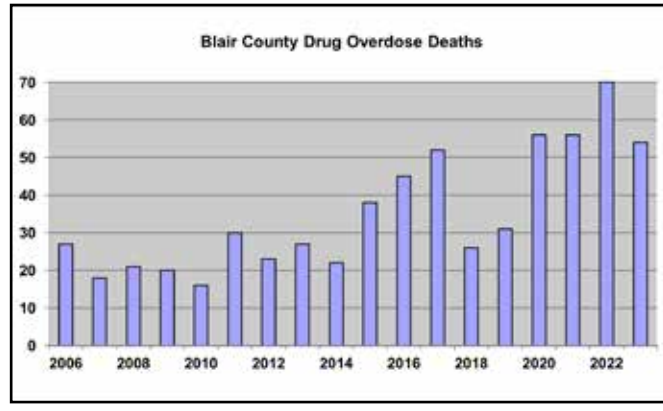
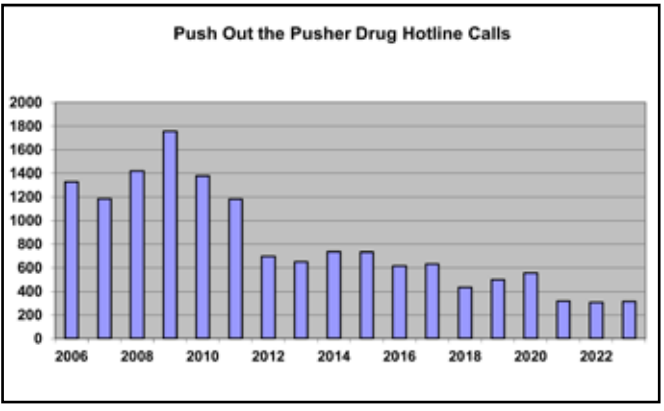
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16870

SERVING OFFICERS  
OF BLAIR, CENTRE,  
AND CLEARFIELD  
COUNTIES



\* Cambria County had an additional 4 probable overdose deaths from 2023 that were pending toxicology results as of the printing of the Annual Report



Source: Blair and Cambria County Coroner's Office

## Paws and Order: Altoona PD Debuts New K-9 Officers

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town provided a grant to the Altoona Police Department in 2023 to support the start-up costs of two new police K-9's certified in narcotics detection and tracking. K-9 Blue is assigned

Keystone Police K-9, LLC. When asked about the impact of OOT's grant funding for the K-9's, former Altoona Police Department Chief Joseph Merrill noted, "It has been over 20 years since the Altoona Police Department

have the personality suited for community relations. Drug enforcement and community relations are two areas that the Altoona Police Department are committed to and are constantly trying to find new ways to improve on."

repetitive runs enabled the K-9's and their handlers to build trust in one another. From scent work, they moved onto tracking. They started out laying small tracks in open fields. Once the K-9's became proficient at that, they moved to small, short tracks through the woods. Once the K-9's became proficient at that, they progressed to tracks between half a mile and a mile long through wooded terrain.

which are Narcotic Detection deployments and 2 patrol (tracking) deployments. Blue has searched 48 environments with 20 positive indications (drugs present). Of those 20 positive indications, Blue has 26 drug seizures and 16 arrests. Ptlm. Stephen Fox emphasized, "Trust is a key word that comes up constantly in K-9 work. 'Trust your dog' is a common phrase used by both handlers and trainers in K-9 work. When it comes to scenting, the dog knows more than I do. This is an area of the job that my partner excels really well in and I constantly am reminding myself, 'Trust your dog.'"



K-9 Blue and K-9 Pongo went through approximately 3-4 months of training with their handlers from their master trainer Jim Walstrom of Keystone Police K-9, LLC. Both K-9's are trained in narcotics detection (meth, heroin, cocaine, and Ecstasy) as well as tracking (human scent). During training, they started with the basics of learning how scent works and how air flow affects scent. From there, they worked various scenarios from building searches, vehicles, buses, luggage, and parcels. They conducted several "runs" through each scenario. These

At the time of writing this article, K-9 Pongo has had 11 deployments with 6 leading to an arrest. On the topic of how his K-9 serves as an asset to both the department and our broader community, Ptlm. Benjamin Riviera mentioned, "K-9 Pongo enhances my job at APD by being a tool to help find more narcotics during vehicle stops and also during search warrants. K-9 Pongo's nose is a tool that can't be replicated by humans, making it a lot easier to find narcotics that are very well hidden. It also helps when people get lost or go missing, having K-9 Pongo as an option to use to get on the right track of where the person was last seen."

Law enforcement work is hard to protect our community every day, which is why they need the best tools and resources to help them do their job. K-9's continue to be a great asset to law enforcement because they can perform a variety of tasks within the police department, such as catching criminals, sniffing out drugs, and search and rescue. These K-9's would not be possible without the support and donations from the Blair County community. Thanks to this support, we'll be protected for years to come!

to Ptlm. Stephen Fox and K-9 Pongo is assigned to Ptlm. Benjamin Riviera. Both K-9's are 3 year old male Black Labrador Retrievers. The K-9's were trained and certified by

had a K-9 unit. We reinstated the unit because we recognized how valuable of an asset K-9s can be. We specifically focused on K-9s that would excel at detecting narcotics, but would

These

**SEE SOMETHING?  
SAY SOMETHING!**

REPORT DRUG ACTIVITY  
**PUSH OUT THE PUSHER**

**814-693-3020**

# Law Enforcement Year in Review

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

## A NATIONAL LOOK

The CDC indicates that there were 106,661 overdose deaths reported in the 12 months leading up to July 2023. By comparison to the previous 12-month period, there was a 1% decrease in deaths. Opioid related overdose deaths during the twelve months leading up to July 2023 accounted for 81,027 of those deaths, making opioids more than twice as likely to lead to death by overdose when compared to the next most fatal class of drugs. Death by heroin overdose continues to decrease, indicating that more and more opioid related deaths are due to fentanyl.

## PENNSYLVANIA

According to the CDC, preliminary numbers from Pennsylvania show there have been 5,190 drug overdose deaths reported for July 2022 to July 2023, marking a less than .1% decrease from the previous year.

## BLAIR COUNTY

Through November 16, 2023, there were 94 controlled purchases of 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 43 search warrants on residences or vehicles and 9 buy/bust operations. 78 defendants were arrested, many of them with multiple criminal complaints. Notably in 2023, OAG BNI and the Blair County Drug Task Force made several large seizures. In May 2023, agents/officers seized 126 grams of heroin/fentanyl, 117 grams of cocaine, 116 grams of crack cocaine, 595 grams (1.3 pounds) of methamphetamine, and nearly \$6,000 during a case that moved through multiple jurisdictions in Blair County and resulted in three arrests. In June, agents/officers seized 2,722 grams of methamphetamine (5 pounds), 64 grams of heroin/

fentanyl, more than \$2,000 and two firearms during an investigation into an individual who had multiple arrest warrants for violent acts. There were many other significant seizures throughout the year and defendants from source states such as Michigan and New York, and source cities such as Philadelphia, were arrested.

## PARTNERSHIPS

In 2023, members of the Blair County Drug Task Force, in cooperation with the PA Office of Attorney General, were successful in not only their prosecution of defendants, but also in their investigations. This was not only due to the

hard work of Blair County's Task Force Officers and Agents, but also due to the cooperation of all local, state, and federal agencies operating in the county, specifically the Pennsylvania State Police, the US Marshalls Fugitive Apprehension Unit, and the Pennsylvania Bureau of Probation and Parole (Altoona District Office).

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 and throughout Blair County.



## Supporting Our Law Enforcement Family

By James E. Ott, President Fraternal Order of Police, Lodge #51 "Bald Eagle Lodge 51", Blair County Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Foundation, Inc.



I've always believed, maybe more so now than ever, that being a law enforcement officer is the single most difficult profession, bar none. We ask members of law enforcement to do the impossible on a daily basis and then judge them harshly if a mistake is made during the split-second time allowed which could determine whether they go home to their loved ones at the end of their shift. Yet, we rarely learn about or praise law enforcement for the good and courageous acts they perform every day when no one is looking.

In today's climate, society is quick to "Monday Quarterback" an incident before ALL the facts are provided or examined, which in so many cases, leave misleading or false

conclusions. When the facts of a case are investigated and completed, more times than not, the actions taken by law enforcement were justified, yet the initial judgmental damage was already done. Sadly, many of these cases where judgment is cast quickly, it is done so by many who have never received any formal training or understanding of the profession, or by elected officials leaving a public opinion of distrust to the good men and women of law enforcement.

Remember, members of law enforcement are your neighbors, they are husbands, wives, sons, daughters, mothers, fathers, and so on. Every day, these individuals leave their homes and loved ones to uphold the oath they took to protect and serve their communities, not knowing what will happen

during the course of their shift.

The statistics are devastating, 1,078 members of law enforcement made the ultimate sacrifice since 2021. The Fraternal Order of Police, Bald Eagle Lodge #51 (Pa.) and the Blair County Law Enforcement Officer's Memorial Foundation have a strong history of support to our brothers and sisters in law enforcement. We have made every effort to support/assist any member in need. Sometimes this is accomplished through cooperative efforts from the various administrators, command staff, and our brave boots on the ground.

**On behalf of all Pennsylvania law enforcement officers and their families, thank you for your support.**

**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!

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.

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 2023, 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 prosecute jury trials. We continue to fight to prioritize fair and effective jury trials for those who prey on our community.

In 2023, the District Attorney's Office continued to work with law enforcement across the County and the Blair County Coroner's Office to investigate and prosecute the rash of drug delivery resulting in death cases resultant from the rising numbers of fatal drug overdoses plaguing our

See **District**/Page A12

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## 2023 Year in Review : Dept. Highlights

### ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Michael Robison**

- The Department handled 4,185 incidents in 2023, slightly up from the 3,955 incidents we handled in 2022.
- 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 286 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2023, slightly up from 274 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2022.
- The Department participated in several community oriented events.

### ALTOONA

**Police Department – Sgt. Matthew Plummer**

- In 2023, the Altoona Police Department handled over 28,102 calls for service (an average of 77 calls per day), made approximately 2,000 arrests, and responded to approximately 200 drug overdoses.
- The department introduced a K-9 unit, thanks to funding from Operation Our Town, welcoming K-9 Blue and K-9 Pongo to our team. Blue & Pongo made two successful narcotics arrests on just their first 2 days on the street. In addition to narcotics detection, Blue & Pongo are also trained in tracking of missing persons.
- 15 APD officers ran 6.7 miles through the City of Altoona, raising \$1,800 for the PA Special Olympics in the Law Enforcement Torch Run.
- 12 APD officers jumped in the frigid waters of Canoe



Pictured: North Woodbury Cruiser



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department

- The Allegheny Township Police thanks our community and programs like Operation Our Town, Blair County Crime Solvers, and Because We Care for your support and efforts to make Allegheny Township a great place to live and work. We look forward to serving our community in the years ahead!

- Creek for the Polar Plunge, raising \$5,330 for the PA Special Olympics.
- 50 APD officers participated in the 3rd annual “No Shave November” program, donating \$3,100 to Easter for Eli, benefitting children battling cancer.
- APD hosted numerous other charity events including:

National Night Out, Home Run Derby at the Altoona Curve, Cocoa with the Popo, and placed 400 flags on Veteran grave sites at Fairview Cemetery on Memorial Day.

- APD partnered with the Altoona Area School District, conducting K-9 demos and police officer presentations at elementary schools to bridge the gap between officers and our local youth.
- The department continued their community outreach program in which officers specifically visited city parks, pools, housing complexes, churches, and various neighborhoods to personally interact with the community. Bicycle patrol was also incorporated, providing extra opportunities for community interaction and talks at local schools/churches.
- 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 9 newly hired officers in 2023 with ongoing recruitment and hiring efforts.

### BLAIR TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Roger Peacock**

- 2023 was a busy but safe year for the officers of the Blair Township Police Department.
- BTPD handled 1,920 incidents in 2023, which is a slight increase from 2022.
- 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 Occupant Protection PA Programs.

As part of the impaired driving enforcement, the Department participated in DUI checkpoints and roving patrols organized by the Blair County DUI Task Force

- The prevalence of alcohol and drugs continued 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.
- The Blair Township Police Department thanks its citizens, businesses, the Board of Supervisors, 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 2024!

### 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 changes and receiving optimum training for the betterment of the community.
- Below are the statistics from 2023:
  - 4,561 Calls for Service
  - 391 Criminal Arrests
  - 17 Juvenile Arrests
  - 1,049 Traffic Citations
  - 77 Non-Traffic Citations
  - 1,192 Vehicle Stops

• 37 DUI Arrests

In 2024, Hollidaysburg Police Department is excited to continue service to the community and the addition of a ninth police officer. Should you have any questions regarding the Hollidaysburg Police Department, please do not hesitate to call.

### LOGAN TOWNSHIP

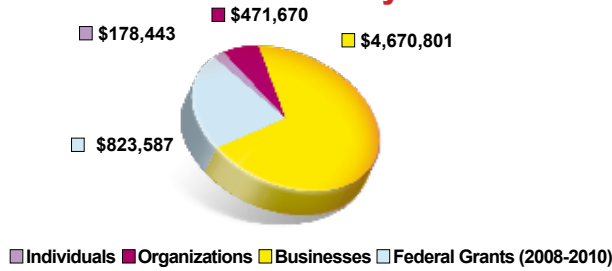
**Police Department – Chief David Hoover**

- LTPD Officers responded to 9,218 calls for service in 2023.
  - LTPD Officers had 359 total arrests in 2023.
  - On July 31, 2023, Officer Justin Hollern arrested 18-year-old James Watts, Jr., and a juvenile male, with multiple drug offenses, following a drug task force investigation. The street value of narcotics seized is estimated to be \$9,270.
  - Corporal Tyler McClellan and Officer Justin Hollern arrested Abigail Watson on August 30, 2023. A search warrant yielded 42 packaged bricks of suspected heroin, 13 loose stamp bags of suspected heroin, 4 knot bags of crack cocaine, \$2,642 of US currency, and drug paraphernalia.
  - Officer Justin Hollern arrested Tara Appleman in October of 2023 with drug delivery resulting in death.
  - Officer Justin Hollern, Corporal Benjamin Shanholtz, Officer Tyler McConnell, and members of the Blair County Drug Task Force arrested Stephen Majoros, Breanna Turner, and Edward Welsh in November of 2023. Majoros was trafficking heroin, methamphetamine, and firearms in the Altoona, Blair County area.
- See Dept. Updates/Page A19

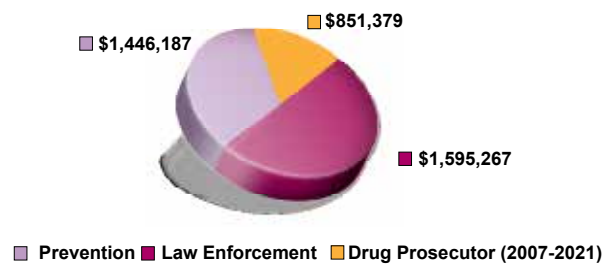


# COMMUNITY

## 2007 - 2023 OOT Money Raised



## 2007 - 2023 OOT Grants Awarded



# OOT: Roundtable Descriptions

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

If you would like to become a part of any of these Roundtables, please contact: (814) 296-8730 or info@operationourtown.org



### Roundtable Descriptions:

#### Community Revitalization Roundtable:

A community partnership to develop and implement

strategies to improve neighborhoods.

#### Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB):

To provide an ongoing forum for communication and collaboration among key decision makers for the 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 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 the community and businesses in Northern Blair County to fight drug abuse and crime through proven law enforcement, drug treatment, and prevention techniques.

#### Pharmacy Roundtable:

To minimize the likelihood of prescription drug diversion and abuse 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 enhancing relationships with law enforcement for collaborative synergistic partnerships. Drug disposal and opioid overdose treatment advocacy will be communicated throughout our efforts.

# NEIGHBORHOOD WATCH

Taking Back Our Neighborhoods  
OperationOurTown.org

# The Best ME Is Drug FREE!

## JIM GREGORY

Continued from A1

anxiety, depression, or stress to those struggling with drug use. It can sadly serve as a reminder of a family member that may have been lost or be disconnected from. When I asked Carlos about people recording videos in these areas, he expressed that it may often have more of a negative impact than people may intend. These videos sensationalize the situation on the street and do not show that each individual has their own story. Every person who uses drugs has a family who may be quite upset to see their loved one and the person being filmed may not have provided consent to be recorded.

We wrapped up our conversation discussing sports. For Carlos, his love of sports keeps him grounded, which I witnessed first-hand when I connected with him at a Flyers game while watching our hometown hero Sam Lafferty. It also serves as a great way to connect with the people he is working with

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## ADDRESSING THE OPIOID CRISIS WE FACE HERE AT HOME

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

As I travel throughout our district, I meet with police chiefs, paramedics, firefighters, and county coroners, who all say the same



thing: the opioid crisis is only getting worse.

Sadly, opioid overdoses remain the leading cause of death for Americans between the ages of 18 and 45.

To address this issue that impacts so many American families, the House of Representatives has recently passed two critical pieces of legislation:

The H.R.467, the HALT

Fentanyl Act, is a bipartisan piece of legislation that would permanently classify fentanyl analogs as Schedule 1 narcotics. Further, the legislation would enforce strict penalties on the traffickers who have continued to lace illicit drugs with these deadly poisons.

Earlier this year, the House Energy and Commerce Committee held a field hearing to discuss reauthorizing the SUPPORT Act. During the hearing, members of the committee heard from families, law enforcement, and a physician working in our

area about the impacts that the opioid epidemic has had on our community.

Recently, the House passed H.R.4531, the Support for Patients and Communities Reauthorization (SUPPORT) Act of 2023. This legislation will help continue to provide resources for training and education on dealing with fentanyl analogs for our first responders, while also ensuring that patients are able to continue receiving treatment for substance use disorder.

Ultimately, these pieces of legislation can help to

save lives – and it's critical that both are brought up for a vote in the Senate in the new year. As your representative in Congress, I am committed to finding solutions that will work for our Commonwealth and country. We must continue to work together at the federal, state, and local levels to address this crisis that affects us all.

Please 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.



Connecting you with resources in your community

pa211.org

Dial 211 • Text Your Zip to 898-211

# Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation

By David Cunningham, Past President

Teamwork makes the dream work, and in 2023, the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp. was lucky to have been part of a great team doing great things! Since last year's article, our organization partnered with a fantastic group of local residents, Leadership Blair County's 2023 Class, the City of Altoona, Central Blair Rec Commission, and of course, Operation Our Town to make incredible progress on the new playground in the Garden Heights neighborhood.

The lot at the corner of Tennyson and Lowell Avenues was home to a completely deteriorated, unusable basketball court. Located close to the Plank Road commercial district, the court was a gathering place for troublemakers and a general nuisance for the neighbors. In 2022, an ad-hoc group of nearby homeowners had had enough. They approached City leadership and asked for a change. That's when the snowball started rolling. The group was put in touch with the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp to aid with fundraising. Meanwhile, the City itself allocated a significant portion of their American Rescue Plan Act funds to the purchase of playground equipment. Next, the BTWRC was selected by the Chamber's Leadership Blair County class as their 2023 servant leadership project, which resulted in a huge fundraising push. Finally, Operation Our Town once again selected our park project for their annual

drug prevention grant program. With all of that support, we were able to begin construction of the new park in absolutely record time!

Today, that useless court has been replaced with a gorgeous new playground. The park features include a 2-5 year old play area, a 5-12 year old play area, a sensory dome, drum circle, interactive panels, a sway bench, swings, and a picnic pavilion. All of the new equipment is tailored



Pictured: New Playground in Garden Heights

for maximum inclusivity and accessibility so that the park can be enjoyed by children of all abilities.

The past year was also a busy one for our continuing series of community block parties! Over 800 people joined us at four different parks around Altoona to gather with neighbors and build community. We had free food, live music, giveaways, contests, bubbles, pinatas, competitions, and lots and lots of fun! The largest party of all was at our very first project: The Booker T. Washington Outdoor Facility. This year, we were honored to hold a ribbon-cutting on the newly refurbished Don

Witherspoon Basketball Court. We'll be doing it all again this year. You can find all of the dates and 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 \$1.5 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.

We at the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp. are proud to be one player on the all-star team that is the Blair County community, and with teammates like Operation Our Town, our wonderful volunteers, and citizens like you, we intend to keep winning!

# Harrisburg Updates

By State Representative Lou Schmitt

Usually at this time of year when I pen my annual article, I take a look back at the past year's legislative efforts in the Pennsylvania General Assembly that affected law enforcement and other issues important to the mission of Operation Our Town.



Unfortunately, since majority control of the PA House shifted from Republican to Democratic at the beginning of 2023, the PA House has made history -- and not in a good way.

In 2023, the PA House was actually in legislative session fewer days than any year since 1964. That's fewer days than any other PA House has ever been in session under our current constitution, which was adopted in 1968.

To make matters worse,

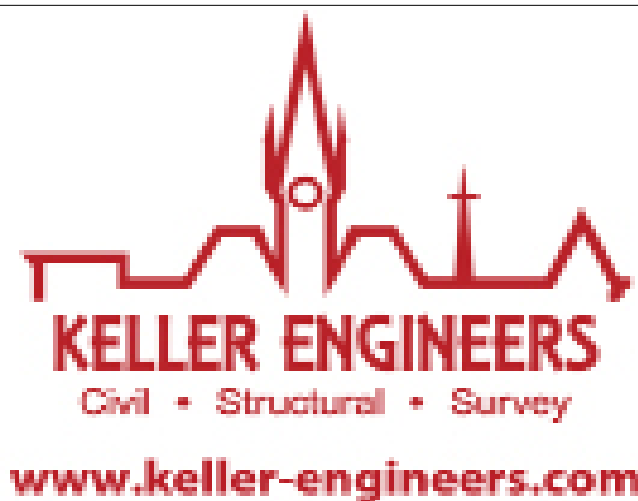
even when the PA House was actually in session in 2023, it was historically unproductive. In fact, fewer bills passed through the Pennsylvania General Assembly in 2023 than anyone can remember, fewer than in any year in more than a half century.

Some seek to blame the inertness of the legislative branch in Pennsylvania on the fact that we have a divided legislature, with the two chambers of the General Assembly split along partisan lines: Democrats hold a majority in the PA House and Republicans hold a majority in the PA Senate. Throw a Democratic governor into the mix and it is difficult to accomplish anything, they say. That argument simply doesn't pass muster.

Pennsylvania is one of ten states that currently have government divided along partisan lines. The others: Wisconsin, Kansas, Vermont, North Carolina, Kentucky, Arizona, Louisiana, Nevada, and Virginia.

If divided government is the problem, one would expect that all of these states would exhibit

*Continued on All*



# PENNSYLVANIA SENATE TACKLES DRUG AND CRIME ISSUES

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

Operation Our Town is a tremendous asset to Blair County and shows the impact that can be made when people from across the community come together in pursuit of a common goal. In the 2023 grant cycle alone, a total of \$60,000 was distributed to numerous recipients in their work to further the mission. What makes this even more incredible is that those funds were donated to Operation Our Town by the local business community, caring organizations, and individual members of our neighborhoods that want to make a difference. With substance abuse and crime trends continuing to rise, the support of our communities and the collaborative efforts of Operation Our Town are needed now more than ever.

Fentanyl has become one of the deadliest drugs in the history of our nation. In 2023, the federal Drug Enforcement Agency seized a record 86,000,000 Fentanyl pills, exceeding last year's total of 58,000,000 pills. They have also seized thousands of pounds of powdered Fentanyl. This is even more alarming, considering it only takes 2 milligrams to create a lethal dose.

The unfortunate rise in Xylazine has made matters worse. This drug is often placed into Fentanyl pills and powders. Since it is not an opioid, Narcan and other emergency overdose

medications do not counter it. This has made it much harder for our first responders to save and treat those who have overdosed.



The drug and substance abuse problem Pennsylvania is fighting also has impacts on crime rates in our communities because of the close relationship between drug abuse and crime. Drug users often turn to crime to fund their addiction or commit crimes while under the influence. Some users also turn to drug trafficking to fund and supply their addiction. This viscous connection between drugs and crime has taken a tragic toll on families and towns across Pennsylvania.

This year, the General Assembly has taken steps to try and push back against this serious problem. For example,

the 2023/2024 Fiscal Year budget we passed earlier this year included increases in two important line items. Drug law enforcement funding

under the Attorney General increased by \$7.3 million, and the Department of Drug and Alcohol received an additional \$213,000, bringing their total amount to \$48.1 million.

The state Senate has also passed several pieces of legislation that would give law enforcement more tools to combat the Fentanyl epidemic. While they are all currently in the state House, I am hopeful that they will receive full consideration by the state House soon.

Senate Bill 165 would ban the implementation of any safe injection sites. While well intended by those who support them, these injection sites run

counter to the goal of helping people with substance abuse get clean. This legislation would allow us to support those with substance abuse disorders without creating an environment that is enabling and harmful to drug users and communities.

Senate Bill 235 would create "Tyler's Law" and target drug dealers who peddle Fentanyl resulting in a fatal overdose. Under current law, drug dealers often receive lenient sentencing because of negotiated plea deals. Under Tyler's law, an individual who sells or engages in a monetary transaction to distribute Fentanyl resulting in a death would face a mandatory minimum 25-year sentence upon conviction. This mandatory minimum penalty would not apply to drug users who share drugs with friends or family members or those who seek medical help for individuals who overdose. A mandatory minimum would ensure that the people who are supplying these terrible drugs are taken off the streets when convicted.

SB 959 amends the Controlled Substance, Drug, Device, and Cosmetic Act to automatically reschedule controlled substances pursuant to their federal classification. This will help to prevent dangerous controlled substances from slipping through the cracks by creating continuity between state and federal criminal law.

SB 683 requires a general acute care hospital to include testing for Fentanyl in a urine drug screening if the hospital conducts a urine drug screening to assist in diagnosing the patient's condition. This testing can play a huge part in combating the epidemic, and the knowledge gained as a result would be an invaluable tool. By identifying those who are using, providers can refer people to treatment and services or provide life-saving medications like naloxone.

SB 941 addresses the need for staffing flexibility for addiction treatment programs. Addiction treatment facilities, like so many other healthcare fields, are experiencing crippling staffing shortages. The additional flexibility that this legislation would provide would enable these facilities and programs to operate more efficiently and effectively so that they can better care for the people who are desperately seeking their help.

It has been a busy 2023, and the Senate has done significant work in advancing legislation to help law enforcement and those in the community fight back against the devastating effects of Fentanyl and Xylazine. However, the work is not finished. We will continue to work together with our colleagues in the General Assembly and our community partners to do all we can to keep our communities healthy and safe.

See Something? Say Something! 693-3020

# Substance Abuse *Continued from A1*

so there is likely a far greater prevalence than any of us know within our schools.” Altoona Area School District Superintendent Brad Hatch also shared his concern regarding

into school curriculum to ensure that students receive age appropriate and relevant information.

Early intervention continues to be a focus as we

continue to work together in the best interest of the students we serve. Many local districts and organizations have offered workshops or informational sessions for parents to increase

Counseling and support services can provide the needed support to students struggling with substance abuse/vaping issues. Our local districts have teams trained to

pressure or stress.

By addressing substance abuse/vaping issues through a multifaceted approach, schools can create a supportive and informed environment that promotes the health and well-being of all students. It is important to foster a culture that encourages open communication, understanding, and initiative-taking measures to prevent and address substance abuse and vaping.

Dr. Don Wagner, Bellwood Antis Middle School Principal concluded, “Preventing middle-aged students from using vaping devices involves a combination of education, communication, and creating a supportive environment. BA has curriculum in health and guidance courses to address the dangers of vaping and drug use and to provide students with skills to avoid peer pressure. This school year, we are pleased there have been zero incidents related to vaping in school, but we are aware that does not indicate there is no problem. Teachers and staff continue to monitor and have conversations with students about the dangers of drugs and alcohol.”

It is vital that we all continue to work together to educate students and families regarding the risks associated with vaping and drug and alcohol use. By addressing root causes, providing education and support services, schools can create an environment that discourages substance abuse and empowers students to make healthier choices for their lives and futures.



the frequency and volume of vaping and vape contents being laced with THC or other narcotics, and indicated that vaping is the biggest concern of illegal substances at this time.

Here are a few key aspects to consider as we work together to educate our students and to combat these issues:

Education and prevention programs are vital. Local districts are working to implement evidence-based substance abuse programs that educate students about the risks associated with drug and alcohol use. Locally, districts are incorporating substance abuse education

look to establish mechanisms to identify students at risk of substance abuse. This may involve training staff to recognize signs of substance abuse or behavioral changes. Counseling services and support for these students identified as at risk are available through our schools and outside agencies.

Parental involvement is another essential element of our continued success. Together, we need to promote open communication between parents and school staff. We need to keep parents informed about the risks of substance abuse and involve them in our prevention methods. We must

awareness and provide strategies for addressing substance abuse and vaping with their children. I encourage parents to take advantage of these opportunities when possible.

Bellwood Antis High School Principal, Mr. Rick Schreier, when asked about parental involvement stated, “I encourage parents to speak with their children on the dangers of vaping. Another helpful tactic would be to be more vigilant with searching and monitoring students for vape products so that they do not find their way into our schools, and to look for signs and symptoms of addiction.”

provide intervention services to students in need.

Finally, community collaborations are vital to our efforts. We need to continue to collaborate with community agencies, healthcare providers, and law enforcement agencies to address these issues on a broader scale. Working with these agencies, we can provide the resources for support to affected students. Collaborating with our local school leaders, we can monitor and discuss the effectiveness of prevention and intervention programs and share successful strategies dealing with factors that may contribute to substance abuse, such as peer

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## NEWLY ELECTED BLAIR COUNTY CORONER

By Ray S. Benton, Blair County Coroner

Hello, my name is Ray Benton and I would like to thank Operation Our Town for this opportunity to introduce myself. I am the newly elected Blair County Coroner. My wife and I live in Claysburg and we have one adult daughter, a son-in-law, and three beautiful grandchildren. I have been a resident of Blair County most of my life and have been proud to call this county my home.

Before becoming the Blair County Coroner, I had served as the Chief Deputy Coroner under the now-retired Coroner Patricia Ross. My background includes being a Registered Nurse, municipal police officer, Pennsylvania State Constable, Greenfield Township Supervisor, business owner, and the prior Blair County Emergency Management Coordinator.

As the Coroner, I look forward to helping families obtain closure after the loss of

their loved ones. My primary responsibility is to determine the cause and manner of death through interviewing witnesses, obtaining medical



history, conducting field investigations, and if needed, requesting an internal exam.

Another important role of the Coroner is death prevention. Unfortunately, like all of the United States, Blair County has seen a

significant increase in drug-related deaths. The primary drugs detected post-mortem were Fentanyl and Xylazine. These drug-related deaths are of all ages, races, and economic status. I feel my role is to make the community aware of the number of drug-related deaths and the drugs being used that lead to their deaths.

As this battle of drug use, abuse, and addiction continues, I believe the key to prevention is to reestablish the family unit. I call this the “table talk”. We need to become more involved in our children’s lives and find out what they are doing. Take the time to sit down with your family over dinner,

without electronic devices, and begin a dialogue. You may be surprised what you may find out if you just ask!

Thanks again to Operation Our Town for this opportunity and for all they do throughout Blair County.

## Faith-Based Roundtable How to Love Your Neighbor

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

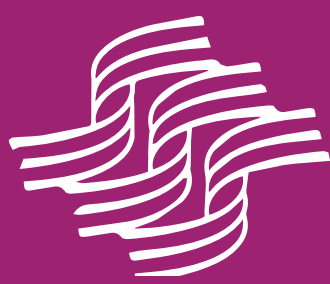
I have been involved with the Faith-based Roundtable for about twelve years now and the one constant I see every time we meet is a concern for others and the willingness to share resources. Each meeting, we see different faces. Some people join us for a season and then move on. We are richer and more equipped to serve others by having a variety of people come and share their thoughts

we have seen an increase in the number of homeless in our community and have been focused on how to best support them. There is no easy answer. With a shortage of affordable housing, an increase in substance use and mental health concerns, there is no quick fix. What I know is that a group of people who are willing to come together on the third Thursday of each month at 2pm



and knowledge. We identify resources for food, clothing, housing, and other opportunities for our neighbors who are on the streets. Compassion is a valuable tool in our arsenal against the ravages of substance abuse and homelessness. Over the past two years,

are making a difference, making connections, and prayerfully considering those in need. Do you have the ability to love your neighbor even if they do not have a roof over their head? Join us and see how a few people can make a huge impact when they come together!



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# Keeping You Safe

Value Drug Company assists Operation Our Town in its mission. We also provide our pharmacists with tools and resources to help fight the prevalence of opioid addiction and misuse in their communities.



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# LOCAL

## 2007-2023 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 Org.  
 ArtsAltoona  
 Bellwood-Antis School District  
 BEN Blessed  
 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 Corp.

Calvary United Methodist Church  
 Catalyst Church  
 Catholic Charities  
 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)  
 Morrisons Cove Memorial Park

Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church  
 N.E.W.S. Worthy Network, Inc.  
 Northern Blair Recreation Commission  
 Overflow Church  
 Penn State Altoona  
 Refuge Youth Network  
 Roaring Spring Community Library  
 Salvation Army  
 Ski Gap Community Action Council  
 Stepping Stones for Life  
 Student Assistance Program  
 Teen Link Connection  
 The Beacon of Blair County Foundation-CPCF  
 The Door Student Services, Inc.  
 The Nehemiah Project  
 The R.O.C.K. at 2nd Ave  
 Tyrone Area High School  
 Tyrone Area School District  
 Tyrone Elementary School  
 Tyrone-Snyder Public Library  
 Williamsburg Borough  
 Williamsburg Public Library  
 YES to Kids  
 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 Altoona Housing Authority added Fairview Hills, Green Avenue Tower, and 11th Street Tower in the 1960's and 1970's.

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 39 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 OOT 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 11/3/23. There were over 76 individuals in attendance. The Housing Roundtable decided to

go back to the original format and removed the breakout sessions. We included vendor tables this year so that landlords can understand how local agencies can serve them more efficiently. This year's workshop focused on fair housing, legal rights for landlords, Section 8, criminal activity, and various agencies informed those in attendance of the services they provide. We concluded the workshop this year with a panel of local leaders in the housing community who were able to answer local housing questions.

The 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 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 continues to take 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 topics and 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.

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# 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
- ▶ **Freedom Township Police Department**  
(814) 695-8545  
131 Municipal Street East Freedom, PA 16637  
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
- ▶ **Altoona Police Department**  
(814) 949-2489  
1106 16th St. Altoona, PA 16601  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week
- ▶ **Giant Eagle Pharmacy - Altoona**  
(814) 946-4267  
181 Sophira Ln. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **Tyrone Borough Police Department**  
(814) 684-1364  
1100 Logan Avenue Tyrone, PA 16686  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm
- ▶ **Blair County Courthouse**  
(814) 693-3000  
423 Allegheny Street Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Greenfield Township Police Department**  
(814) 239-5313  
477 Ski Gap Road Claysburg, PA 16625  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **VA Medical Center**  
(814) 943-8164  
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:30pm
- ▶ **Blair Township Police Department**  
(814) 696-3846  
375 Cedarcrest Drive Duncansville, PA 16635  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Hollidaysburg Police Department**  
(814) 695-3711  
401 Blair St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 11:00pm
- ▶ **Walgreens Pharmacy**  
(814) 944-3236  
508 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **CVS**  
(814) 944-9224  
200 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **Logan Township Police Department**  
(814) 949-3364  
100 Chief Logan Circle Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **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:



## Lou Schmitt

*Continued from A6*

similar levels of legislative inactivity. Not the case. Through the end of the budget season in July of 2023, states with divided government passed the following number of bills:

- Wisconsin – 75
- Kansas – 91
- Vermont – 91
- North Carolina – 137
- Kentucky – 226
- Arizona – 240
- Louisiana – 466
- Nevada – 536
- Virginia – 812
- Pennsylvania? – 15

To make matters even worse, a number of those 15 bills were related to the Fiscal Year 23/24 budget, not substantive bills relating to other issues. And oh by the way, as of the writing of this article in December, the Pennsylvania General Assembly had still failed to fully pass the state budget – which was due June 30.

With a Democratic majority in the PA House, there has been little legislation of note passed at all, let alone legislation that would advance the interests of law enforcement and other issues important to Operation Our Town. That was the case in 2023 and I expect that unfortunate trend to continue into 2024.

Despite the paucity of legislative production, there was one piece of legislation that passed the PA House and that I was proud to sponsor. House Resolution 70 honors the memory of law enforcement officers who gave their lives in the line of duty in 2022 in the Commonwealth. That resolution was one of the few pieces of legislation to actually make it through the PA House in the first half of 2023, passing unanimously on April 24.

# BLAIR COUNTY COMMISSIONER — AMY WEBSTER'S GOALS AND OBJECTIVES FOR 2024

By Amy Webster, Blair County Commissioner

What are my goals and objectives for Blair County? My priorities are and continue to include increasing efficiency in the services county government provides, creating a more positive and hopeful environment for our citizens and the county employees, promoting and expanding economic opportunity, making county government more useful and relevant to our entire community, and expanding economic and recreational opportunities to draw in new business and people to grow our area. I hope to preserve and showcase the good we have here in Blair County. Those may be lofty goals, but these are the issues we must address in order to create a thriving and optimistic county.

Unfortunately, we are faced with problems that mar the image of our community. We must prioritize and tackle those problem areas if we expect to attract people to the area. We must focus on controlling and minimizing negative influences as we develop the positive attributes of our community. As an attorney, what stands out to me is the burgeoning problems our county faces from the immense strains on our law enforcement officers, our prison, and our courts, resulting from the addictions and mental health struggles that exist in our community.

Much of our county funds are allocated to providing services that are mandated by the state and federal governments. Crime is an issue everywhere

eliminate crime. However, we can make use of the knowledge, experience, and supports available within our community to be vigilant in

of our non-profit agencies and our faith community to assist and redirect people who need assistance.

Blair County does apply for and receive grant funds for specific projects, and has used much of those funds for infrastructure improvements, public safety upgrades, and broadband expansion. Our tax dollars are allocated to the general operations of the county, but as the demand increases to deal with crime and addictions, the expense of operating the county continues to increase exponentially, placing increasingly larger demands upon our taxpayers. We must resolve the addiction, mental health, and crime crisis to attract people and businesses to the area which will, in turn, bolster our economy and community, which should lead to lower demand for services to address addiction, mental health issues, and crime. We will receive opioid lawsuit settlement award funds to address drug addiction and mental health problems that plague our area and drain our resources. We also rely on the assistance of the Operation Our Town program, which provides funds to assist in the identification of offenders. We are grateful to all those who contribute financially and those who invest their time and expertise in conducting the program to make Blair County a better place to live.



throughout America and the world. Much of our crime locally results from addictions and from mental health problems.

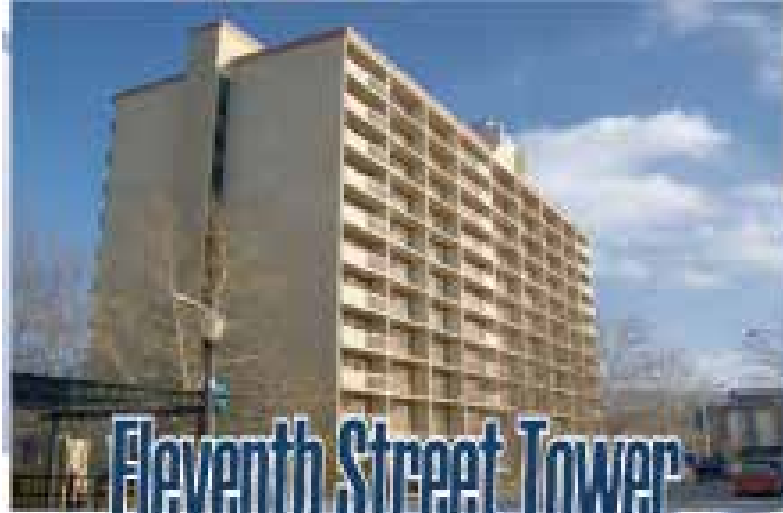
No one person, group, or board of commissioners can

observing those who exhibit problematic tendencies, and involving the necessary services to deflect and deter problematic behavior. This includes availing ourselves of the services and contributions



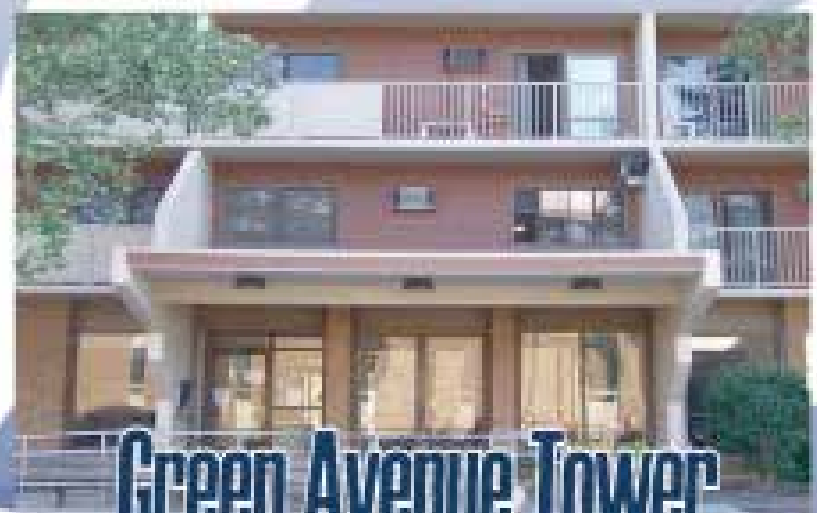






### Eleventh Street Tower

1100 11th Street  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2011



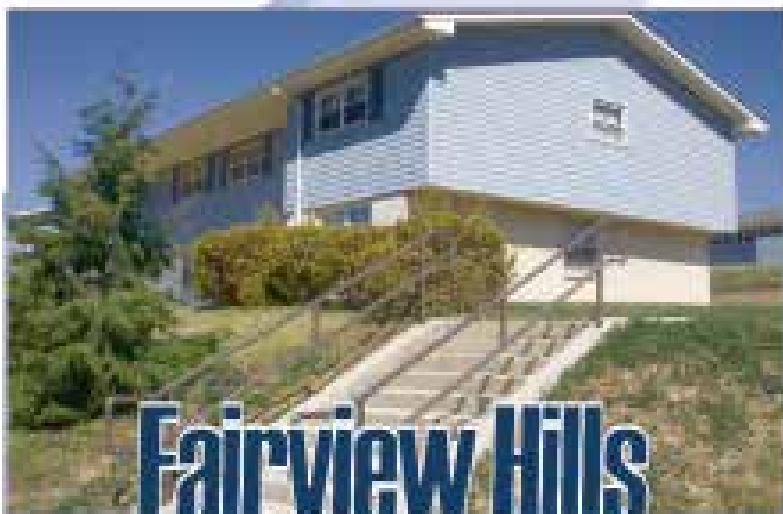
### Green Avenue Tower

911 Green Avenue  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2009



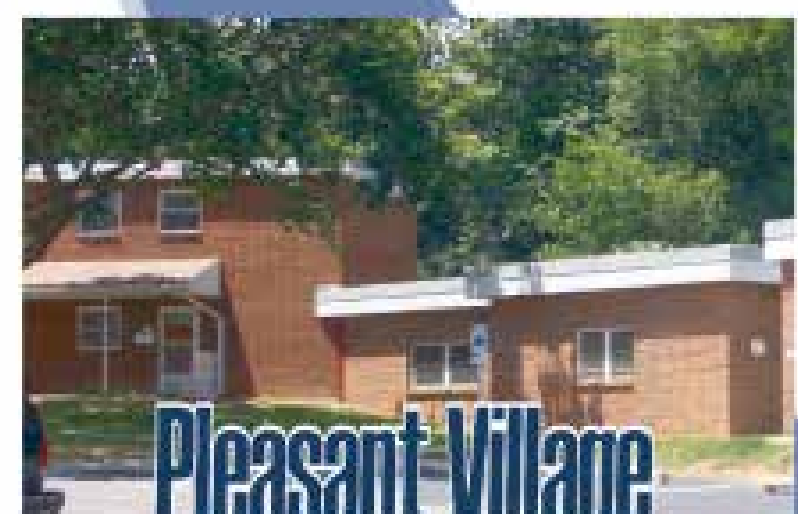
# Altoona Housing Authority

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### Fairview Hills

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### Pleasant Village

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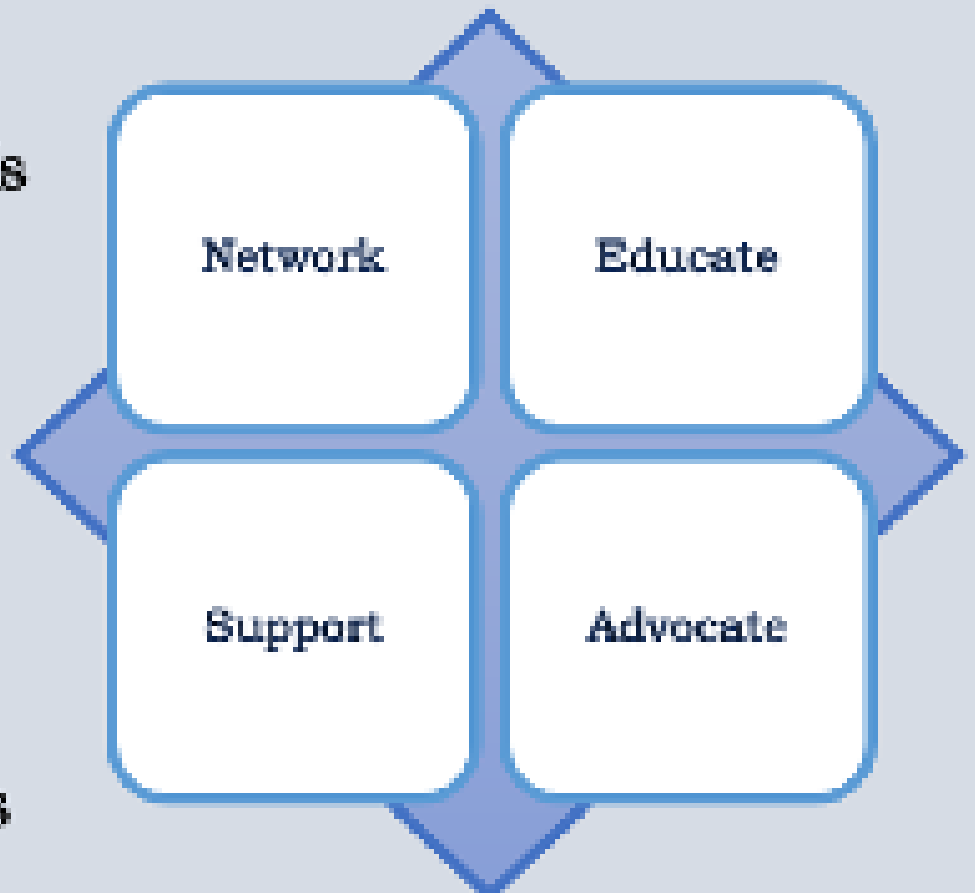
We are an Equal Opportunity Housing Provider. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, familial status or disability.



# CENTRAL PA LANDLORD'S ASSOCIATION

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**UNLOCK EMOTIONS, and Create A Lifetime of Open Communication**

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namiblaircountypa.org**



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**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 eight 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, 62 students signed up to participate in the program in the 2023-2024 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 2023-2024 school year. The Senior High randomly tests four students each week. Erin Fogle, 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 help sponsor the purchase of the Sheetz gift

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, 117 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 2023-2024 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 valuable 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 network of business, 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 January 2023, Pastor Sharon Erb, President and Gary McGovern, Secretary of Tyrone Area Cooperative Ministries (TACM) spoke to the Roundtable. TACM was the third identified

sector of the community (police department, school district, ministerium) that we held discussions with about working together and identifying any ways we can be of help. Going forward, we need to circle back and bring all three sectors together to brainstorm what are the highest needs and how we can help bridge any gaps.

Uplift Tyrone was created in partnership with Every Life Matters Support Services, in an effort to help people learn new skills and/or sharpen their knowledge of various life improvement topics. Kickoff picnics were held for community members throughout the summer of 2022 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, and were met with small attendance. In an effort to revitalize Uplift Tyrone

and see more engagement, a kickoff informational breakfast was held in February 2023 to educate the community about Uplift Tyrone. At the time of writing, plans for Uplift Tyrone are on hold, though we look forward to continue being of service to the Northern Blair community going forward.

The Roundtable 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; Stop the Bleed/Active Shooter; and Understanding Addiction, Mental Health, and Co-occurring Disorders. While we did not offer a workshop in the spring of 2023 due to our focus on supporting Uplift Tyrone, we are beginning to formulate ideas to resume the

workshops in the spring of 2024.

Our group has been working on poverty, homelessness, transportation, and employment/educational needs. Josh Baker, CEO of AMTRAN, talked to the Roundtable in June about their Northern Blair pilot route. The pilot route began in June 2023 with service on Saturdays only, then added Tuesdays and Thursdays to the route in August. The route currently operates on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays. However, dedicated pilot funding will last until June 2024, and AMTRAN will need to discuss local share funding to continue operations.

In December 2023, some members of the Roundtable spent their day learning more about AMTRAN by experiencing it firsthand. The group boarded at Penn Highlands Tyrone Hospital and rode to Walmart in Altoona where

we got off and had lunch at Valley Dairy Restaurant and then retraced our trip back home. All agreed it was easy to ride, actually comfortable, and so reasonably priced. The most we waited for the bus was maybe 10 minutes, and the drivers were incredibly helpful. We came away excited that AMTRAN gave Tyrone this option and opened up the service. We rode with those going to work, going to school, going shopping, going to medical appointments etc., and we heard that often seniors from different facilities will ride just to get out and have lunch or for a change of scenery. Many thanks goes out to AMTRAN for helping Tyrone serve its people by providing our community this service!

For more information about the Northern Blair Roundtable, contact Shawna Hoover at shawna@operationourtown.org.

# CHOOSE LIFE! NOT DRUGS.

## 2023 OOT Golf Tournament Results

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town held its 11th Annual Golf Tournament on September 18 & 19, 2023. The two-day event included the following events on Monday: "Tee Off Against Drugs" Student Golf Tournament at Park Hills Golf Club, Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park, and the "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry at Park Hills Golf Club. The 11th Annual Golf Tournament was held on Tuesday at Park Hills Golf Club.

All funds raised benefit local drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County thanks to our 158 sponsors and in-kind donors! 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 "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.

The OOT Board members thanked all of the sponsors and

announced the winners of the Student Golf Tournament and Mini-Golf Tournament. District Attorney Peter Weeks provided an update from the District Attorney's Office. Attendees were invited to showcase

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,

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 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: Richard Fiore Jr, Todd Homan, JP Stultz, Brett Weibley. 2nd Place: Danny Green, Dan Green, Randy Green, Wesley Rhone. 3rd Place: Matt Neumeyer, Darryl Owens, Harry Benjamin, John Ventura. The Closest to the Pin 2nd Shot winner on Hole 2 was Jim Emiliani with a measurement of 4 feet, 2 inches. David Willnecker got a Hole in One on Hole 14 (157 yards, par 3)! The winning teams and skill winners all received special golf gifts!

Please consider supporting Operation Our Town through our 2024 annual golf tournament, as it has become one of our major fundraisers. The money raised from this tournament goes towards funding drug enforcement and prevention programs aimed at reducing drugs and crime in Blair County.

Please contact Shawna Hoover at (814) 296-8730 or shawna@operationourtown.org for more details on how you can support this year's tournament!



their chipping skills in a fun Chip a Duck game. A special fundraiser was also held to cut Michael Fiore's ponytail on Tuesday, with proceeds going to Operation Our Town. The

September 19th 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,

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



# DON'T BRING DRUGS TO BLAIR COUNTY





# 2023 Blair County Police Dept. Drug Collection Boxes Data

LOCATION	1ST QUARTER	2ND QUARTER	3RD QUARTER	4TH QUARTER	TOTAL
ALTOONA POLICE DEPT.	154 lbs.	160.5 lbs.	n/a*	n/a*	314.5 lbs.
HOLLIDAYSBURG POLICE DEPT.	36 lbs.	40 lbs.	33 lbs.	35 lbs.	144 lbs.
LOGAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPT.	14.5 lbs.	17 lbs.	32 lbs.	0 lbs.	63.5 lbs.
TYRONE POLICE DEPT.	23 lbs.	35 lbs.	77 lbs.	34 lbs.	169 lbs.
TOTAL	227.5 lbs.	252.5 lbs.	142 lbs.	69 lbs.	691 lbs.

## IN THEIR OWN WORDS - STUDENT EXCERPTS

By Nick Gordon, Operation Our Town Community Outreach Coordinator

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

“You have been hanging around a new group of kids at school. However, your mom is concerned about your erratic

Parents and schools can open up the lines of communication by starting conversations and education about drugs at a very young age. Additionally, the importance of self-respect and values need to be taught in the home environment to help strengthen a teen’s coping skills when dealing with peer pressure.”

Atticus, a 10th grader at Hollidaysburg Area High School, and second-place prize winner, leaves us with some profound thoughts about how being passionate about something can raise your standard of living and effectively fend off peer pressure:

**“I feel as though one of the most effective pieces of armor one can have against peer pressure is passion. Whether it is art, music, sports, education, or community service, when you find something you’re passionate about, you automatically become a part of something bigger than yourself. Devoting yourself to something provides structure and a higher standard of living.”**

*Excerpt from essay submitted by HAHS 10th grader, and second place winner, Atticus*

On behalf of the Marketing Roundtable and Operation Our Town, we want to extend our gratitude to those who participated in our essay contest, and we look forward to another great year in 2024!

## ESSAY CONTEST RUNNER UP

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Atticus Imler, a 10th grader at Hollidaysburg Area Senior High School, was chosen as the runner-up in the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest! Atticus received a \$100 Visa gift card provided by Imler’s Poultry.

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 a portion of his 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:

There are three main reasons, all interconnected, why people fall victim to peer pressure: They struggle with self-confidence, they are vulnerable to herd mentality, or they lack ambitious personal pursuits or passions.

When a teen struggles with self-confidence, they are often easily manipulated by others, making them easy prey for the vulturous nature of peer pressure. The fear of ostracism often overpowers common sense and blurs the line between right and wrong.

Individuality or going against the crowd can be downright terrifying for someone with low self-confidence. The low-confidence individual is likely to succumb to herd mentality due to the deep yearning to belong to a group. The low-confidence individual will find themselves seeking validation from outside

sources, rather than from within themselves. More often than not, this will lead to the loud, collective voice of herd mentality drowning out the inner conscience of the person struggling with confidence. The low-confidence individual may find themselves ignoring their personal morals and values to obtain peer acceptance.

I feel as though one of the most effective pieces of armor one can have against peer pressure is passion. Whether it is art, music, sports, education, or community service, when you find something you’re passionate about, you automatically become a part of something bigger than yourself. Devoting yourself to something provides structure and a higher standard of living. You will find that dedicating time feeding your passion, honing your skills, and chasing your ambitions leaves a lot less time to be affected by the negative influence of your peers. Personal passions give life direction and purpose. When your life has direction and purpose, your self-confidence will grow leaps and bounds, making you a lot more likely to say no when pressured to use drugs or alcohol. After all, feeding your passion requires a healthy mind and body.

Each time we choose ourselves, our resolve is fortified and our self-confidence grows, leaving us more and more capable of standing strong against peer pressure.



thoughts on the matter, which is exactly why we want to share some of the highlights from our 2023 essay contest finalists.

Emma, 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,

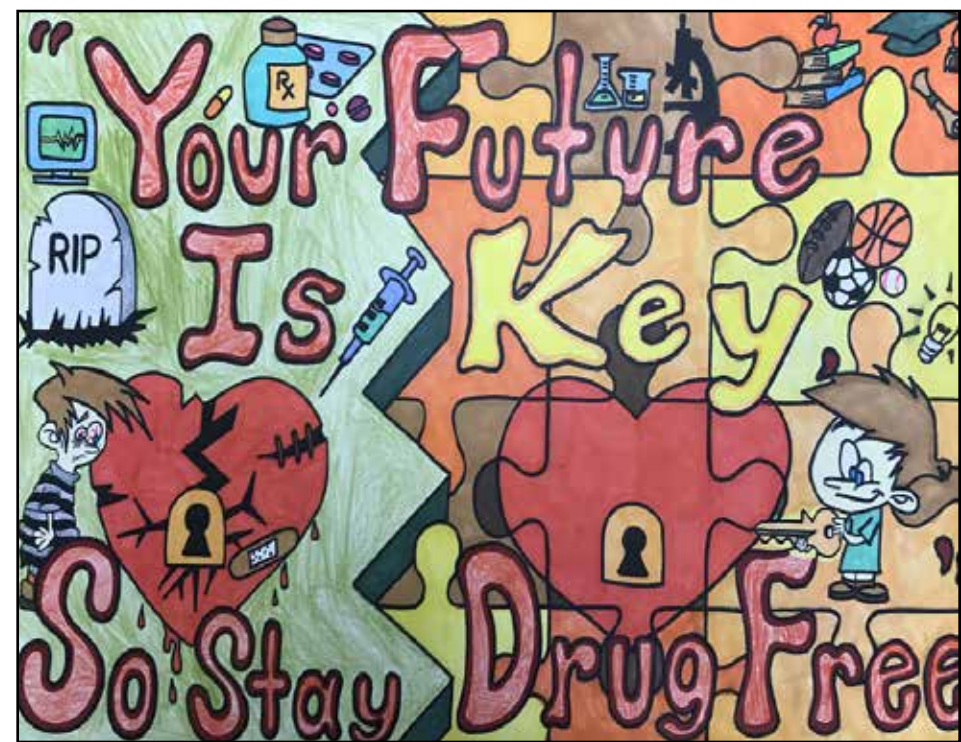
“If you surround yourself with bad people, they are most likely to pressure you into doing something bad, like drugs. An easy way to solve this is to surround yourself with people who have the same values as you, and people who actually care about themselves and you.”

Megan, a 12th grade student at Central High School painted a picture of what might happen if youth hang out with the wrong crowd, facing peer pressure to use illegal drugs, suggesting,

behavior due to your sudden change in friend groups. You inform her that they are the cool kids of the school and not to worry. Shortly after making these new friendships, you agree to hang out. The hangout is going great, or that was your perception. All of a sudden, your new friends remove something from their pockets. You feel your stomach plummet to your feet, and your face begins to pale, knowing they are doing drugs.”

Carter, an 8th grade student at Altoona Area Junior High School took the approach of giving words of wisdom for his peers. Here’s what he had to say about the role parents and schools play when it comes to illegal drugs and peer pressure:

“Although difficult, there are ways in which giving into peer pressure can be avoided.



# 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 Tournament on September 18, 2023 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

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

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 and girls teams were both from State College Area High School! The winner of the Closest to the Pin on Hole 3 was Will Sankey from Altoona



quicker pace of play for the students, the event included a morning and afternoon shotgun start. A total of 36 teams (144 students) from 23 school districts participated! We would like to give special thanks to the 2023 OOT Student Golf Tournament sponsors: Sheetz, Seltzer Financial Strategies, SRM Holdings, and The EADS Group. Sheetz provided snacks, water, and sports drinks for the students and coaches to enjoy throughout the day. To start off the event, Sheetz provided To-Go breakfast sandwiches for the morning student golfers and coaches. For lunch, Park Hills Golf

student golfers and coaches to take on their way home. Officer Rivera & K-9 Pongo from Altoona Police Department conducted a drug sniffing demo for students to watch during lunch, which provided the students with an example of how Operation Our Town funds benefit the community, since Operation Our Town helped to provide the start-up costs for two new Altoona Police Department K-9's. 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

Area School District with a measurement of 2 feet. The winner of the Closest to the Pin on Hole 11 was Trenton Ripple from Bedford Area School District with a measurement of 4 feet, 8 inches. 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 support this year's tournament!

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**12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL OPERATION OUR TOWN GOLF TOURNAMENT**

**Save The Date!**  
September 16 & 17, 2024

PARK HILLS GOLF CLUB, ALTOONA

### Schedule of Activities:

#### Monday, September 16th:

- 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 17th:

- 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:

- Beverage sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Company banner displayed during event
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- Closest to the Pin sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage at the sponsored pin
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- Golf Cart sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage on golf cart (limit 5 sponsors)
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- Hole in One sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage at the sponsored Par 3
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- Refreshment Tent sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage on one of the 4 Refreshment Tents or provide your company's tent
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- Reception sponsor - \$500**
  - Company banner displayed during event
  - Company name listed in Event Guide
- “Tee Off Against Drugs” Student Golf Tournament sponsor - \$250**
  - Signage displayed during the event
  - 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 17th year of operation and will be starting into our 18th year in November of 2024. We're fortunate and appreciative of the continued support from our local businesses and community at large that have continued to provide funding for drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County, despite the economic effects from the pandemic.

Many of our ongoing issues have worsened as a result of the pandemic. Lethal drugs such as fentanyl are coming across our border at alarming rates. In 2023, 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 focus on reducing diversion and addiction in the community through awareness of over-the-counter Narcan and informing the pharmacist community of

in our community. The Early Childhood Education Roundtable is working to support early childhood programs and providers with financial assistance through the Early Learning Investment Grant

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, such as the City's fully-operational Land Bank. The Criminal Justice Advisory Board (CJAB) is looking to focus 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 working to educate landlords and 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 substance 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. Your efforts have helped to make Blair County a great place to live!



trends and happenings in the area with prescription opioids.

The remainder of our roundtables all work together in different ways to reduce the demand for those drugs

Program. 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

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## The Deadly Duo *Continued from A1*

heroin, and increased drug dealers' profits. The need for risky large shipments from East Asia was replaced by labs in the US making the synthetic fentanyl, decreasing the risk as well. Xylazine, a horse sedative, is easily obtained and now is mixed with heroin and fentanyl to make the cost of production of the street drugs that are much cheaper, increasing profits significantly. Xylazine is the deadliest of the three because it doesn't respond to Narcan (brand name of the generic drug naloxone) and creates a zombie like state for people who inject it.

**A quick look into how local law enforcement sees fentanyl and xylazine in our community with Jarod Quist, Supervisory Narcotics Agent, PA Office of Attorney General:**

Blair County, like most communities in the Commonwealth, has been inundated with fentanyl. To further cause harm to our communities, drug suppliers have made the choice to cut fentanyl with xylazine. For the past couple of years, Blair County and the surrounding counties have started to see fentanyl mixed with xylazine, which is also known as "tranq." Xylazine in vials have also been seized prior to dealers having a chance to mix it with fentanyl. The rate of seizure for fentanyl over the past few years has remained steady. The Blair County Drug Task Force has been successful in identifying suppliers from out of the area and conducting investigations which lead to search warrants, significant seizures, and arrests of those involved.

**Addressing the effects of fentanyl and xylazine entering our community**

**with Judy Rosser, Executive Director, Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships:**

A comprehensive public health approach is needed to address one of the most fatal combinations of drugs, fentanyl and xylazine, that has resulted in increased deaths. Fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid drug that has replaced heroin in the drug

in the drug supplies that they have seized. Blair County has seen xylazine showing up in the overdose death toxicology reports since 2021. Overdose rates have increased to over 70 deaths in Blair County since 2022 and now 2023. Approximately fifty percent of admissions to our treatment system are for opiate use disorders.

like the plague and forget that this is a disease, not a character flaw. A lot of people use drugs, few become addicted, and the ones that do are genetically predisposed to this disease."

As part of a public health approach, Pennsylvania has made available numerous harm reduction approaches to intervene on overdoses. PA has expanded access to naloxone,



supply. This drug is being mixed with numerous other illicit drugs in our community and packaged in different forms. When ingested, fentanyl attaches to the opioid receptor sites in the body and can result in respiratory arrest and/or death. Xylazine is a very strong sedative used in veterinary medicine practice. It is not approved for human use. Xylazine can lower blood pressure, heart rate, and breathing, resulting in an increased sedative state of the person ingesting this substance. The combinations of these drugs have resulted in higher risk of overdose.

Currently, the DEA reports an increase in xylazine

A public health approach addressing this ongoing crisis requires the ability to integrate approaches, including understanding the disease of addiction, which addresses stigma through brain science, best practices of pharmacology in treating the substance use disorder, harm reduction approaches, and counseling strategies that also specialize in trauma response and prevention. Integration of these approaches across different sectors of our community is critical.

Dr. Zane Gates shared a similar sentiment regarding substance use disorder stigma, stating, "Most primary care offices avoid these patients

a medication that intervenes on an opioid overdose. It unfortunately does not reverse the effects of xylazine. The FDA approved naloxone in May of 2023 to be an over-the-counter medication, which has enabled increased access to this life-saving tool to the general community. PA legislation was approved to allow for the possession of drug testing strips (fentanyl/xylazine) and the availability of these supplies. The test strips provide the individual the ability to test their drug supplies for the presence of these drugs.

Statewide, we have seen increased access to medication assisted treatment providers

that treat opioid use disorders. Locally, Blair County partners have received grant funding to increase trauma training of front line counseling staff to improve the therapeutic interventions provided at our treatment providers. In addition, the increase of case management services and certified recovery specialists (persons with lived experience) help to support individuals in early recovery to build their pathway of recovery. Healthcare professionals and other social service professionals receive training on substance use disorder and brief interventions and referral to treatment. Dr. Gates agrees that better educating healthcare professionals and increasing access to primary care, as well as more engagement and understanding for primary care, are essential to slow the progression of those suffering and prevent further deaths.

These are just a few of the areas that have improved in the last decade. We still have a lot of work ahead of us to address the stigma. Continued education is needed to help expand the knowledge and understanding around this disease. We hope you, as a community, will consider your own understanding to this complex issue and challenge yourself to learn more about this issue.

We hope you are willing to guide someone you may know to get help. Help is available 24/7 at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships just by calling 814-381-0921.

You can receive free naloxone at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships Monday through Friday, 8am-4pm or by mail at <https://nextdistro.org/pennsylvania>.

**Help save a life!**

**SHEETZ**

# WHY THE SHEETZ NOT



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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

The City of Altoona implemented several unique approaches in 2023 as we continue our fight against blight, all while recognizing the challenges and obstacles faced by many property owners in the City.

We know that blighted, abandoned, and vacant properties constitute a danger to the public and can also lead to an increase in crime. The feedback received from our Comprehensive Plan Survey confirmed that people who reside in, work in, and visit Altoona also have an interest in the revitalization and improvement of our neighborhoods. Not only does blight create a negative effect and appearance in our neighborhoods, it also impacts both adjacent property owners and the community as a whole, resulting in loss of real estate tax revenue. Significant resources are dedicated to conduct enforcement actions against the owners of these properties.

The City of Altoona has utilized a significant portion of its HUD Community Development Block Grant and HOME Program funding

to help prevent and eliminate blight. The City's housing loan program and the HOME rental loan program are both in place to benefit low-to-moderate income residents with rehabilitation. The City utilizes CDBG funding to demolish homes that are unable to be saved after all avenues of compliance have been exhausted, and the demolition program is a valuable and necessary tool in the City's efforts in blight elimination.

One of the most significant efforts is the City's fully-operational Land Bank. The Land Bank, through the Altoona Redevelopment Authority, is a tool for local governments to remove problematic properties from vacancy, abandonment, and tax foreclosure. In 2023, our Land Bank was successful in obtaining and acquiring several dilapidated properties that were originally slated for demolition; these properties will be rehabilitated and returned to productive use. The Land Bank was also instrumental in obtaining several vacant lots for future redevelopment purposes.

City staff will continue to identify structures that have rehabilitation potential prior to the end result of demolition. We are eager to see the growth of the Land Bank with new initiatives for blight remediation and community revitalization.

Although the City was unable to hold our annual Community Cleanup Day in 2023 due to staffing issues, several local churches and organizations held their

own cleanups in various City neighborhoods. We encourage, support, and thank our volunteer groups that have provided our community with their time and efforts! The City will be conducting a Community Cleanup Day in 2024; stay tuned for more information on that initiative.

In an effort to encourage homeowners to take pride in their property and neighborhoods, in 2023, we implemented a "Welcome

Letter" that is sent to new property owners each month, providing them with helpful information in the hope of increasing a sense of community and pride throughout our neighborhoods.

Altoona is a resilient City, full of strong residents who have shown perseverance. We all should be proud of our community, and we remain committed to working with you to continue to move our city forward!

# OOT Night at the Altoona Curve

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The third annual Operation Our Town Night at the Altoona Curve was held on June 22, 2023. For those who purchased their June 22nd 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 \$211 to OOT!

Operation Our Town had a booth on the concourse and distributed drug prevention information, "Choose Life, Not Drugs" wristbands, provided a drug-free pledge banner to sign to get a free OOT t-shirt, and Curve staff distributed Push Out the Pusher yard signs at the exits of the ballpark. K-9 Blue & K-9 Pongo, the two new Altoona Police Department K-9's that Operation Our Town helped to provide the start-up costs for,

and their handlers, made an appearance on the field before the postgame fireworks.

"The Altoona Curve were excited to partner with OOT again in 2023. 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 2024 in order to raise more money for a great cause," said Nate Bowen, General Manager of the Altoona Curve.

Mark your calendars for June 27, 2024 for the fourth annual OOT Night at the Altoona Curve! We thank the Altoona Curve for their continued partnership and support, and look forward to another great event!

## 2024 OPERATION OUR TOWN FUNDRAISER AT PNG FIELD

### THURSDAY, JUNE 27 – 6PM

**Altoona Curve vs. Akron RubberDucks**

**BENEFITING OPERATION OUR TOWN**

<b>BUSINESS PACKAGE</b>	
Share your product or service with thousands of Curve fans on Operation Our Town Night!	
<b>PLATINUM PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$550 (\$100 Donation)</b>
Have two members of your company participate in an on-field promotion (based on availability), first pitch before the game (based on availability), receive a public address/scoreboard & program "thank you" for being a community sponsor and supporter, a concourse table to display your company's information/products & 50 Grandstand game tickets for June 27.	
<b>GOLD PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$350 (\$75 Donation)</b>
Receive a public address/scoreboard recognition as a community supporter, first pitch before the game (based on availability), a concourse table to display your company's information/products and 25 Grandstand game tickets for June 27.	
<b>SILVER PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$175 (\$50 Donation)</b>
Receive a public address/scoreboard recognition as a community supporter, first pitch before the game (based on availability), a concourse table to display your company's information/products and 15 Grandstand game tickets for June 27.	
<b>BRONZE PACKAGE</b>	<b>\$85 (\$25 Donation)</b>
Receive a public address/scoreboard recognition as a community supporter, first pitch before the game (based on availability), a concourse table to display your company's information/products and 10 Grandstand game tickets for June 27.	
<b>INDIVIDUAL GRANDSTAND TICKETS</b>	<b>\$7 (\$1 Donation)</b>

---

**OPERATION OUR TOWN NIGHT**

I am a PLATINUM supporter       I am a SILVER supporter  
 I am a GOLD supporter             I am a BRONZE supporter

Company Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_

Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Method of Payment: (circle one)      Visa      MasterCard      Discover

Name on Card: \_\_\_\_\_ Credit Card Number: \_\_\_\_\_

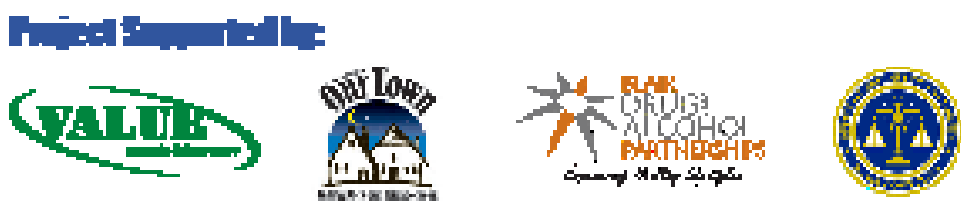
Expiration: \_\_\_\_\_ Security Code: \_\_\_\_\_

IF PAYING BY CHECK, PLEASE MAKE PAYABLE TO: ALTOONA CURVE      Check Number: \_\_\_\_\_

**FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT NATE BOWEN AT (814) 283-3118 or NBowen@AltoonaCurve.com**



# Thank you for being part of the solution.





# OOT IN THE COMMUNITY



Pictured: Sheetz Fellows volunteers & McGruff at 2023 RV Expo



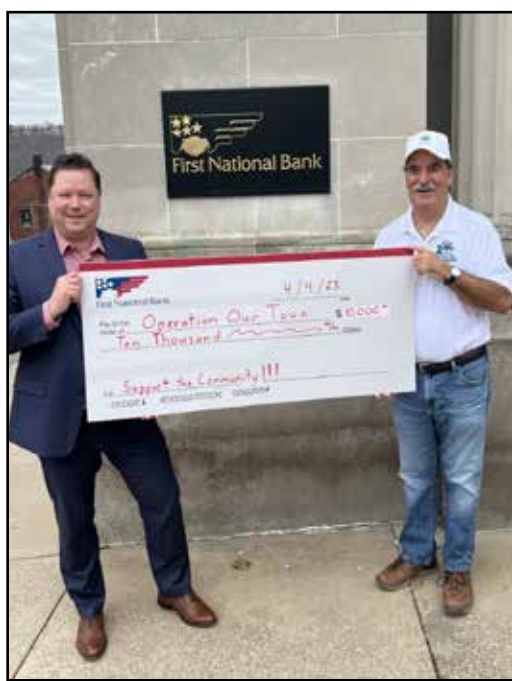
Pictured: 2023 OOT Community Partnership Award - Central PA Landlord Association



Pictured: Blair County Chamber 2023 Non-Profit of the Year Award



Pictured: 2023 Red Ribbon Week Proclamation with Hollidaysburg Senior High SADD Club



Pictured: First National Bank check presentation



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



Pictured: Landlord Workshop agency participants



Pictured: Duncansville Community Days



Pictured: 1st Summit Bank check presentation

# 2023 GRANT RECIPIENTS

*Continued from A13*

**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 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: After School Arts Program (ASAP)**

2212 Sixth Avenue, Altoona (814) 201-7004

Funding awarded will be

319 Sycamore Street, Altoona (814) 946-4068

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) 201-2751

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



Pictured: 2023 Operation Our Town Grant Recipients

used to offer free, consistent arts programming for youth in Elementary and Middle school throughout each school year.

**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.

activities to help at-risk youth combat the effects of trauma through the use of art techniques.

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

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: The Healing Patch Children's Grief Program**

20 Sheraton Drive, Altoona (814) 947-7027

Funding awarded will be used to assist with the supplies associated with peer support 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 and brochures for their Lending Library.

**Blair YMCA: Family Y-Nite**

1111 Hewit 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 provides food, resources, art, music, and crafts for all.

**Morrisons Cove Memorial Park: Stay Drug Free at Spring Cove**

201 S. Walnut Street, Martinsburg (814) 793-2176

Funding awarded will be used toward providing a drug prevention and mental wellness event for area youth.

**Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp.: Garden Heights Playground**

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

Funding awarded will be used toward the construction of a new park and playground in the Garden Heights neighborhood of Altoona, designed for children of all abilities.

**Northern Blair County Recreation Commission: NBCRC Sponsored Youth Program**

4080 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd, Altoona (814) 742-9500

Funding awarded will be used to work with at risk students or those in need, by providing programming/activities that promote a healthy lifestyle while also being educated on drug and alcohol awareness.

**Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Altoona-Johnstown: Getting Ahead**

1300 12th Avenue, Altoona (814) 944-9388

Funding awarded will be used to walk beside those in poverty, homeless, or nearly homeless, to introduce strategies and tools to become self-sufficient, allowing them to have a choice to get ahead.

**Overflow Church: Jefferson Park Community Engagement**

125 5th Avenue, Altoona (615) 430-9987

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

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

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

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

**Roaring Spring Community Library Association: Hydroponics on a Shoestring**

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

Funding awarded will be used to promote drug prevention and recovery through reducing

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

*Continued on A27*

# E-Cigs and Vaping

*continued from A1*

new users – youth and young adults who had never previously smoked.

As of December 3, 2019, the CDC began reporting EVALI (E-Cigarette Vaping Associated Lung Illnesses) hospitalizations and deaths across the United States. These injuries are much more serious than shortness of breath and can result in placement on a ventilator, types of pneumonia, wet lung, and can be serious enough to require lung transplantation. As of February 18, 2020, a total of 2,807 hospitalizations were reported, as well as 68 deaths. 82% of hospitalized patients reported using THC-containing products. Illicit drugs can also be added and then vaporized, such as LSD, GHB, and ketamine. Even scarier was many reported acquiring products from sources other than commercial sources, creating a riskier situation relative to what the products contain.

The reporting by the CDC was halted by the COVID pandemic, which created a gap in the availability of information relative to

EVALI.

The FDA monitors the national usage rates for all tobacco products, including an annual youth survey, which has shown a drastic increase in youth use of e-cigarette products. The FDA has called this an "epidemic" of youth use and has prioritized prevention efforts.

There are NO safe tobacco products. Some of the safety problems include:

- Overheating, fires, and explosions of the devices
- Lung injuries requiring hospitalizations and even lung transplants
- Seizures and other neurological symptoms

Some myths relative to e-cigarettes and vaping devices are:

- They are safer than smoking cigarettes or using smokeless tobacco.
- Youth use of tobacco products, in any form, is unsafe, including e-cigarettes.
- E-Cigarettes/vapes contain the same amount of nicotine as a pack of cigarettes.

- Some of these devices

contain up to five times as much nicotine as a full pack of traditional cigarettes.

- E-Cigarettes are used more often by adults, not youth.

- In 2018, more than 3.6 million U.S. middle and high school students used e-cigarettes in the past 30 days.

What can be done to help someone who is using e-cigarettes?

For 24/7 free and confidential information and referrals, call SAMHSA's National Helpline at: 1-800-662-HELP (1-800-662-4357) or visit the SAMHSA Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator at: [findtreatment.samhsa.gov](http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov).

The INDEPTH Program is an alternative to suspension or citation program that is offered as an option to students who face suspension for violation of school tobacco or e-cigarette use policies, available locally at The Lung Disease Foundation of Central Pennsylvania located in the Lung Disease Center at 800 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona (814-946-2845).



**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!**



## Drug Free

K V X U H G F Q D M I H I O G N Z C O P T J F Z  
 W C P N C B N Q C A Z P C N N D J B G O N R T K  
 F R Q O I Y Z C F P B K D O H Y B T K H N M O W  
 I T S V A V E K I N D A X K S G B Q N A A L A P  
 M A M O R K C C O K I N J H U B F I K Y L A C A  
 D J S D E H S U L H O X V R C Z T V F N S H C R  
 R A W O T B G Y C V L J D Y P T C Q Y O C S O C  
 B K D L T W U D T H T N E S W N V H Y T R Q A C  
 N D W D E L D G Q O O N N C A D G A S U U L X P  
 K G H M I B K C Z I D O I O O D F P S A C B B Z  
 N H W A Q C P A T S M L E C P K Y F L O P M A K  
 G R U D L R T P F P R J F A D O T M H O A N R X  
 R Y X N L L I I B S T F I M D Y O F R Z S X F  
 F R H A M R U J O N R N A N A E L Z I B D W B C  
 F A M N C U Z C R N V V C E T C J J N P O Z U L  
 C E J S J S F T I R R J T R T N U N P Y I Z Y P  
 Z E E K T C L T C N O N X P N A M V P E L R V U  
 E R J G C D B M O M I O U B N T N U X J J Y E J F  
 P J W N N E V H M F Z G Q A Z S C U A L E Y H  
 Q U H E R O I N B M M I E I L B O X S W Q B D R  
 W S Z M U Y D X H D F W N N L U P U Q J Y Z N H  
 B V O T R N F G M T X Z D H S S H S T S C O I V  
 N F G P N A M I D T Y P E E D I K P J H I H F V

- |           |               |                    |
|-----------|---------------|--------------------|
| Addiction | Alcohol       | Beer               |
| Caffeine  | Cigarette     | Cocaine            |
| Drugs     | Hallucinogens | Heroin             |
| Liquor    | Marijuana     | Prescription Drugs |
| Say No    | Substance     | Tobacco            |



## 2023 GRANT RECIPIENTS

*Continued from A25*

food insecurity in Pennsylvania by offering hydroponics.

**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 supplies for a program held on Wednesdays for youth in Pre-K to 12th grade, which provides a home-cooked meal, gym/physical activities, the arts, and age-appropriate small groups that encourage healthy living.

**Tyrone Area School District:**  
**Arts Elevate**

1001 Clay Avenue, Tyrone (814) 684-1800 ext. 3707

Funding awarded will be used to purchase an additional potter's wheel for an after-school arts connection program aimed at creating an environment to support disenfranchised and disconnected students through mentorship and art.

**Tyrone Snyder Public Library:**  
**Socialize Our Salute**

1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, Tyrone (814) 684-1133

Funding awarded will be used to support the Socialize our Salute social group for veterans that will help foster a core support group in a substance-free environment for local veterans centered around the veteran experience.

**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.

**YES to Kids: Youth Empowerment Scholarships**

338 Deer Run Drive, Roaring Spring (814) 502-4435

Funding awarded will be used to improve the lives of disadvantaged youth by keeping them active and involved in the extracurricular activities of their choice while they develop important life skills, build their self-esteem, and improve their academic performance by providing all young people with the opportunity to reach their full potential.

**Young Life of Central Pennsylvania: 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.

**DelGrosso's PARK LAGUNA Splash**  
 Come Celebrate  
**Operation Our Town Day**  
 at DelGrosso's Park

Learn more about Operation Our Town and how the funds they raise help fight drugs and crime in Central PA

Come Check Out Drug Dog Demos & Other Special Activities!

Our Town... A Great Place to Live!

Visit [www.OperationOurTown.org](http://www.OperationOurTown.org) to Learn More About Operation Our Town and to Donate!

**\$23 ALL-DAY FUN PASS**  
 For each Coupon redeemed, \$3 will be donated back to Operation Our Town!

Coupon Valid August 1, 2024 Only. Not Valid With Any Other Offer. DelGrosso's Park is now Cashless.  
 All-Day Fun Pass Regular Price: \$37.00 ea.  
[MyDelGrossoPark.com](http://MyDelGrossoPark.com) Print and Bring this Coupon or Show on Mobile Device Exits 41 & 45 Off I-99

PR - Operation Our Town Day  
 995-7

# OPERATION OUR TOWN DONORS

Operation Our Town was founded in 2006 by a core group of local businesses dedicated to support efforts to take back our neighborhoods from drugs and violent crime. Sustaining Members have committed to providing \$10,000 per year to support these efforts. Our Founding Members are marked with an asterisk (\*) in appreciation for their role in establishing our organization by contributing at least \$30,000 over our first three years.

The success of Operation Our Town, combined with the desire to improve our community, has led many local businesses to financially support local programs that prevent and/or reduce drug abuse and/or crime in Blair County.

## Sustaining Members:

1st Summit Bank  
Blair Companies\*  
First National Bank  
John & Doug Wolf\*  
Lee Industries, Inc.\*  
Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.\*  
McLanahan Corporation\*  
M&T Bank\*  
New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co.\*  
New Pig Corporation\*  
NPC, Inc.\*  
Pyramid Healthcare, Inc.  
Reliance Bank\*  
Rockland Manufacturing  
Sheetz, Inc.\*  
Small Tube Products  
Stucky Automotive  
The Hite Company Division of  
Mayer Electric\*  
Thompson Pharmacy  
UPMC Altoona\*  
Value Drug Company  
Ward Transport & Logistics Corp.\*

## Donors:

2nd Avenue Global Methodist Church  
A-1 Paving  
ABC, Central PA Chapter  
Accurate Bookkeeping Service  
AFSCME Local 2188 – Altoona City Employees  
AFSCME Local 906 – Hollidaysburg Veterans Home  
AGSM Ventures, LLC  
AIA Alera Group  
Al's Tavern  
Alan Gehring, Rhythm Systems  
Allegheny Brain & Spine Surgeons, P.C.  
Allegheny Club of Hollidaysburg  
Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries  
Allegheny Mountains Convention & Visitors Bureau  
Allegheny Orthotics & Prosthetics  
Allegheny Supply  
Allegheny Township Police Association  
Allegheny Trucks, Inc.  
Allegro Restaurant  
All Things Automotive, Inc.  
Alto Markets, LLC  
Altoona Area School District Foundation  
Altoona Arthritis & Osteoporosis Center  
Altoona Auto Auction  
Altoona Blair County Development Corporation  
Altoona Catholic Nurses  
Altoona Center for Clinical Research, PC  
Altoona Center for Nursing Care  
Altoona Community Theatre  
Altoona Curve  
Altoona First Savings Bank  
Altoona Honda  
Altoona Housing Authority  
Altoona Jewish Community School  
Altoona Mirror  
Altoona Pipe & Steel Supply Company  
Altoona Police Narcotics Division  
Altoona Soft Water  
American Eagle Paper Mills  
AmeriServ Financial  
Amtran  
Anonymous donor  
Anslay RV  
Appalachia IU8  
APR Supply Co.  
ARC Federal Credit Union  
Arch Insurance Group  
Arrow Land Solutions, LLC  
A. Thomas Farrell Law Offices  
Atlantic Broadband  
Babst, Calland, Clements & Zomnir, PC  
Back in Action Physical Therapy & Fitness Center  
Backyard Burgers  
Baechele & Associates Architects  
Baltimore Life Insurance  
Bavarian Aid Society  
Beard Legal Group  
Beauchamp Plumbing & Heating, Inc.  
Bedford Regional Urology  
Bellwood-Antis School District Foundation  
Bellwood Fraternal Order of Eagles  
Benzel's Bretzel Bakery, Inc.  
Bernard Albert Good Post 8685  
Best Line Equipment

Bickel's Surplus Too, LLC  
Bill Wertz & Sons, Inc.  
Blair/Bedford Builders Association  
Blair Business Technologies  
Blair Candy Company, Inc.\*  
Blair County Anesthesia, P.C.  
Blair County Beverage  
Blair County Chamber of Commerce  
Blair County Children, Youth & Families  
Blair County Crime Solvers  
Blair County District Attorney's Office  
Blair County Golf & Driving Range – Madey Corp, Inc.  
Blair County Health & Welfare Council  
Blair County NAACP  
Blair County Police Departments  
Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships  
Blair Gastroenterology Associates  
Blair Medical Associates  
Blair Orthopedics  
Blair Roofing, Inc.  
Blake Solutions, Inc.  
Blue Knob Golf Club  
Blue Knob Valley Chainsaw Carving Competition  
Bob's Storage  
Bolger Brothers, Inc.  
BrandDemon Strategy + Design  
Buccinese Society  
Bun Air Corporation  
Burgmeier's Hauling, Inc.  
Burns White, LLC  
Business Planning Service, LLC  
Carlin & Associates Insurance  
Carmike Cinemas, Inc.  
Carnegie Equipment, Inc.  
Catalano, Case, Catalano & Clark-Radzietz  
Catholic War Vets Post 1691  
CBT Bank a Division of Riverview Bank  
Central Blair Recreation Commission  
Central PA Cardiology, LLC  
Central PA Digital Learning Foundation  
Central PA Landlord Association  
Centre Concrete Company  
Cesare Battisti Mutual Benefit Association  
Chester E. Grannas Family Foundation  
Chimney Doctor, Inc.  
City Beverage of Altoona, Inc.  
Clear Creek Environmental  
Cleveland Brothers Equipment Co., Inc.  
Clip Art Salon  
Cohen & Grigsby, P.C.  
Coldwell Banker Town & Country Real Estate  
Combined Insurance  
Concordia Society  
Construction Applicators  
Contact Altoona  
Courtesy Motors  
Craig Fencing  
Credit Control Collections  
Cresson Lions Park Association  
Cumming Motors, Inc.  
D.C. Goodman & Sons, Inc.\*  
D. Freeman, Inc.  
Daversa Pest Control  
Days Inn & Suites, Altoona  
Dean Patterson Chevrolet  
DeGol Organization  
DeGrosso Foods, Inc.  
DeGrosso's Amusement Park  
Delozier Construction  
Delta Health Technologies, LLC\*  
Despoy & Robertson Law Firm  
Deus Ex Machina  
DiAndrea Media  
DiAndrea Promos  
Dick's Pharmacy, Inc.  
Discovery House  
Doing Better Business, Inc.  
Domino's  
Douglas V. Stoehr, Attorney At Law  
Drayer Physical Therapy Institute  
Durbin Companies  
East Freedom Surgical Associates  
E.B. Endres, Inc.  
Edward Jones Investments – Michael Harris  
Edward Jones Investments – Richard Logan  
Eldorado Kiwanis Club  
Empire Communication Systems, Inc.  
Empower Business Solutions, Inc.  
Encompass Health Rehabilitation Hospital of Altoona

Epworth Manor  
Evolution Counseling Services, LLC  
Excalibur Insurance Management Services  
Fairfield Inn & Suites–TownePlace Suites by Marriott Altoona  
Fairview United Methodist Church  
Family Pizza & Pub  
Family Services, Inc.  
Fenner Consulting  
Fine Line Cabinets, Inc.  
Fiore Brothers Management, LLC  
Fiore Buick GMC\*  
Fiore Furniture  
Fiore Toyota\*  
Fiore True Value Hardware  
First Commonwealth Bank  
First Energy Foundation  
First Presbyterian Church  
First Stop Shop, Inc.  
Foster F. Wineland, Inc.  
Fox 8 TV – Peak Media of Pennsylvania, LLC  
Fraternal Order of Police Bald Eagle Lodge #51  
Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #8  
Frederick Lock & Key, Inc.  
Freedom Basketball Club, Inc.  
Freedom Excursions by Scully, LLC  
Freedom RV Rentals, LLC  
Fringe Benefit Group  
Furrer Beverage Co., Inc.  
Galliker Dairy Company  
G.B. Wineland & Son, Inc.  
Geisinger Health Plan  
Gerard Ziegler, CPA  
G&G Auto Sales  
G&G Cinemas, Inc.  
Glenn O. Hawbaker, Inc.  
Global Impact  
Golden Living Center – Hillview  
Goldstein, Heslop, Steele, Clapper, Oswald & Smith  
Gold Wing Road Riders Association  
Chapter PAS  
Good Advertising  
Grainger Foundation, Inc.  
Grappone Law Office\*  
Graystone Court  
Greendown Acres Mobile Home Park  
Greenfield Township  
Green Valley Landscaping, Inc.  
Greenwood Pools & Spas  
G&R Excavating  
Griffith & Petz Co.  
Groff Tractor & Equipment  
Gwin, Dobson & Foreman  
Haberstroh, Sullivan & George, LLP  
Hamer Auto Body  
Harry K. Sickler Associates\*  
Heidelberg Country Club  
Helsel, Fiore, Sheeler Wealth Management Team  
H.F. Lenz Company  
Holiday Inn Express\*  
Holland Brothers Meats  
Hollidaysburg Area Junior High School Student Body  
Hollidaysburg Rotary Club  
Home Health Resource  
Home Nursing Agency  
Hometown Bank of Pennsylvania  
Homewood Retirement Centers  
Hoss's – Willard E. Campbell Enterprises, Inc.  
Housing Authority of Northumberland County  
Housing & Redevelopment Insurance Exchange  
Huntingdon Storage & Distribution  
Imler's Poultry  
Inco Beverage, Inc.  
Infinity Insurance Management Service  
Inner Peace Counseling  
Investment Savings Bank  
Iron Masters Country Club  
Irwin Financial, Inc.  
Jack & George's  
Jaffa Temple Altoona Shrine Club  
Jane & Lee Hite Family  
Jim Bryan's Tree Trimming & Removal  
J. Kirk Kling Law Office  
JMH Medical, LLC  
Joel C. Seelye, Grabill & Seelye, PLLC  
Johnny's U Pull It  
Jones Day  
Jones Funeral Home  
JP Morgan Chase & Co.  
Just Breathe Salt Spa & Yoga Studio  
Keller Engineers, Inc.  
Keystone Custom Homes

Keystone Dermatology & Center for Skin Surgery  
Keystone Real Estate Group, LP  
Kids First Blair County/Lily Pond  
Kimmen Plumbing & Heating, Inc.  
Kish Bank  
Kiwanis Club of Altoona  
Kiwanis Club of Tyrone  
KLZ Resources, LLC  
Klesius & Sheedy, Inc.  
Knights of Columbus Council 551  
Koehle Maintenance  
Kooman & Associates, LLC  
Kopp Drug  
Kranich's, Inc.  
Kunzler & Company, Inc.  
Ladies of Virtue Foundation, Inc.  
Lakemont Lions Club, Inc.  
Lake Raystown Resort  
LAMB Foundation  
Law Office of Stephen D. Wicks  
Law Offices of Thomas M. Dickey  
Lawruk Machine & Tool Company, Inc.  
Lawruk Realty\*  
Lezzer Lumber  
Llysven United Methodist Church  
Lockton Companies  
Logan Lodge #490 F&AM  
Longstreth Brothers, Inc.  
Low Life Rider Chapter, Inc.  
Loyal Order of Moose, Altoona  
Family Center #74  
Lumax Lighting  
Lung Disease Center of Central PA  
Mainline Medical Associates  
Mama Randazzo's, Inc.  
Manpower  
Marc-Service, Inc.  
Marian Heights at Garvey Manor  
Marianna's Fundraisers, Inc.  
Mariska Eash Realtor, Stultz Real Estate  
Martin Oil Company  
Martin's Food Market – Ahold  
Financial Services  
Mathew Greenwald & Associates, Inc.  
McAleer's Plumbing, Heating & Air Conditioning  
McCartney's, Inc.  
McCloskey Builders, Inc.  
McMullen Furniture Store, Inc.  
McQuade Blasko, Inc.  
Mike's Court  
Mike Servello Garage, Inc.  
M&M Roofing & Contracting, Inc.  
Mock Creations  
Moore Power Sales  
Morrison's Cove Herald  
Moses & Associates, P.C.  
Mountain City Law Dogs of Altoona  
Mountain Lodge #281 – Free & Accepted Masons  
Mountain Research, LLC  
Mount Aloysius College  
Mount Aloysius College – Physical Therapy Club  
Mueller's Auto Recycling  
Musical Society Unter Uns  
Nason Hospital  
Newborn Enterprises, Inc.  
Nic's Tobacco Outlet, Inc.  
Nimquin, Inc.  
Nittany Building Specialties, Inc.  
Norfolk Southern Foundation  
North American Communications  
Northwestern Mutual  
Northwest Savings Bank  
Okonak, Dean & Lechner, P.C.  
Old Canal Inn  
Olive Garden - GMRI, Inc.  
Omega Bank  
ORX  
Overhead Door Company of Blair County  
PA Gang Investigators Association  
Park Hills Golf Club  
Park Security Systems  
Passarello Law Office  
Patt Organization  
Paul Head Roof & Chimney  
PennCrest Bank  
Penn State Altoona  
Pennsylvania Highlands Community College  
Pennsylvania Prison Warden's Association  
Pennsylvania Skill  
PennTerra Engineering  
Pepsi Bottling Group, LLC  
Photo Flare  
P. Joseph Lehman, Inc. Consulting Engineers

Platinum Wealth Strategies, LLC  
PNC Bank  
Preferred Benefit Specialists  
Presbytery of Huntingdon  
Prevailing Wage Solution Center, LLC  
Priority Management & Associates  
Providence Presbyterian Church  
PSECU  
RADIOLU Business Solutions, LLC  
Ravine, Inc.  
Reilly Creppage & Co.  
Re/Max Results Realty Group  
R.H. Marcon, Inc.  
Riley, Inc.  
Ritchey's Dairy, Inc.  
Roaring Spring Paper Products  
Rockhill Realty, LLC  
Rotary Club of Altoona  
Rotary Club of Roaring Spring  
Roundhouse Harley-Davidson  
Roundhouse Powersports, Inc.  
Russell Tire  
Sacred Heart Church  
Saint Francis University  
Saleme Insurance Services, Inc.  
Sam's Club #6460  
Say-Core, Inc.  
Scotch Valley Country Club  
Season-Aire, Inc.  
Secure-Tec, Inc.  
Seltzer Financial Strategies  
Senior Life Altoona  
Sheehan & Associates  
Shelco  
Shields Trophy, LLC  
Shirley's Cookie Company, Inc.  
Sigel's School of Dance  
Sisk Mills Properties, Inc.  
Sinking Valley Country Club  
Smith Transport, Inc.  
Solarshield Remodelers, Inc.  
South Hills School of Business & Technology  
Spherion  
Splish Splash Auto Bath  
SRM Holdings, LLC  
Stanley J. Krish Funeral Home, Inc.  
S&T Bank  
Stiffler, McGraw & Associates, Inc.  
St. Joseph Institute  
Sub Zero Ice Cream & Yogurt  
Summit Country Club  
Swiss Club of Altoona  
Sylvan Hills Golf Club  
Talixa Software & Service, LLC  
Teeter Group  
Thaler Family Dentistry, PLLC  
The Burchfield Organization, Inc.  
The Crossroad  
The EADS Group  
The Knickerbocker  
The Lytle Group  
The Meadows Frozen Custard of Greenwood  
The Meadows Original Frozen Custard of Hollidaysburg  
The Medicine Shoppe  
The Village at Morrisons Cove  
The Willde Fetterman Group at Morgan Stanley  
The Winds at Mattern Orchard  
ThyssenKrupp – AIN Plastics  
Tomasseti Law Office  
Tom & Joe's Restaurant, LLC  
Tom Yurochko Youth Golf Fund  
Top to Bottom Office Interiors  
Traficante Family Chiropractic  
Travelling Tator Trucks, LLC  
Tri-Star Ford of Tyrone  
Tyrone Area Community Organization  
Tyrone Area Education Association  
Tyrone Area School District  
Tyrone Hospital  
United Veterans Association of Blair County  
United Way of Blair County  
United Way of the Capital Region  
University Orthopedics Center  
Unkel Joe's Woodshed, Inc.  
UPMC Health Plan  
US Foods  
Veeder-Root Community Service Team  
Ventura Construction Services, Inc.  
Vicki's Florist  
Wachovia Securities  
Warren A. Gingrich Agency, Inc.  
Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC  
Willard Family Foundation  
WJAC-TV  
Xanitos, Inc.  
Young, Oakes, Brown & Co.  
YTI Career Institute - Altoona

Individuals: 272 individual citizens.

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Professional and OOT Titles

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