



# OUR TOWN TIMES

2026 ANNUAL REPORT | VOL. XV

DRUG USE ● PREVENTION ● COMMUNITY SUPPORT ● EDUCATION ● LAW ENFORCEMENT ● VOLUNTEERISM

## Proudly Supporting OOT's Mission in Congress

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

With respect and appreciation, I join with the citizens of Blair County in commemorating the 20th anniversary of Operation Our Town.

As the Representative for Pennsylvania's 13th Congressional District, which includes Blair County, I am committed to introducing and advocating for legislation that supports Operation Our Town's mission and goals.

The founding mission of Operation Our Town retains special relevance for everyone who lives, works, and raises a family in Blair County. In essence, that mission includes all of us.

The organization's efforts to maintain safe communities benefits people across the generations. Most certainly, the harmful effects of violent crime and drug use block pathways to individual quality of life, professional development, and economic advancement.

Signed into law by President Trump on July 16, 2025, I was an original co-sponsor of the game-changing HALT Fentanyl Act. The HALT Fentanyl Act cracks down on the criminals who create, traffic, and sell illicit fentanyl in the U.S. by classifying fentanyl analogs as a Schedule I drug. Additionally, this law empowers law enforcement to more effectively seize these dangerous drugs and impose harsher penalties on the criminals responsible for the opioid epidemic.



On behalf of constituents in the District, I have been pleased to support President Trump's initiatives to stop crime and uphold justice. These initiatives include sealing the border, initiating the largest deportation operation in U.S. history to remove criminal illegal aliens and protect American communities, and designating international cartels and other violent organizations as Foreign Terrorist Organizations and Specially Designated Global Terrorists.

President Trump's Executive Order of April 28, 2025 was created to restore law and order and ensure that every community is better protected from crime and lawlessness. The Executive Order very much reflects the goals of Operation Our Town by empowering law enforcement to do their jobs, relentlessly pursue criminals, and protect innocent citizens.

Continued on A6

## The First 20 Years

### HOW IT ALL STARTED

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

**It was a dramatic increase in violent crime and drug use that brought about the formation of Operation Our Town in November 2006.**

**Criminal activity** became the subject of daily news headlines; burglaries, violent crime, shootings, gang activity, and drug overdoses all escalated. Many of the forces driving this deviant behavior came from outside our community.

It was like a poisonous disease, a cancer that spread quickly throughout our neighborhoods, impacting our youth and endangering the lives of many.

A group of concerned citizens, determined to find a way to fight back, formed an exploratory group. What they discovered was that most organizations, including law enforcement, did not have the resources needed to deter and reduce the criminal stronghold

on our neighborhoods. It became clear that unless the community pulled together, we would lose our community to those profiting from drug and related criminal activities.

Within a few short months, dozens of local businesses committed financial and other support to "take back our neighborhoods." Partnerships were forged between Operation Our Town and existing organizations with proven

law enforcement, treatment, and prevention programs.

Operation Our Town was modeled after the U.S. Department of Justice "Weed and Seed" program, which is a community-based strategy that aims to prevent, control, and reduce violent crime, drug abuse, and gang activity in designated high crime neighborhoods across the nation. Weed and Seed

See 20 Years/Page A27



## THE FUTURE OF OPERATION OUR TOWN

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

For the past 19 years, Operation Our Town has been striving to manage the ever-changing drug trade in Blair County the best we can with our three main focuses on law enforcement, prevention, and treatment. As we look to the future of Operation Our Town, we'll need the ongoing support of the business community and the engagement of our next generation of leaders in order to continue our mission.

Operation Our Town wouldn't be here 20 years later without the continued support of the Blair County business community. Our local businesses are the backbone of Blair County and we will need their continued support in the years ahead, as they are the major source of funding that helps Operation Our Town to provide grants for drug

enforcement and prevention programs.

We will need to engage the next generation of leaders from different sectors of the community who want to keep our communities safe for everyone who lives, works, and raises a family in Blair County. We will need their involvement to step up and be the next chairpersons of our Roundtable committees to help address issues and come up with innovative solutions.

Our Roundtable committees were created to focus on critical areas in Blair County through community projects and initiatives in the following focus areas: Community Revitalization, Early Childhood Education, Faith-based, Housing, K-12 Education, Law Enforcement, Marketing,

Northern Blair, and Pharmacy.

Each of these Roundtables will continue to play an important role in attacking the supply of drugs and reducing their demand in our communities in the years ahead:

The Law Enforcement Roundtable will continue to utilize various tools, equipment, and resources to attack the supply of drugs coming into Blair County through drug enforcement operations. The Pharmacy Roundtable will continue to focus on overdose prevention and reducing prescription drug diversion and addiction in the community through Narcan awareness, and informing the pharmacist community of prescription opioid trends in the area.

The remainder of our roundtables will work

together in various ways to reduce the demand for drugs in our community through education and community engagement:

The Early Childhood Education Roundtable will continue to work on better coordination between early childhood providers and K-12 schools, and solutions to address staff recruitment/retention, in order to give children the best educational start in life. The K-12 Education Roundtable will continue to meet regularly to discuss and confront the ongoing challenges facing our schools, such as school safety and student mental health support. The Marketing Roundtable will continue to communicate the initiatives of the organization, and promote prevention and treatment resources available through

Continued on A7

## Pick up your new window clings, magnets, & yard signs

Available at  
**The OOT Office**  
5508 6th Ave., Rear - Altoona, PA 16602

**Operation Our Town**  
(814) 296-8730  
[info@operationourtown.org](mailto:info@operationourtown.org)  
[www.operationourtown.org](http://www.operationourtown.org)

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|----------------------|------------|
| <b>Police Report</b> | <b>A2</b>  |
| <b>Community</b>     | <b>A5</b>  |
| <b>Prevention</b>    | <b>A9</b>  |
| <b>Local</b>         | <b>A10</b> |

# POLICE REPORT

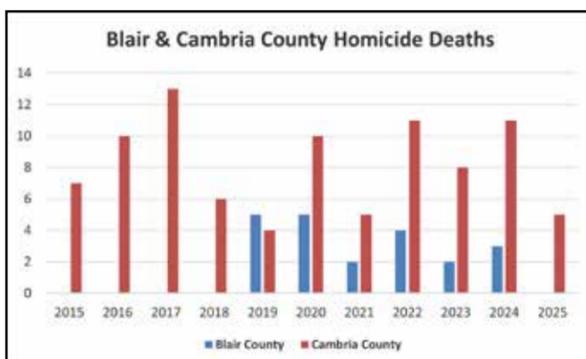
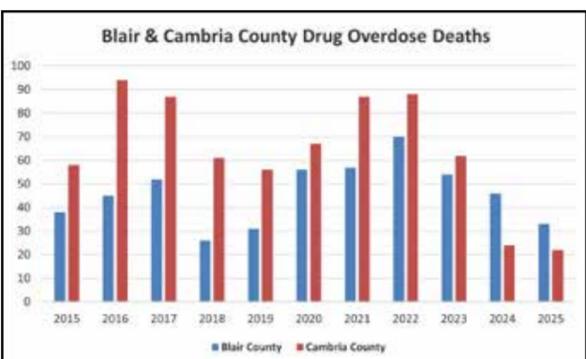
## FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE



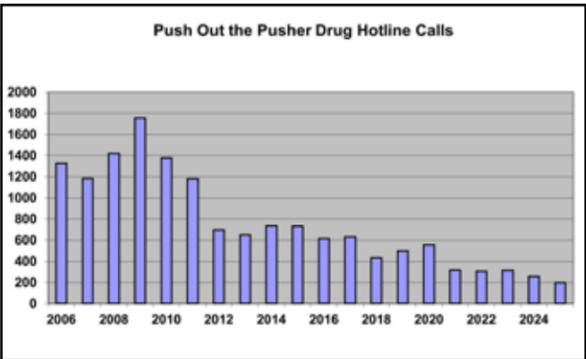
### BALD EAGLE LODGE #51

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

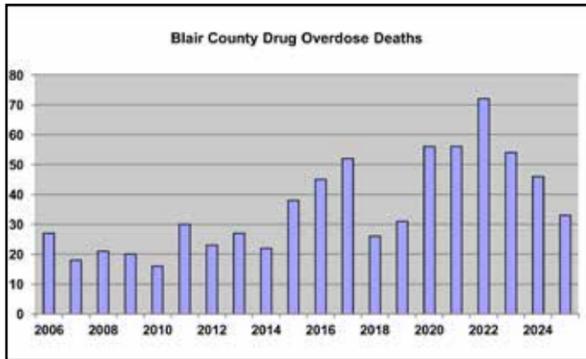
SERVING OFFICERS  
OF BLAIR, CENTRE,  
AND CLEARFIELD  
COUNTIES



\* Blair County had an additional 2 probable overdose deaths from 2025 that were pending toxicology results as of the printing of the Annual Report



From 2006-2025, 15,194 calls were received to the Push Out the Pusher Drug Hotline



\* Blair County had an additional 2 probable overdose deaths from 2025 that were pending toxicology results as of the printing of the Annual Report.

Source: Blair and Cambria County Coroner's Office

## Altoona Police Department K-9 Report: Blue & Pongo

By Sgt. Tom Venios, Altoona Police Department

In 2025, the Altoona Police Department's K-9 Unit continued to build upon the strong foundation established in recent years, proving once again to be an indispensable asset to both patrol operations and the community. Patrolman Stephen Fox and K-9 Blue completed 89 deployments, leading to 89 arrests, with approximately half of their activity being proactive, self-initiated work. This year also marked a major milestone for Blue, who proudly celebrated his 200th drug seizure, a testament to his exceptional skill and reliability in the field.

New canine handler, Patrolman Sam McCoy and K-9 Pongo, made an immediate impact during their first year together, conducting 53 deployments and contributing to 32 arrests. The pair consistently provided valuable support in narcotics investigations, traffic stops, and search warrant operations throughout Blair County, quickly becoming a trusted team within the department.

Together, the two K-9 teams were responsible for locating significant quantities of illegal narcotics during 2025. Blue and

Pongo assisted in the seizure of 1.5 kilograms of heroin/fentanyl combined, 4 kilograms of methamphetamine, over

320 grams of cocaine, and additional illegal substances such as mushrooms, LSD, prescription pills, and marijuana. These recoveries underscore the K-9 Unit's critical role in disrupting drug trafficking and safeguarding

local neighborhoods. Beyond narcotics detection, the teams provided crucial support in search warrants,

vehicle searches, and tracking missions involving fleeing suspects or missing individuals. Their specialized capabilities—particularly their precision tracking and scent detection—offer tools not otherwise available to patrol officers, often

making them the difference-makers in complex cases. The K-9 Unit also remained a cornerstone of

community engagement. Throughout the year, K-9 Blue and K-9 Pongo participated in school presentations, public demonstrations, and multiple Operation Our Town events, drawing enthusiastic crowds and helping strengthen

relationships between residents and law enforcement. Their presence continues to serve as a bridge between officers and the community, especially among children and families.

The impact of the K-9 Unit extended well beyond the City of Altoona. Blue and Pongo provided assistance to the Blair County Prison, the Pennsylvania State Police, the Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General, the Altoona Area School District, and numerous surrounding law enforcement agencies, reflecting the broad regional value of the program.

As the K-9 Program celebrates another successful year, Patrolman Fox, Patrolman McCoy, K-9 Blue, and K-9 Pongo stand as essential contributors to public safety and community outreach. Their achievements in 2025 highlight the enduring importance of the K-9 Unit—made possible through the continued generosity and support of Operation Our Town.



**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 most recent data on overdose death statistics is indicative of a leveling off or slight decrease when viewed at a national level. Of specific concern are additives to heroin or fentanyl like xylazine and medetomidine. Both are considered to be veterinary medicine in the class of sedatives or analgesics. These additives to what are already potentially deadly substances cause further treatment issues as they are not countered by Narcan.

## BLAIR COUNTY

In 2025, the Blair County

Drug Task Force, who have partnered with the Office of Attorney General Bureau of Narcotics Investigation and Drug Control and the Pennsylvania State Police, were consistent in their ongoing efforts to combat drug trafficking. Investigators averaged multiple search warrants and or buy/busts a month throughout the year. Approximately seventy-five drug arrests were made during the year.

The Task Force and their partners conducted multiple saturation details throughout the year, adding an increased presence that was specifically geared towards combating drug

trafficking.

The Task Force conducted numerous notable investigations throughout the year that resulted in significant seizures. In February, the Task Force and local police departments investigated multiple overdose deaths. An arrest was made later that day resulting in the seizure of nearly four pounds of methamphetamine, two ounces each of heroin/fentanyl and cocaine, and \$1,000. In March, an operation resulted in the seizure of multiple firearms, more than \$6,000, and approximately 7 grams of heroin/fentanyl. In June, the Task Force conducted an investigation that resulted in

the seizure of half a pound of methamphetamine and half an ounce of crack cocaine. One operation resulted in the seizure of a pistol and more than an ounce of crack cocaine. Another investigation resulted in the seizure of an ounce and a half of crack cocaine and more than \$5,000. More recently, the Task Force, OAG BNI, and the Pennsylvania State Police conducted an investigation that resulted in the seizure of two pounds of cocaine as it arrived in Blair County.

## PARTNERSHIPS

In 2025, 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.

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



# HONOR THE BADGE

OperationOurTown.org

## BLAIR COUNTY: DISTRICT ATTORNEY

By Peter J. Weeks, District Attorney

The Blair County District Attorney's Office and Operation Our Town share a common mission of ensuring public safety. 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,

of fatal overdoses involving fentanyl, xylazine, and methamphetamine. The District Attorney's Office continues 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

and resultant crimes. We remain committed to not only protecting the citizens of Blair County from illegal substances, but also from firearms that may come into the hands of individuals who would use them to commit crimes and are not permitted to legally possess them. We have prioritized the usage of drug detecting canines and their handlers to intercept controlled substances meant for our community before they are distributed to users, and have taken record amounts of drugs off the street in 2025.

This year, the District Attorney's Office was able to resolve many cases that underscore the dangers of drug trafficking and the inherent violence that it brings to our community. We continue to prosecute repeat offenders who bring in large amounts of fentanyl and methamphetamine into Blair County. While these cases have routinely been delayed by several years due to the scheduling of pretrial motions, we have been able to achieve multi-decade sentences for reoffenders to make the cost of selling drugs in Blair County higher than any potential financial award. We also continue to aggressively prosecute the intersection of drug trafficking and human trafficking, and resolved a number of those cases that have been delayed in the court system.

Now, more than ever, it is imperative that we return

to our roots and sentence those who traffic these deadly drugs to significant terms of incarceration. This may not be the popular approach in our country's current social and cultural climate, but it is the time-tested method that has been proven to reduce crimes of violence within our community. The District Attorney's Office, along with law enforcement throughout Blair County, will continue to bring these offenders to justice. While we believe in providing treatment options for criminals who have drug and alcohol addictions, we remain committed to holding the safety of the community and the justice for victims above accommodations for those who commit crimes. We will also proudly stand beside those in our community, like Operation Our Town, who choose to support law enforcement; law and order; and a safer community for everyone.

We, in law enforcement, continue to adapt to the changes in the laws and tactics of the drug dealers to stay ten steps ahead of the offenders. The collaboration that we have between the business community, drug and alcohol treatment agencies, and prevention and social service groups is directly related to Operation Our Town and unmatched in other communities. It is this collaboration that strengthens and unifies us in our shared mission for a safer Blair County.



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.

In 2025, the recent trends continued with high numbers

in death cases resultant from the rising numbers of fatal drug overdoses plaguing our community.

The District Attorney's Office also works with our partners in law enforcement to dismantle the organizations profiting from drug dealing

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

BLAIR COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY  
PETER J. WEEKS

# DEPARTMENT UPDATES

## 2025 Year in Review : Dept. Highlights

### ALLEGHENY TOWNSHIP

#### Police Department – Chief Michael Robison

- The Department handled 4,832 incidents in 2025, slightly up from the 4,486 incidents we handled in 2024.
- 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 that focus on detecting/arresting impaired drivers.
- The Department investigated 331 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2025, slightly down from 337 Motor Vehicle Accidents in 2024.
- The Department participated in several community-oriented events.
- The Department had 350

#### Sgt. Patrick Tomassetti

- In 2025, the Altoona Police Department handled nearly 31,000 calls for service. This was the second year in a row APD eclipsed 30,000 calls for service. Over 2,700 arrests were made.
- On 2/8/2025, 17 APD officers participated in The Polar Plunge, where they jumped into the frigid waters of Canoe Creek State Park, raising money for the Special Olympics.
- On 5/15/2025, 28 APD officers participated in the LE Torch Run, where they ran 6.7 miles through the city with other LE agencies, raising money for the Special Olympics.
- On 8/5/2025, APD held their annual National Night Out, where local families could interact with several police agencies and other emergency services to have fun, as well as create and foster positive community relationships.



Photo Courtesy of Logan Township Police Department

able to take 200 kids shopping this year.

- Throughout the year, APD partnered with area schools, conducting both K-9 demos and police officer presentations at elementary schools to bridge the gap between officers and our local youth.
- In the spring of 2025, K-9 Blue achieved his 200th drug deployment with his handler Ptlm. Fox. Also in the spring of 2025, Ptlm. McCoy became the new handler for K-9 Pongo after Ptlm. Rivera's departure from APD.
- The department continued their community outreach program in which officers specifically visited city parks, pools, housing complexes, and various neighborhoods to personally interact with the community. Bicycle patrol was also incorporated, providing extra opportunities for community interaction.
- At the end of 2025, Chief Joseph Merrill retired after 20 years of service with APD. Deputy Chief Swope assumed the role of Chief of Police effective at the beginning of 2026.
- APD welcomed 10 newly hired officers in 2025. Recruitment is ongoing into 2026.

Department participated in DUI roving patrols organized by the Blair County DUI Task Force.

- BTPD Officers were also active with the Blair County Drug Task Force and participated in several details with other law enforcement agencies.
- 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.
- BTPD Officers were very active in the community and participated in many of the events that were organized to strengthen the relationship between our police officers and the community.
- 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 2026!

plates, and missing persons.

- The department was pleased to earn the AAA highway safety platinum award for its efforts in keeping residents and guests safe on our roadways. This is the 11th consecutive year we have received this award.
- We would like to express our sincere appreciation to the neighboring police departments, Operation Our Town, and the numerous other organizations and individuals that contribute to the success of our department.
- We are looking forward to a healthy and happy 2026 and wish all our community the same.



Photo Courtesy of Blair County Sheriff's Office

### HOLLIDAYSBURG

#### Police Department – Chief Richard Oldham

Hollidaysburg Police Department is comprised of nine full-time officers, four clerks, and an Administrative Officer/Secretary to the Chief of Police employed to protect the community 24/7. 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 2025:

- 4,170 Calls for Service
- 444 Criminal Arrests
- 15 Juvenile Arrests
- 1,041 Traffic Citations
- 64 Non-Traffic Citations
- 1,133 Vehicle Stops
- 45 DUI Arrests

In 2026, Hollidaysburg Police Department is looking forward to continuing service to the community and is excited to add a K9 to the roster. Should you have any questions regarding the Hollidaysburg Police Department, please do not hesitate to call.

See Dept. Updates/Page A7



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department

criminal arrests in 2025, slightly up from 347 in 2024.

- 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 for years ahead!

### ALTOONA

#### Police Department –

- On 12/16/2025 and 12/17/2025, APD officers, along with several county LE agencies, participated in the 2nd Annual Blair County Shop with a Cop at Walmart. Officers were paired with a disadvantaged child from the county and took them shopping with a \$150 gift card. The gift cards were received through countless donations from businesses and private citizens. Officers were

### BLAIR TOWNSHIP

#### Police Department – Chief Roger Peacock

- 2025 was a busy but safe year for the officers of the Blair Township Police Department.
- BTPD handled 1,866 incidents in 2025, which is a slight increase from 2024.
- The Department continued to focus on traffic safety via enhanced enforcement of the motor vehicle laws and actively participated in the statewide Aggressive Driving and Occupant Protection PA Programs.
- As part of the impaired driving enforcement, the

### DUNCANVILLE

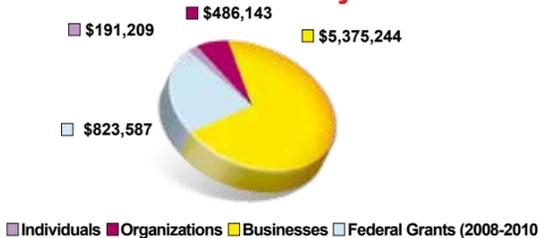
#### Police Department – Chief Rodney Estep

- 2025 was a good year for Duncansville Police Department and Duncansville Borough.
- Duncansville PD handled 718 calls for service, with a number of those incidents being directly related to drugs and alcohol.
- Duncansville is proud to announce we have purchased a License Plate Reader for use in one of the police cars. This technology will help us locate stolen vehicles, expired registrations, stolen license

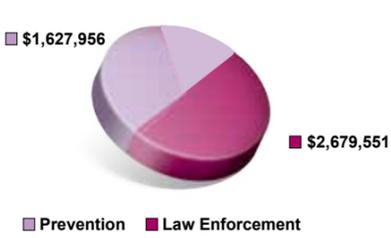


# COMMUNITY

2007 - 2025 OOT Money Raised



2007 - 2025 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

### Community Revitalization Roundtable:

A community partnership to develop and implement strategies to improve neighborhoods.

### 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 community and business in Northern Blair County to fight drug abuse and crime through proven law enforcement, treatment, and prevention techniques.

### Pharmacy Roundtable:

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

# The Best ME Is Drug FREE!

# THANK YOU

To OOT's Sustaining Members for your ongoing support!

# Pennsylvania Makes Steps Towards Safe and Drug-free Communities

By Senator Judy Ward (R-30)

As we wind down 2025, we continue our



fight against the drugs and crime that are harming countless communities across Pennsylvania.

Anxiety, depression, and loneliness, along with the drugs and violence that often follow, remain difficult challenges for our family, friends, and communities.

The past year has seen the continuance of some problems and changes that could potentially bring relief to many. Drugs, like fentanyl and heroin, and violent crime remain prevalent on our streets. However, the Trump administration's enforcement of the border and the law and order measures that have been taken in cities across the county are promising and will hopefully begin to reverse the troubling trends we have seen.

Operation Our Town is a critical piece toward solving this puzzle of drugs and violence. Since 2006, they have been working with local businesses, law enforcement agencies, and treatment and prevention groups to take

back our neighborhoods. The family support, youth programming, and support services have resulted in tremendous progress, but there is still more to do.

Like Operation Our Town, the General Assembly plays an important role in this shared mission. This year, the General Assembly has been working to craft policy that will give law enforcement the tools they need to patrol our streets and addicts the tools they need to find sobriety for good. As we enter the second half of the 2025/2026 session, we look to continue to work together to combat these crucial issues.

Act 14 of 2025 was a significant piece of legislation this year in our fight against drugs, alcohol, and violence. It updates the Department of Drug and Alcohol Program's annual reporting requirements. Enhanced reporting will allow the General Assembly to better assess program effectiveness, allocate resources where they are most needed, and explore new strategies for addressing substance misuse prevention, treatment, and recovery. Additionally, these reports will improve communication and collaboration with the public, advocacy organizations, and service providers, fostering greater transparency and informed policymaking to support DDAP's mission more effectively.

Even though it is still

working its way through the legislative process, Senate Bill 899 would also be a win for safer communities. This legislation would create the Kratom Consumer Protection Act and put guardrails on Kratom products. The bill will prohibit the preparation, manufacturing, sale or distribution of kratom products mixed with unsafe materials/ingredients, and the sale or distribution of kratom products to individuals younger than 21 years of age and would create labeling standards and prohibit misleading descriptions. Taking this harmful substance off the streets will help to keep our children and loved ones safe and promote healthier communities.

The 2025/2026 Fiscal Year budget also contained a win for those looking to curb the effects of drugs and alcohol in our communities by appropriating more than \$48 million dollars to the Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs. This money will give the Department the resources they need to effectively carry out their mission.

While the fight isn't over, there is reason for optimism and hope. I'm confident that through the work of groups like Operation Our Town and with impactful policy from Harrisburg, we can turn the tide and move towards a brighter future, free from drugs and violence.

# CONGRESS UPDATE SUPPORTING OOT

Continued from A1

One specific element of the Executive Order directs the Attorney General to create a mechanism to provide legal resources and indemnification for officers facing unjust legal expenses from official duties, including pro bono assistance.

Another maximizes the use of Federal resources to improve training, increase officer pay and benefits, strengthen legal protections, seek tougher sentences for crimes against officers, enhance prison security and capacity, and improve crime-data uniformity.

In Congress, I look forward to advancing solutions that provide Operation Our Town with the tools and support that are needed to sustain the momentum generated over the past 20 years.

As a Blair County native and your representative in the U.S. Congress, I express gratitude to Operation Our

Town's leadership and dozens of community partners for their enduring commitment to providing essential resources to law enforcement, youth programs, family programs, and supportive services.

Most certainly, the impact of these efforts is felt in each and every community in Blair County.

Thank you, Operation Our Town, and best wishes for continued success.



# BOOKER T. WASHINGTON REVITALIZATION CORPORATION

By Shasta Langenbacher, President

The Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation has been continuing renovation work at Veterans Field, located at 920 24th Street in Altoona. Thousands of athletes and even more of their supporters have gathered at this location

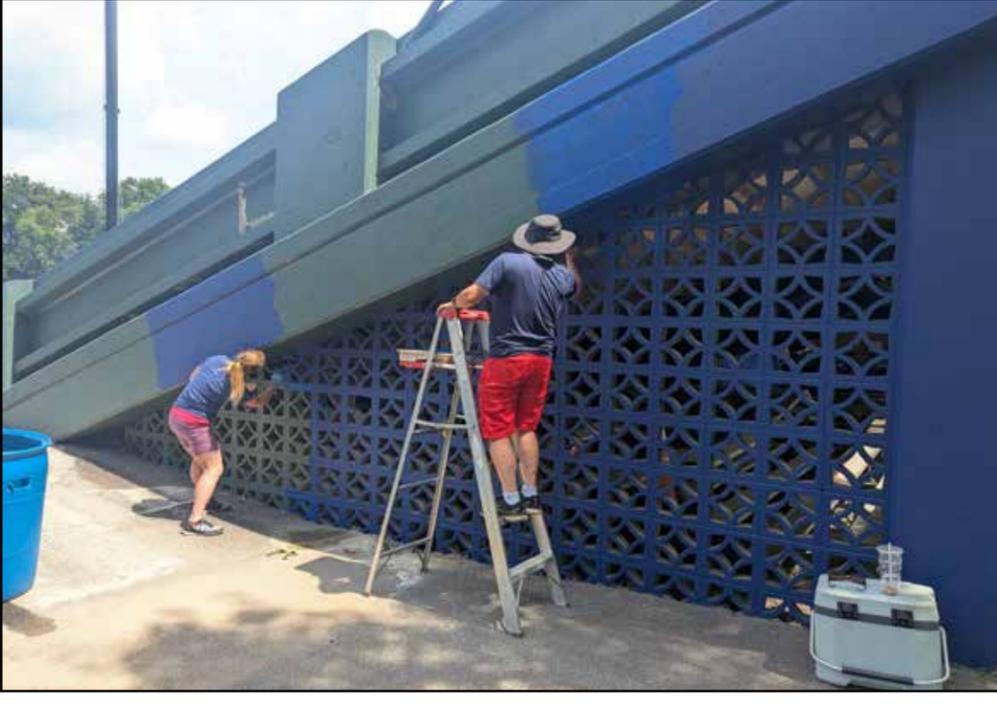
their supporters to have a more comfortable visit to the ballfield for practices and games.

Many people have been working on these upgrades in the last year and we have quite a few to be proud of. The most

from the elements. We want to thank the Kathleen and Gerald Sheetz Foundation for making this project possible. Staff and volunteers have finished painting the grandstands 'heritage blue' with red and white highlights.



Pictured: New dugouts being constructed at Vets Field



Pictured: Volunteers painting the grandstands at Vets Field

for more than 100 years to play football and baseball, and BTW Corp has aided in funding upgrades around the complex for athletes and

exciting renovation has been the dugouts for both teams. The new dugouts are minor league quality and provide new team benches, shelves, and shelter

New backstop padding will also be installed in the spring. We are planning to install flag poles for every branch of the military to match U.S. Flag

Code, replace roofs on the concession stand and ticket booth, improve accessibility with handicap parking and gate transitions, upgrade the restrooms, and regrade the outfield.

Our annual Community Classic Dinner is planned for February 28, 2026, and our main fundraiser will feature Chris Hoke from the Pittsburgh Steelers. We are also presenting the 2026 Respected Citizen Award to Scott Filler. Tickets are \$50 each and on sale at the Central Blair Recreation Commission office. Thank you to our event sponsor, UPMC Altoona. All proceeds will benefit projects

at Veterans Field or local parks, as well as CBRC Scholarships for children to participate in organized sports.

We would like to take the time to thank Operation Our Town and the work they do to help support initiatives at our local parks. They may be small, but the parks bring a major benefit to all who live around them. We appreciate that OOT recognizes how important outdoor play and safe community spaces are for all ages, and the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation works to continue building and supporting outdoor parks for everyone to enjoy.



Pictured: Red Sand Project



Pictured: HPD at Farmer's Market



Photo courtesy of Altoona Police Department

See Something? Say Something! 693-3020

# Looking Towards the Future

Continued from A1

the OOT website. The Community Revitalization Roundtable will continue to work on decreasing blight in Altoona through utilizing various tools and resources, such as the City's fully-operational Land Bank. The Faith-based Roundtable will continue to identify the most urgent needs in the community and connect those impacted by addiction and homelessness with food resources, shelter, clothing, and support services. The Housing Roundtable will continue to educate landlords and agencies, connect them with resources, and identify housing solutions through their annual Landlord Workshop. The Northern Blair Roundtable will continue to address needs in Northern Blair County

communities by helping to connect individuals and families with resources. The future of Operation Our Town also lies within our annual law enforcement and prevention grants to attack the supply of drugs and reduce their demand in our communities in the years ahead. Our law enforcement grants will continue to work on attacking the supply of drugs coming into Blair County by giving law enforcement the resources and equipment that they need to stay on top of the ever-changing drug trade. Our prevention grants will continue to work on reducing the demand for drugs in Blair County through supporting community and neighborhood-based programs that provide

outreach to youth and families that need it the most. Our prevention grant recipients are the most important asset we have, because they recognize that the key to gaining control of substance abuse begins with youth and their families, which is the core of where positive change can begin. As a community, we will continue to face new challenges in the future, but we can make a difference if we continue to work together.



Volunteers at the 2025 RV Expo

Volunteer from home

Visit our website @ CONTACTAltoona.com



Photo Courtesy of Logan Township Police Department

# Department Updates: Year in Review

Continued from A4

## LOGAN TOWNSHIP

**Police Department – Chief Devon Moran**

- LTPD handled 8,133 incidents in 2025.
- The Department hired 6 new officers in 2025, including the Chief of Police.
- The Department will be adding another officer to its complement starting in 2026.
- The Department appointed Det. Justin Hollern as detective. Officer Jason Beiler will be appointed as the department's second detective

in approximately April 2026. The Department is in the process of implementing a new external vest uniform for patrol officers. The new

uniform will be similar in color; however, it will allow officers to utilize the benefits of wearing external vests. Residents can expect to see



LTPD officers in both styles of uniforms in 2026.

- The Department implemented new body worn cameras and vehicle cameras for each of its officers and patrol vehicles.
- The Department replaced its aging Taser equipment and now carries the newest Taser 10 model.
- Corporal Hayden Hann received a Pennsylvania DUI Top Gun award for his proactive policing and focus on DUI enforcement.
- The Department continues to participate and assist the

Blair County Drug Task Force with enforcement details throughout Blair County.

- Drug, alcohol, and mental health related incidents continue to be prevalent in the department's calls for service.
- The Department enrolled in the Pennsylvania Law Enforcement Accreditation Commission's program with the intention of becoming Blair County's first Accredited local police department.

See Dept. Updates/Page A19

**Some things just go together.**  
Like local banks and local businesses.

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# Faith-Based Roundtable: Coming Together to Impact Others

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

**An Invitation to Pastors, Ministry Leaders, and Caring Community Members**

As we move into 2026, the Faith-Based Roundtable continues its mission of coming together as lay people, pastors, agency partners, and concerned citizens who care deeply about those in our community impacted by addiction, homelessness, and overwhelming life challenges. We remain a group without special titles or formal qualifications, but we do have compassionate hearts and a steadfast belief that every person deserves dignity, support, and hope. Over the past year, our Roundtable has grown—not only in numbers, but in understanding. We have welcomed new partners who

bring practical resources, from life-skills training and job-readiness support, to updated information on the Warming Center and other emerging community programs. These collaborations help us respond more effectively to the needs we see every day on our streets and in our neighborhoods. Unfortunately, the challenges facing our community have also grown. We continue to see an increase in individuals and families experiencing homelessness. Some are living with substance use and mental health disorders; others are long-time residents who have lost jobs, run out of savings, or simply reached the end of the help available to them. Many have no family support. Many are quietly struggling, unseen.

Yet, we have witnessed powerful moments of change. Over the past year, the Faith-Based Roundtable has:

- Connected dozens of individuals to food, clothing, shelter, and recovery resources
- Supported agencies in identifying unmet needs, particularly in affordable housing
- Helped build bridges between churches, nonprofits, and local leaders
- Expanded the network of volunteers able to assist with transportation, furniture storage, and practical needs
- Encouraged people who felt forgotten—and reminded them they are valued

Still, there is much more to be done, and we cannot do it alone.

**A Call to Pastors and**

**Faith Leaders**

Our community needs your presence, your voice, and your care. Your leadership can help open doors for real transformation—not only for those we serve, but within congregations eager to live out their faith in tangible ways.

**A Call to Laity and Community Members**

If God has placed a burden on your heart for people who are hurting, this is a place where your compassion can make a direct difference. You don't need expertise. You don't need special credentials. You just need a willingness to listen, learn, and love your neighbors.

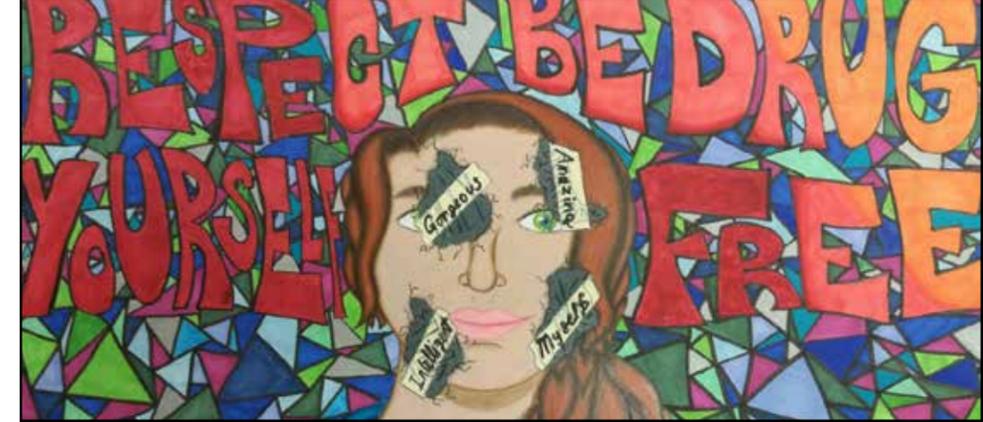
**Join Us**

The needs are great, but so is our potential—especially when we work together. Please

consider becoming part of this growing, hope-filled effort.

**The Faith-Based Roundtable meets on the second Thursday of every month at 1:00 PM at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships.**

Together with God, we can build a stronger, more compassionate community—one life at a time.



# For the Community. For Brighter Tomorrows.



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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.



DUNCANSVILLE | PENNSYLVANIA  
[WWW.VALUEDRUGCO.COM](http://WWW.VALUEDRUGCO.COM)

# PREVENTION

## Operation Our Town: 2025 Grant Recipients

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

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

The 2026 Grant Cycle will open on May 1, 2026 with a deadline for grant applications on June 5, 2026. A total of \$75,000 will be available for grant funding. Applicants have the option of using the "\$2,999 & Under" or "\$3,000 & Above" grant applications to apply for funding. To access the grant applications, please visit [www.operationourtown.org](http://www.operationourtown.org) and click on the Grants tab on the homepage.

A total of over \$77,000 in grants were awarded by Operation Our Town during the 2025 Grant Cycle to the following 23 programs:

AASD Adult Education Program: HSE: Unlocking Doors to a Brighter Future

2212 Sixth Avenue, 2nd Floor,

Altoona (814) 329-0253  
Funding awarded will be used to invest in the future of Blair County adults who lack a high school diploma by awarding HSE (High School Equivalency) scholarships to pay for the cost of GED subtest exams necessary to earning their High School Equivalency Credential.

AASD ELECT Program: ELECT (Education Leading to Employment & Career Training)  
1201 8th Avenue, Altoona (814) 496-7088

Funding awarded will be used to provide pregnant and parenting teens with items from a food pantry, partner incentives, strollers, play yards, and pack & plays to support them in ways that traditional funding sources do not allow.

Altoona Area Public Library: Parent and Caregiver Resource Library  
1600 5th Avenue, Altoona (814) 946-0417

Funding awarded will be used for parenting and caregiver books, brochures, literature,

marketing and advertising to help parents and caregivers gain knowledge and confidence to help their children reach developmental goals.

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 used to offer free, consistent arts programming for youth in Elementary and Middle school throughout each school year, enabling youth to make positive decisions and to discover and nurture their talents and passions. Big

Brothers Big Sisters of Blair County: S.M.A.R.T. School-based Mentoring Program  
891 23rd Street, Altoona (814) 944-6129

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

Blair County Head Start: Head Start Drive to Thrive Program  
319 Sycamore Street, Altoona (814) 946-5247 ext. 147

Funding awarded will be used to provide gas cards to support Head Start families experiencing housing instability or financial and transportation barriers, helping them remain enrolled, access critical medical, dental, and mental health services, and stay connected through family engagement events that foster ongoing participation in the

program and its vital resources. Blair Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon: B.E.S.C.P.  
2500 4th Avenue, Altoona (814) 502-0660

Funding awarded will be used to provide special events: Badges, Belles & Beaus Ball and Family Christmas Party in support of serving and caring for the individuals (and their families) who serve our communities as first responders and emergency services personnel.

Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corp.: Vets Field Revitalization  
2101 5th Avenue, Altoona (814) 949-2231

Funding awarded will be used to purchase backstop pads as part of a larger restoration effort at Vets Field, located at 24th Street and Maple Avenue, which will be utilized by many youth in the community.

Families United for Change: C.C.'s Boutique  
3921 Maple Avenue, Altoona (814) 934-8067

Funding awarded will be used

See Grant/Page A20

## Blair County Agencies Who are Partnered with OOT

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

Altoona Police - 814-949-2489  
Contact Person: Chief Derek Swope

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

Bellwood Borough Police - 814-742-7800  
Contact Person: Chief Joseph Schlecht

Blair Township Police - 814-696-3846  
Contact Person: Chief Roger Peacock

Duncansville Police - 814-695-1930  
Contact Person: Chief Rodney Estep

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

Greenfield Township Police - 814-239-5313  
Contact Person: Sgt. Dan Eastep

Hollidaysburg Borough Police - 814-695-3711  
Contact Person: Chief Richard Oldham

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

Logan Township Police - 814-949-3364  
Contact Person: Chief Devon Moran

Martinsburg Borough Police - 814-793-2838  
Contact Person: Chief Justin Davis

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

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

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

Williamsburg Borough Police - 814-832-2022  
Contact Person: Chief Adam Hauser

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

Pa State Police - 814-696-6100  
Contact Person: Sgt. Shane Murarik

Central PA Humane Society - 814-942-3780  
Contact Person: Officer Paul Gottshall

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

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

PA Game Commission - 814-643-1831  
Contact Person: WCO Pfister

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

Blair County Prison - 814-693-3155  
Contact Person: Warden Matthew Hale

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

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

Blair County Coroner Office - 814-693-3184  
Contact Person: Coroner Ray Benton

PA Fish & Boat Commission - 717-486-7087



## OOT Pharmacy Roundtable

By Rick Seipp, PharmD - Chairman, Pharmacy Roundtable

President, Value Drug Company

The Pharmacy Roundtable encompasses much more than pharmacy, including leaders from the addiction treatment, law enforcement, and medical communities, in addition to our pharmacist contributors. The appreciation to each of them starting their day once a month at 7:15 in the morning to work on our objectives cannot be stated enough. Our primary objective is to inform the pharmacist community of prescription opioid trends in the area and continue to focus on reducing diversion and addiction through patient counseling and overdose treatments, as well as provide safety in our

community pharmacies from crimes associated with drug abuse through collaboration with law enforcement.

The Pharmacy Roundtable started the year with a focus on increasing awareness and access of medication assisted treatment and the prevalence of the tandem of mental health disorders in drug abuse and addiction. The group published the March 2025 edition of the Pharmacy Roundtable newsletter on Co-Occurring Disorders: Substance Use and Mental Health. Pertinent information included was the 988 suicide and crisis hotline and contact information

for Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships as resources. The October 2025 edition of the Pharmacy Roundtable newsletter featured a Public Safety Alert from the Drug Enforcement Administration, titled "What Every Parent and Caregiver Needs to Know About Fake Pills."

A review of recent developments in addiction treatment reveals a methodological shift toward lower-barrier care, aiming to improve accessibility and reduce counseling requirements for individuals with prior experience. There is also an increasing focus on methadone treatment within professional discussions. Due to Rite Aid store closures in 2025, there has been a rise in the volume of controlled substances dispensed in other pharmacies,

which may attract increased regulatory scrutiny when these levels surpass those of routine prescriptions. Many patients were displaced during the closures and maintaining access for these patients was critical. Provider awareness of the impact throughout the healthcare continuum was discussed on many levels.

Opioid use disorder affects over 16 million people worldwide, with over 2.1 million of these in the United States, according to the National Institutes of Health. There are currently plans on the part of many government entities, from the federal government to local towns and cities, to use funding from the global opioid legal settlement that will pour billions of dollars in settlement funds into education for and support and treatment of those affected by

the opioid crisis. Particularly important is the medication assisted treatment to help those afflicted with addiction become less dependent on opioids. Pharmacists will play a significant role in the counseling of these patients regarding how to use their medications. Access to these important treatments, as well as reducing the stigma surrounding treatment, continue to be a challenge. Although efforts to curb opioid diversion, abuse, and addiction are working, as seen in a 64% decrease in deaths from prescription opioid overdose, despite an overall rise in deaths from other forms of opioids, our work is far from finished. Pharmacists need to be diligent in our efforts to ensure that prescription opioids

Continued on A12

# LOCAL

## 2007-2025 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 Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon  
 Blair Regional YMCA  
 Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation

Calvary United Methodist Church  
 Catalyst Church  
 Catholic Charities  
 Center for Community Action  
 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 Support Services  
 Evolution Expressions  
 Families United for Change  
 Family Intervention Crisis Services  
 Family Resource Center of Blair County  
 Family Services Incorporated  
 Garver Memorial YMCA  
 Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation  
 Hollidaysburg Area School District  
 Home Nursing Agency Foundation  
 H.O.P.E. Drop-In Center  
 IDA Community Development Corporation  
 Jewish Memorial Center Altoona

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 County Recreation Commission  
 Overflow Church  
 Penn State Altoona  
 Refuge Youth Network  
 Roaring Spring Community Library  
 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 Avenue  
 The Salvation Army  
 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

# HOUSING ROUNDTABLE UPDATE

By Brad Kanuch, Co-Chair of Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable, Deputy Director, Altoona Housing Authority

The Operation Our Town Housing Roundtable has been meeting since 2007. It started as a group of individuals who did not like the path our community was heading down. The Roundtable identified and developed creative ways for landlords to address drug activity and crime created by transient tenants. The Roundtable quickly evolved as an educational resource for landlords and local agencies. This is how the Landlord Workshop became what it is today. Since education became the main priority, we continue to add organizations, including human service agencies that provide housing assistance. These partnerships have helped solve and address the current issues that we are dealing with in our city and county. Operation Our Town held the annual Landlord Educational Workshop on November 14, 2025. The event was full of landlords,

local agencies, and local stakeholders. Our workshop is consistently re-evaluated to review the top issues that face our local landlords and agencies. This year, we focused on our mainstays, which included:



criminal activity, frequently asked magistrate questions, fair housing, reasonable home modifications, and the eviction process and leases. We also included a session for rental assistance programs that our

human service providers currently have funding for. The event was very successful this year, as we had 90 individuals in attendance. There were a lot of great questions asked and many of the attendees

left with new knowledge. Our goal was reached by providing valuable information and resources to the landlords and agencies in attendance. There is one thing for certain, our community is

changing. The issues from 2007 are different from the issues of today. We live in a post-COVID world that has made us all have to adapt more quickly than in the past. Our community has adjusted, but some may argue it has not adjusted enough to the growing issues that we all face on a regular basis as landlords and agencies. Our community still has a drug problem, but the drugs are becoming more potent, more easily available, and are reaching different populations. Our community has an aging housing market that needs to be rehabbed and bring online additional workforce housing units. We have seen housing stock instability, coupled with federal government regulations, that have caused problems for our tenants where they need to choose between food for their families or a roof over their head. We have seen new populations in our city ask for help from human

service providers. The Housing Roundtable continues to work with those agencies to find solutions, as the community is beginning to see a resurgence in transient populations. OOT and our community continue to take a proactive approach to housing. We have seen more improvement with our landlords and city inspections, which help landlords stay up-to-date on deficiencies and meet regulations. However, we need everyone to come together to help shape our future so that we can continue to adapt and be proactive to our changing dynamics. We need to hear from landlords and other individuals in our community to continue to shape our Roundtable and Landlord Workshop to ensure that we are meeting their needs. We need to continue to provide resources, tools, and education so we can have the best landlords and tenants that our community can ask for.

With a heavy heart the Blair County Sheriff's Office announces the passing of our beloved K-9 RIK. After a short unexpected medical issue, RIK passed on the evening of December 30, 2025.

This is not just a loss of a dog — but a warrior, a protector, a loyal partner who served with courage as well as heart, and a true fur friend.

K-9 Rik proudly completed two tours in Afghanistan, standing on the front lines where bravery was not optional and loyalty meant everything. He later continued his mission here at home as the trusted K-9 partner to Sgt. Bennett of our office, protecting our community with the same devotion.

He served with honor, instinct, and heart. To those who worked beside him - he was a guardian. To those who knew him - he was love wrapped in fur, strength, and devotion. To us - he was so much more, he was family.

**Rest in peace, K-9 Rik. Forever honored. Forever remembered. Forever loved.**

We keep RIK's family (Sgt. Bennett and family) in our thoughts and prayers.



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



**Stuckey Ford Is a Longtime Supporter of  
Operation Our Town's Mission to Promote  
and Protect Healthy Neighborhoods –**

**Stuckey Ford – Here for Every Mile.**



# OOT: ON THE AIR

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Operation Our Town and Seven Mountains Media have partnered over the past 15 years to provide information on Operation Our Town's drug prevention efforts in the community. In 2025, I recorded a PSA on some of Operation Our Town's upcoming events that was aired on the Seven Mountains Media local radio stations. We are certainly grateful to have

this opportunity to get the message out to the community regarding all the good things Operation Our Town and its supporters accomplish together! "It has been a pleasure working with Shawna and Operation Our Town. Seven Mountains Media is proud to keep the community connected to everything Operation Our Town has done and continues to do," said Bill Kurtis,

Public Service Director for all Seven Mountains Media Radio Stations: FROGGY 98.1 / WALY 100.1 / ROCKY 104.9 / WOWY 103.9 / POP 104.5. Stay tuned to hear us on the radio again, as we plan to highlight some of Operation Our Town's activities and events in 2026, such as the Operation Our Town Prevention Grant Cycle, OOT Night at the Altoona Curve, OOT Day at DelGrosso's Park, OOT Mini-Golf Tournament, and Landlord Educational Workshop! Operation Our Town is thankful for its partnership with Seven Mountains Media, which has provided us with an excellent resource to get information out to the community!

## Miniature Golf, Maximum Fun!

By Nick Gordon, OOT Community Outreach Coordinator

Operation Our Town held its Annual Mini-Golf Tournament on Monday, September 15, 2025. The event was held at Lakemont Park in partnership with the Young Professionals of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce and sponsored by Behe Brothers' Brewing Company. This year's mini-golf tournament had a Western theme. All funds raised benefit local drug enforcement and prevention programs in Blair County thanks to our teams and sponsors! Many thanks, once again, goes to the OOT Golf Committee, Lakemont Park, and all the volunteers who helped to make the event a success.

Participants were invited to the "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry afterwards for great food and networking. The mini-golf tournament is a fun team-building event for businesses and employees of all ages, and a great alternative for those who are not regular golfers. OOT is grateful for the support of the Young Professionals this year and going forward, especially to Marcus Edwards and Laura Green, who also serve on our Golf Committee.

Marcus shared his thoughts on some of the highlights of the event, from the point of view of the



**2025-2026 Drug Testing Program**

Thank you to our 2025-2026 Program Sponsors:

- Allegheny Township Police Association
- STIFFLER MCGRAW
- P. JOSEPH LEHMAN, INC.

**Our Helpline can be reached by calling (814) 946-9050**

**CONTACT Altoona**

A caring voice is as close as the phone!

The Operation Our Town Mini-Golf Tournament kicked off at 4:00pm on Monday at Lakemont Park's Keystone Falls 18-Hole Mini-Golf Course. A total of 12 mini-golf teams registered. The winning teams were, 1st Place: Solarshield, 2nd Place: Veeder Root, 3rd Place: Blair Companies Real Estate. There were several skill prize winners between the Hole in One competition and Chip a Duck. The winning team also received a special prize!

Young Professionals group, saying: This year's Mini-Golf Tournament was another meaningful and successful event for Operation Our Town and the Blair Chamber Young Professionals. While we didn't have as many teams participate as in previous years, the energy, enthusiasm, and generosity of our players and volunteers made the day truly special. Every team that showed up helped continue a tradition that brings our community together.

Continued on A16

# Operation Our Town K - 12 Education Roundtable Report

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

**Empowering Education and Strengthening Families in Blair County**  
Operation Our Town (OOT) continues to be a driving force for positive change in Blair County. Through strategic partnerships and targeted funding, OOT addresses critical community needs—focusing on education, prevention, and family support. By investing in programs that break cycles of poverty, crime, and substance abuse, OOT helps create safer, healthier environments where individuals and families can thrive. This report highlights two impactful initiatives supported by OOT in 2024: Adult Education and the AASD ELECT Program.

**Adult Education – "HSE: Pathway to a Brighter Future"**  
The "HSE: Pathway to a Brighter Future" program has empowered twenty-five adults through the AASD Adult Education Program. To date, fourteen participants have graduated, and eleven more are on track to achieve this milestone soon! Thanks to OOT 2024 funding, learners received essential support, including:  
· Transportation assistance (Sheetz gas cards)  
· Study materials (GED Ready vouchers)  
· Exam fees (GED Subtest scholarships)

Graduation gifts (diploma covers)  
This investment is life-changing. Graduates are overcoming obstacles, entering the workforce and military, earning higher wages, and pursuing college degrees. Achieving a High School Equivalency (HSE) opens doors to brighter futures—breaking cycles of poverty and crime in Blair County.

**Supporting Young Families**  
The AASD ELECT Program, serving pregnant and parenting youth, also benefited from OOT grant funding. This support enabled ELECT to provide monthly food pantry items to families struggling with rising grocery costs. Over the past year, ten students and their families received ongoing nutrition support and education. Additional impact highlights:  
· Gift cards for partners who attended educational events and workshops with ELECT students—12 partners were recognized for their engagement in their children's lives.  
· Safe home items and mobility support, including four baby gates and four strollers, ensuring families have essential tools for safety and independence.

A special event at Jethro's, honoring their achievements alongside family members. The program is deeply thankful for OOT's commitment to keeping youth engaged in healthy, supportive environments. Operation Our Town's dedication to education and community well-being is creating lasting change across Blair County. By investing in prevention, support, and opportunity, OOT helps schools and families build strong foundations for success. These initiatives not only empower individuals, but also strengthen our entire community—reducing poverty, improving mental health, and fostering safer neighborhoods. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Operation Our Town and its partners for their unwavering commitment to building brighter futures for our children, families, and communities.



## Pharmacy Roundtable

Continued from A9

are used exclusively for a legitimate medical purpose. In 2026, we will be working with other disciplines on continuing education to help re-educate and refocus awareness about the importance of access to medication assisted treatment. Updates and the most current information is important to be brought forward to providers. Thanks, once again, to all



the Pharmacy Roundtable members who give selflessly of their time and energy to help make our community a safer place to live. Lastly, a big thank you to the pharmacy community, who continually

work to battle the opioid crisis that our community faces.



Photo Courtesy of Altoona Police Department

# SPEAK OUT: LAWMAKERS NEED TO HEAR ABOUT RECREATIONAL MARIJUANA

By Rep. Scott Barger (R-80)

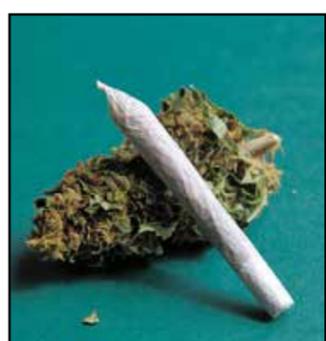
Stop me if you've heard this one: The Pennsylvania General Assembly is going to legalize adult-use, recreational marijuana and tax it to balance the state budget.

For a decade, the possibility of legalizing recreational marijuana has loomed in Harrisburg. It seems like every year is going to be the year to make it happen. Thankfully, common sense wins out time and time again.

Drug legalization does not protect the safety and well-being of our citizens. In fact, because marijuana is a Schedule I substance federally, its use within state borders could cause issues for workers, renters, and others running afoul of federal laws that require drug testing.

Legalizing recreational marijuana is a slippery slope that would result in more minors experimenting with a dangerous drug and developing dependency. It would add more burdens to our recovery

and treatment programs. It also could exacerbate other criminal behavior, particularly



instances of driving under the influence.

The promise of additional tax revenue is tempting to many lawmakers, but I don't think the benefit justifies the cost.

This is where you can help.

This is the time for law enforcement officers to voice their concerns about the potential legalization of recreational marijuana. Speak to anyone who will listen – local and state officials, union

leaders, school directors, human service providers – about your perceptions of what legalization would mean for the communities you serve.

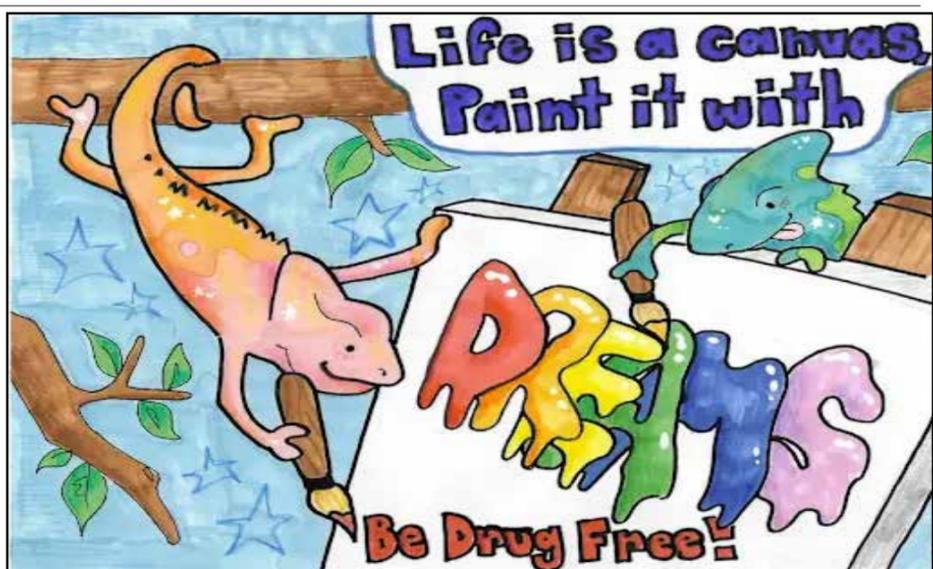
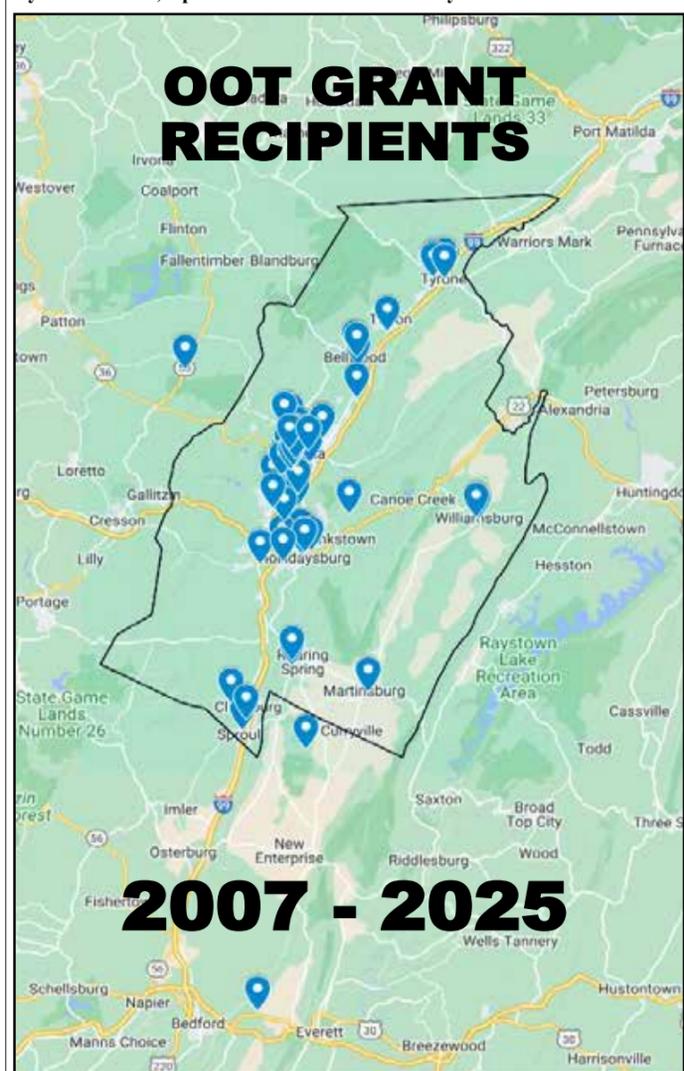
Marijuana use directly affects the brain and can cause permanent effects for memory, decision making, coordination, and learning. A Washington State University study linked cannabis use to higher rates of students failing exams.

Put aside the concept that the state shouldn't be generating revenue based on destructive behaviors like marijuana use. For every dollar Colorado has received in tax revenue from marijuana sales, it is spending \$4.50 to mitigate social costs.

I voted "no" on the most recent proposal to legalize adult-use, recreational marijuana. I intend to continue being a stalwart against this foolhardy concept. Please consider adding your voice to the many who stand in opposition.

# OOT Grant Map

By Nick Gordon, Operation Our Town Community Outreach Coordinator



## Be a Crime Fighter!

Let's get dangerous and potentially addictive drugs out of homes and off the street!

Free Medication Drop Boxes are available for you to discard unused medications! The best way to combat drug diversion and abuse is to get drugs away from folks who may be tempted to use or sell them. Drugs discarded into the dropboxes are safely destroyed by law enforcement.



### Blair County Medication Drop Off Locations:

- ▶ **Allegheny Township Police Department**  
(814) 695-9563  
3131 Colonial Dr. Duncansville, PA 16635  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Altoona Police Department**  
(814) 949-2489  
1106 16th St. Altoona, PA 16601  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week
- ▶ **Blair County Courthouse**  
(814) 693-3000  
423 Allegheny Street Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Blair Township Police Department**  
(814) 696-3846  
375 Cedarcrest Drive Duncansville, PA 16635  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **CVS**  
(814) 944-9224  
200 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **Freedom Township Police Department**  
(814) 695-8545  
181 Municipal Street East Freedom, PA 16637  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Giant Eagle Pharmacy - Altoona**  
(814) 946-4267  
181 Sophira Ln. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **Greenfield Township Police Department**  
(814) 239-5313  
477 Ski Gap Road Claysburg, PA 16625  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **Hollidaysburg Police Department**  
(814) 695-3711  
401 Blair St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
Monday – Friday, 7:00am – 11:00pm
- ▶ **Logan Township Police Department**  
(814) 949-3364  
100 Chief Logan Circle Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:00pm
- ▶ **State Police-Troop G - Hollidaysburg**  
(814) 696-6100  
1510 N Juniata St. Hollidaysburg, PA 16648  
24 hours per day / 7 days per week
- ▶ **Tyrone Borough Police Department**  
(814) 684-1364  
1100 Logan Avenue Tyrone, PA 16686  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 5:00pm
- ▶ **VA Medical Center**  
(814) 943-8164  
2907 Pleasant Valley Blvd Altoona, PA 16602  
Monday – Friday, 8:00am – 4:30pm
- ▶ **Walgreens Pharmacy**  
(814) 944-3236  
508 E. Plank Rd. Altoona, PA 16602  
Available During Store Hours
- ▶ **Williamsburg Police Department**  
(814) 832-2022  
305 E. 2nd St. Williamsburg, PA 16693  
Mon, Tues, Thurs, Fri, 9:00am – 3:00pm  
Wed, 8:00am – 4:00pm

Project Supported by:



# HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION: WORK GROUP HIGHLIGHTS

By Karen Struble, President & CEO, United Way of the Southern Alleghenies

The Healthy Blair County Coalition (HBCC) is a partnership of individuals and organizations working to promote the social, economic, emotional, and physical well-being of residents. Our mission is to assess facets of a healthy Blair County by sharing resources, engaging local partnerships, and implementing strategies. There are five work groups and numerous community members who come together to strategize around our communities' most pressing health challenges.

In 2025, we released the data from our sixth Community Health Needs Assessment. Key areas of concern included obesity; screen time and addiction to electronics/social media; alcohol and drugs; distracted driving; heart disease; smoking, tobacco, and vaping; and adult mental health. Implementation plans were developed to address these issues. Our five work groups/committees meet regularly

to plan and implement educational programs and activities:

**The Youth Connection Task Force** is continuing to work with area partners to address issues our youth face. We are continuing our emphasis on kindness and are working to develop a series of videos to promote kindness, as well as build awareness related to bullying, digital wellness,



AN INITIATIVE OF HEALTHY BLAIR COUNTY COALITION

consent, and stereotypes.

**The Let's Move Blair**

**County Committee** changed its name to **Get Active Blair County**. It continues to host two Active Living Challenges during the year and promote community assets that allow us



to lead more active lifestyles. Plans are under way to add

new movement opportunities in 2026.

**The Mental Health Committee** is continuing to provide free training on the Columbia-Suicide Severity Rating Scale (C-SSRS), which supports suicide risk assessment through a series of simple, plain-language questions that anyone can ask to help identify whether someone is at risk for suicide. They are developing a "Community Conversations around Mental Health" resource to reduce stigma. Additionally, several members attended LOSS training to support survivors of suicide loss and bring these training resources to Blair County. Finally, the Mental Health Committee launched the H.E.A.R.T of Blair County website. The website provides resources and information on trainings, education, and resources within the county to support emotional well-being.

**The Food for Life Committee** changed its name to **Nourish Blair County** and is addressing food insecurity and promoting healthy eating.

The Committee is currently completing asset mapping for food resources in Blair County, and will be developing a new Food Resource Guide in 2026.

**The Substance Use & Physical Health Coalition's** goal is to enhance communication and coordination between drug/alcohol and healthcare providers. Under the leadership of Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships, early intervention programs have resulted in more individuals being referred to and receiving treatment for substance use disorders.

We continue to look toward the future and the development of more programs within the Coalition that foster communication, collaboration, and change. If you would like to connect with us, please visit our website at [www.healthyblaircountycoalition.org](http://www.healthyblaircountycoalition.org) and like our Facebook pages.

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

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

The ninth annual Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Amusement Park and Laguna Splash was held on August 7, 2025. For each coupon that was redeemed that day, \$3.00 was donated to Operation Our Town. A total of 575

Child fingerprinting was also provided by PA State Police Trooper Jacob Rhymestine. Patrolman Samuel McCoy and K-9 Pongo from Altoona Police Department conducted a drug sniffing demonstration outside the main entrance for park guests to watch.

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



coupons were redeemed that day, resulting in a donation of \$1,725 to Operation Our Town!

Operation Our Town had a booth at the main entrance to the park and distributed "Choose Life, Not Drugs" and "See Something, Say Something" wristbands, drug prevention information, and provided a drug-free pledge banner to sign to get a free OOT t-shirt.

– Director of Marketing for DelGrosso's Park & Laguna Splash.

Mark your calendars for August 6, 2026 for the tenth annual Operation Our Town Day at DelGrosso's Park! We thank DelGrosso's Amusement Park for their continued partnership and support, and look forward to another fun-filled day!

We are family members and friends who have lost a loved one to addiction. We are here to share comfort and support.

**MEETING EVERY 2ND & 4TH THURSDAY 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM**

BlairDAP.org

We are family members & friends who have been adversely affected by the addiction of our loved ones. We are here to seek guidance & support.

**MEETING EVERY WEDNESDAY 5:30 PM – 7:30 PM**

BLAIR DRUG ALCOHOL PARTNERSHIPS  
Empowering Healthy Lifestyles

**Connecting you with resources in your community**

**pa211.org**

Dial 211 • Text Your Zip to 898-211

## Early Childhood Education Roundtable Report

By Amy Streightiff, OOT Early Childhood Roundtable Chair

In 2025, the Operation Our Town Early Childhood Education Roundtable began the year with discussions revolving around staffing retention, recruitment, and training, all hot topic items, not only for early childhood, but across industries in Blair County and the country. The Roundtable members have not only been discussing this topic at every meeting, but also living it real-time within their individual centers, schools, businesses, and organizations. Again, there is a great opportunity to leverage the other committees and resources of the Blair County Chamber of Commerce and the Altoona Blair County Development Corporation to determine opportunities to move the needle forward for all. In addition, it allows further chances to have business owners and early

childhood leaders discuss how they can work together for mutually beneficial results.



Early childhood education isn't just critical for the child and for families, but also for businesses and employers. Reliable access to childcare allows employees to maintain consistent work schedules, reduce absenteeism, and remain focused and productive on the job. Without proper

childcare support, working parents—especially mothers—are more likely to

leave the workforce or reduce their working hours, leading to increased turnover and higher hiring and training costs for employers. By recognizing the role of childcare in workforce stability, businesses can create an environment where employees feel supported, leading to improved job

satisfaction, and overall performance.

The Early Childhood Education Roundtable sponsored a Blair County Provider Forum with the help of Mrs. Barbara Crago at the First Evangelical Lutheran Church in October 2025. We invited all of the childcare providers in Blair County and had 28 participants with 19 childcare locations present. The providers talked about how recruitment and retention are an ongoing problem. They also talked about other areas of concern for them to keep their doors open and continue to provide quality childcare to the children of Blair County. They shared a lot of feedback with one another and with the Early Childhood Education Roundtable and they have agreed to continue meeting with their next meeting

retention, scheduled for January 2026.

Some of those participants have also shown interest in being a partner with the Early Childhood Education Roundtable, bringing fresh ideas and suggestions to the table.

Overall, the Operation Our Town Early Childhood Education Roundtable had a very active and productive year. We plan to continue working on ways to improve the initiatives of the early childhood education environment and the businesses of Blair County to provide safe and affordable childcare. Our door is always open and our meetings are bi-monthly on the first Thursday of the month starting in February 2026. Meetings are at 10:00am in the Blair Chamber offices at the Devorris Center for Business Development. Join us. We welcome your help!



### Eleventh Street Tower

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



### Green Avenue Tower

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



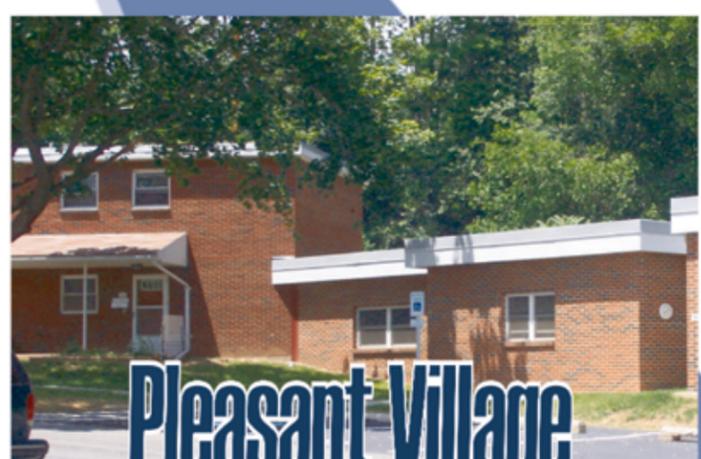
# Altoona Housing Authority

Providing safe and affordable housing for the City of Altoona, Pennsylvania  
Welcoming you to move towards a brighter future with the AHA  
2700 Pleasant Valley Boulevard, Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-2000



### Fairview Hills

1614 1st Street  
Altoona, PA 16601  
(814) 949-2016



### Pleasant Village

2700 Pleasant Valley Boulevard  
Altoona, PA 16602  
(814) 949-2010



Equal Opportunity Housing Provider

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.



# NAMI

## Blair County, PA

National Alliance on Mental Illness

**Support • Education • Advocacy**

We provide support, education, and advocacy for individuals and families affected by mental illness.

### FREE PROGRAMS & SERVICES:

- Family Support Groups
- Peer Support Groups
- Educational Presentations
- Community Resources

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

814-327-7083

The ROARING SPRING Family of Businesses  
*congratulates*  
**OPERATION OUR TOWN**  
 for helping make our



**COMMUNITY**

*a safer and better place to live!*




## LOCAL STUDENT WINS ESSAY CONTEST

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

**C**ongratulations to Kayla Shaulis, an 8th grader at Altoona Area Junior High School, whose essay was chosen out of 93 entries as the winner of the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest! Kayla received \$250 in gift cards to The Meadows Original Frozen Custard in Hollidaysburg.

Co-sponsors of the Essay Contest were the Altoona Mirror, Imler's Poultry, and The Meadows Original Frozen Custard in Hollidaysburg.

See below to view Kayla's winning essay on how to be a positive influence to help your friends avoid drug use:

When I was 10 years old, my uncle overdosed on drugs. He was struggling with addiction, but it never became bad until a year before

his death. When we found out about his addiction, he stopped talking to us because he chose drugs over family. He was a very successful nurse, had a happy family, was well loved, but then it all changed. He lost his job, got a divorce, and lost his relationship with his kids and family. I personally didn't believe the news when I first heard it. It was a shock to everyone in his life including the ones that he pushed away. I personally have seen how much of an impact it is on family when you choose to do drugs. I can be a positive influence to my friends by sharing my uncle's story with them so they make the right decision and share that addiction can happen to anyone.

Firstly, I can be a positive influence to my friends by

sharing my family story with them. That story of my uncle is very meaningful and explains how drugs can be so powerful over someone's life. Even though drugs can make you feel what you want to feel, it doesn't mean they are good. They are very deadly.

***If you want a high that doesn't involve drugs, there are many activities you can do including sports, band, crafting, and so much more. They create that feeling***

***you enjoy without using a substance.***

According to "National Library of Medicine," activities activate the same feeling as drug abuse. It increases in dopamine concentrations and dopamine receptor binding. By telling his story, I can help my friends realize that drugs don't solve problems. They just create more.

Secondly, getting addicted to drugs can happen to anyone.

***You might think that only certain people use them, but that is not the case. Someone that might have an amazing life could get sucked into using them if they are pressured by people.***

They also could want to use them to feel happy again. For example, my uncle was always happy, but he was hiding that he wasn't actually happy and was just putting a smile on his face. No matter who you are, addiction can happen. According to "Centers for Disease Control and Prevention," one and six Americans report that they are using drugs.

In conclusion, I can't control what anyone does with their life, but I can at least help support them, listen, and provide resources if they need help. I hope this story will have a positive impact on my friends and make them think twice before they try drugs. This is a reminder to live life to the fullest and never do anything that puts your life in danger. In the end, if one of my friends benefited from this, then my uncle's story did make a difference in someone's life. He will help people see how harmful drugs are and how much they affect people's lives.



Pictured from left to right: Barb Harpster (Media Consultant, Altoona Mirror), Joe Meadows (Partner, The Meadows Original Frozen Custard Hollidaysburg), Kayla Shaulis (Essay Contest Winner), Fred Imler Jr. (President, Imler's Poultry)

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**Updates - News - Events**

**JOIN OUR COALITION**  
 ENGAGE. EMPOWER. BELIEVE.



**BlairDAP.org**

**BE OUR PARENTS**  
 Don't Supply Us Alcohol



**WAIT!** It's Illegal to Purchase or Provide Alcohol for a Minor

**blairdap.org**

## OOT Mini-golf *Continued from A12*

together for a great cause.

Our Western theme was a hit, adding a fun and spirited atmosphere across the course. We are especially grateful to Christi Draves, General Manager of Lakemont Park, and the entire Lakemont Park staff for their exceptional hospitality and smooth coordination throughout the event. The Blair Chamber Young Professionals are proud to continue our partnership with Operation Our Town, and we remain committed to supporting their mission and the positive impact they have in Blair County.

We look forward to building on this year's momentum and growing the event again in the future.

We would also like to give special thanks to the other 2025 OOT Mini-Golf Tournament sponsors: McCartney's, Bellwood Eagles, Keller Engineers, Wagner & Finn Attorneys at Law, Kiwanis Club of Altoona, Gingrich Insurance, Reilly, Creppage & Co., Inc., Blair Companies Real Estate, UPMC Altoona, UDNI, and Rene Paul Frier.

A total of \$3,265 was raised from mini-golf teams and sponsorships! Please consider

supporting Operation Our Town through participating in any of our annual golf tournament events, as they have become a major source of funding for the organization. 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 email Nick Gordon at oot@operationourtown.org for more details on how you can support and get involved in this year's 2026 mini-golf tournament!

# OOT IN THE COMMUNITY



Former UFC Fighter Charlie Brenneman speaking to Hollidaysburg Jr & Sr High Students



Vendor Resource Tables at the 2025 Landlord Workshop



Red Ribbon Week Proclamation with HAHS



The Door - Operation Recreation & Inspiration



OOT Grant Training



Refuge Youth Network - Weekly Campus Meetings



OOT Appreciation Night



Blair County Head Start - Drive to Thrive Program



**KEEP IT SAFE.**



**KEEP IT GOING.**

OperationOurTown.org

## 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 ten 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 Area 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, 121 students signed up to participate in the program in the 2025-2026 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

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, 85 students signed up to

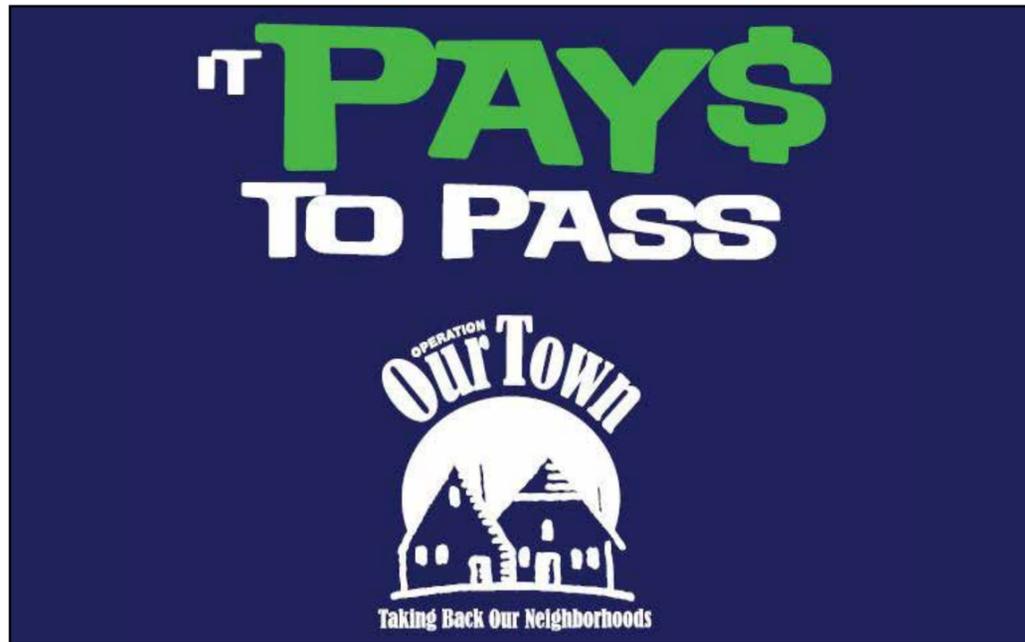
participate in the program in the 2025-2026 school year. The Senior High randomly tests four students each week. Erin Fogle, Hollidaysburg Senior High School Nurse who administers the drug testing for the Senior High

said, "The program has been a positive healthy behavior promotion aspect for the school environment. The students are enthusiastic about being called for testing and are thrilled with the Sheetz gift cards! Most of our students drive, so many of

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

We 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

cards for the 2025-2026 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!



**"IT PAYS TO PASS"**

OPERATION OurTown

Taking Back Our Neighborhoods

# ALTOONA MIRROR & OOT ESSAY CONTEST RUNNER-UP

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

Brynn Merrill, a 6th grader at Charles W. Longer Elementary School, Hollidaysburg Area School District, was chosen as the runner-up of the Altoona Mirror and Operation Our Town Essay Contest out of 93 entries! Brynn received a \$100

Hollidaysburg. See below to view Brynn's runner-up essay on how to be a positive influence to help your friends avoid drug use:

car accidents and violence combined? Not a lot of people are aware of this. It is our job to make everyone, and especially our friends, are aware of that. If you don't want to go through life without some of your best friends then we need to take action and raise awareness to people that drugs are a shortcut to nowhere.

Operation Our Town is taking a stand against drugs and we can help them. Here are some of my ideas on how to keep my friends far away from drugs. The first thing that you can try is to explain to them that their life matters to you. This is relevant because some people make themselves think they don't matter so going on drugs is okay, but it is never okay. Simply tell them that their life is too valuable to

waste on drugs. It may also be a good idea to elaborate on their view of what drugs are. You can do this by telling them all drugs are deadly, addicting, and promote crime which is dangerous. Tell them also that they can not be one and done with drugs. Telling people that their life matters to you can help them say no to drugs.

Another way to stop your friends from doing drugs is to motivate them to be cautious, not curious. This matters because picking curiosity about what happens when you take drugs over your safety is like choosing death over life. And if they are curious because their friends think drugs are cool and they want to be cool too, then you need to stop them before they are already in too deep. Ask them if their friend jumped off a boat into the big blue ocean, would you do it too, just for bragging rights. Be a friend and don't let them get peer

pressured into death. All they might need to know is that they are cool without doing drugs. If you help them make the decision of not doing drugs, then ultimately, they will have a happier and longer life.

In conclusion, if you want your friends to stay far away from drugs, then you need to take action to create change. 17% of humans fall under drug addiction in their lifetime. This means (as a kid) in my classroom (with an average of 30 kids) will have around 2-7 kids that fall under the spell of drugs.

I don't want to grow up in a generation where all my friends die because of drug addiction so I am going to take a stand before it is too late. People need to spread the word that drugs are a shortcut to nowhere, except maybe death. You can stop the problem of your friends doing drugs before it starts too. Say no to drugs!



Pictured left to right: Barb Harpster (Media Consultant, Altoona Mirror), Joe Meadows (Partner, The Meadows Original Frozen Custard Hollidaysburg), Brynn Merrill (Runner-up), Fred Imler Jr. (President, Imler's Poultry)

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

**Educate and Inform: Drugs are a Shortcut to Nowhere**  
Did you know that drugs kill more people yearly than



# 2025 OOT Golf Tournament Results

By Shawna Hoover, OOT Executive Coordinator

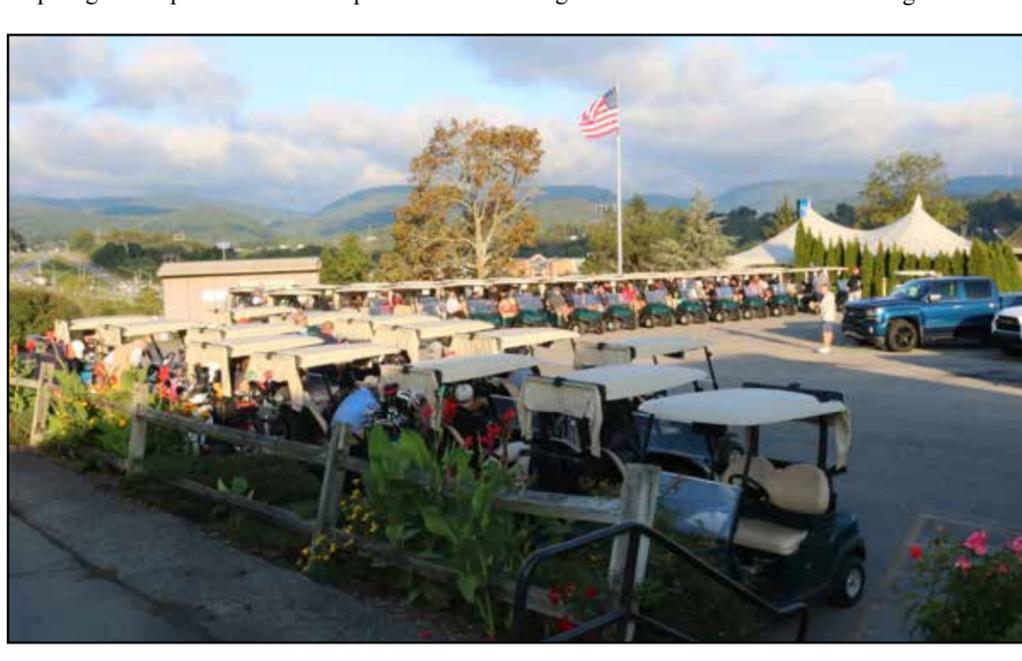
Operation Our Town held its 13th Annual Golf Tournament on September 15 & 16, 2025. The two-day event included the following events on Monday: "Tee Off Against Drugs" Student Golf Tournament at Park Hills Golf Club, Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park, and the "Our Town" Appreciation Night sponsored by Imler's Poultry at Park Hills Golf Club. The 13th 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 126 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.

At the beginning of the evening, Cheryl Johns was acknowledged with a plaque

for her upcoming retirement and efforts with the Housing Roundtable of Operation Our Town. The theme of the Appreciation Night this year included some interactive and inspiring examples from law



enforcement and prevention of weapons that are taken off the streets. The evening ended with a K-9 demo by Ptlm. Fox & K-9 Blue from the Altoona Police Department. The main Golf Tournament was held on Tuesday, September 16th and golfers had the opportunity to choose from an 8:00am or 1:00pm

programs were also highlighted at each table to show sponsors how their support is making an impact. Law Enforcement had equipment and displays throughout the patio areas of pictures from drug busts to

show the amount of drugs and why it's important to continue to support Operation Our Town. On the prevention side, three grant recipient organizations had some of their participants explain how the funds they receive from Operation Our Town are making an impact on the youth that they serve. OOT Grant Recipient organizations and

highlighted an OOT Grant Recipient organization and program.

The golf tournament included the "Golden Ticket" contest in which ten golfers in the morning session and ten golfers in the afternoon session had the opportunity to putt for a \$5,000 cash prize donation from Park Hills Golf Club. The winner of each session was

food sponsor on Tuesday and provided a delicious breakfast, lunch, and snacks on the golf course. City Beverage provided the beverages for golfers on the golf course. A tee sign at each hole on the golf course

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 44 golf teams participated! The winning golf teams were 1st Place: John Ventura, Matt Neumeyer, Harry Benjamin, Darryl Owens. 2nd Place: Michael Macionsky, Matthew Spangler, Mark Condrin, Ryan McNeely. 3rd Place: Cory Tubo, Matt Riley, Matt Colombo, Steve Milliron. The Closest to the Pin 2nd Shot winners on Hole 2 were Kim Kaschalk - 0'0" (in the hole) and Sam Piccioni - 0'0" (in the hole). The winning teams and skill winners all received special golf gifts! Please consider supporting Operation Our Town through our 2026 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!



# DON'T BRING DRUGS TO BLAIR COUNTY



# Department Updates: Year in Review

Continued from A7

## TYRONE BOROUGH

### Police Department – Chief Jessica Walk

- The Tyrone Borough Police Department, along with members of the Pennsylvania State Police and Blair County Drug Task Force, arrested 4 individuals in connection with 3 overdose deaths.
- The police department, along with members of the DTF, conducted drug investigations in Tyrone Borough and county-wide that were believed to be involved in drug activity. Several arrests were made with field contacts, search warrants, and traffic stops.
- The police department had 63 drug related arrests for the year.
- The police department handled 5,045 calls for service in 2025.
- The police department made

- The Department stays busy investigating various crimes such as Fraud, Sex Crimes, Child Line Investigations, Traffic Complaints, and Motor Vehicle Accidents.
- In 2025, the Department continued our partnership with the Public Traffic Safety program and participates in the statewide Aggressive Driving and Occupant Protection program and the Blair County DUI Task Force, participating in DUI Roving and DUI Checkpoints that focus on detecting and arresting impaired drivers.
- The North Woodbury Township Police would like to thank its citizens, community, and Operation Our Town for their continued support in keeping North Woodbury Township and Blair County a beautiful place



Photo Courtesy of North Woodbury Township Police Department

- 188 criminal arrests.
- The police department issued 118 traffic citations and conducted 736 traffic stops.
- The K9 was used for several K9 sniffs throughout Blair County.

to live and raise a family. We look forward to serving you in 2026!



## N. WOODBURY

### Police Department – Chief Lance Morris

- The Department consists of 1 Full-Time Officer and 3 Part-Time Officers. Officers handled 1,241 calls for service in 2025.

# Blair County Sheriff's Office

By Sheriff James E. Ott

**Name of your Sheriff:**  
Sheriff James E. Ott

### Names and Titles of Command and Supervisor Staff:

Chief Deputy Richard "RJ" Peo, Lieutenant Kermit Alwine, Sergeant Justin Bennet, Sergeant David Dauria, Corporal Trinitie Applas, Corporal Vinente Teano

The following reflect what full complement would be if fully staffed. Sadly, much of the law enforcement nationwide face this same crisis, as we continue to struggle to attract and sustain staffing. We are starting to see that slightly change with the slight increase in wages, with the hope of continuing to see that increase to a more level wage. We are grateful that the Commissioners have been willing to give this concern some consideration to start heading in the right direction.

- Number of full-time deputies: 26**
- Number of part-time deputies: 4**
- Number of K-9 deputies: 1**
- Number of office staff: 3**

### Ways Our Office Serves the Community:

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

## By the numbers

**Our office is proud to provide the following statistics for 2025: We had a significant increase in many of the stats compared to 2024.**

|  | Opened/New | Closed/Old  |
|--|------------|-------------|
| Civil and Criminal process received/served:    | 2,981      | 3,806       |
| Personal property eviction-writs, Garnishment: | 219        | 243         |
| Real estate executions:                        | 202        | 357         |
| Processed-issued license to carry firearms:    | 3,130 NEW  | 1,983 RENEW |
| Warrants served/processed:                     | 1,932      | 1,942       |
| Outstanding warrants:                          | 2,378      |             |
| License to sell firearms:                      | 16         |             |
| License to sell precious metals issued:        | 8          |             |
| Protection from Abuse (PFA) opened/processed:  | 1,357      | 1,311       |
| Inmate transports:                             | 4,089      |             |

**Our office provides additional safety steps by providing screening and security at the main entrance of the courthouse campus.**

### Here are the results of those actions:

- Number of citizens screened at entrance: **164,324**
- Number of items X-rayed: **129,846**
- Number of prohibited items declared: **224**
- Number of items intercepted by our deputies (drugs, weapons, etc.): **868**

have been able to restructure the process for securing weapons prior to screening at the entrance of the courthouse for more convenient and safer handling. We have also added a prescription medication drop off box inside the front entrance of the courthouse so that citizens and employees can have a safe and proper way of disposing unwanted or unused prescription medications.

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

### Special Accomplishments:

The office continues to participate in many of the countywide targeted impairment and drug activities, as well as traffic safety programs, as these all promote safer communities and roadways for the public. For the 8th consecutive year, our office has been recognized by AAA at the highest level (platinum) for our traffic

safety efforts in keeping our roadways safe. This comes from our involvement in traffic enforcement and community education efforts.

### Duties/Services the Sheriff's Office Provides:

Our office is responsible for prisoner transports for Common Pleas Court, safety and security of the courthouse campus, process and service PFA's, including weapons retention related to PFA's, real estate sales, and issue license to carry. We also conduct on view arrests for criminal violations, traffic enforcement efforts, serve warrants, and assist all other law enforcement agencies upon request.

We now have a QR Code that will take you to the online application process for license to carry (LTC) using your smart device:



# Operation Our Town Mini Golf Tournament



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

## Save the Date!

**Monday, September 14, 2026  
@ Lakemont Park**

**Keystone Falls – 18 hole Mini-Golf Course**



### Schedule of Activities:

- 4:00pm – Tee time for OOT Mini-Golf Tournament at Lakemont Park**
- 5:00pm – "Our Town" Appreciation Night at Park Hills Golf & Grille**

### Mini-Golf Sponsorships:

- Individual Mini-Golfer – \$50
- Mini-Golf Team – \$200
- OOT Grant Recipient/Non-profit Team – \$100
- Mini-Golf Tee Sign – \$100
- Team & Tee Sign Bundle – \$250

In Partnership With:



# 2025 Blair County Police Dept. Drug Collection Boxes Data

| LOCATION                    | 1ST QUARTER | 2ND QUARTER | 3RD QUARTER | 4TH QUARTER | TOTAL       |
|-----------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| ALTOONA POLICE DEPT.        | 61 lbs.     | 62.5 lbs.   | 130 lbs.    | 61 lbs.     | 314.5 lbs   |
| HOLLIDAYSBURG POLICE DEPT.  | 56 lbs.     | 38 lbs.     | 48 lbs.     | 48 lbs.     | 190 lbs.    |
| LOGAN TOWNSHIP POLICE DEPT. | 605 lbs.    | 15.5 lbs.   | 34.5 lbs.   | 0 lbs.      | 655 lbs.    |
| TYRONE POLICE DEPT.         | 53.8 lbs.   | 40.6 lbs.   | 56.3 lbs.   | 0 lbs.      | 150.7 lbs.  |
| TOTAL                       | 775.8 lbs.  | 156.6 lbs.  | 268.8 lbs.  | 109 lbs.    | 1310.2 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 thoughts on the matter, which is exactly why we want to share some of the highlights from our 2025 essay contest finalists. 2025 marked our eleventh year of holding the contest and we've received a cumulative total of 1,339 submissions, 93 of which came from this past year alone.

Zoe, an 8th grade student at Altoona Area Junior High School, shared an experience she had related to how drugs can impact a person and the importance of a support system, stating,

***"I saw a young man, probably in his early twenties, folded over with his back at an unnatural angle. I knew this was a result of fentanyl, as that was the most prevalent result of taking the dangerous drug. I wondered if he had anyone to guide him, to show him the dangers of drugs, or if he had been left to develop this habit on his own."***

Excerpt from essay submitted by AAJHS 8th grader, Zoe

Rebekah, a 12th grade student at Bishop Guilfoyle, brought up a great point about how we need to understand where people struggling with drug use are coming from, suggesting,

"You cannot help someone you do not truly understand. So many kids now come from hard backgrounds. They come

from peer pressure, poor family dynamics, and easy access. We cannot ignore this. It is not their fault, they are still a person to love, not a person to 'fix'. Understanding them is the pinnacle of being a steady presence and helping them out of it."

Jack, an 8th grade student



at Altoona Area Junior High School, stressed the importance of finding more positive things to do in lieu of drugs. Here's what he had to say about the role hobbies and other interests play when it comes to illegal drugs and peer pressure:

"When you do things you love to do, like sports or clubs, you produce dopamine which makes us feel happy and become more driven. It's kind of like a natural high that's even better than the fake alternative! As a

friend, it should be our duty to make sure our friends are doing things they love so that they will not have an interest in drugs at all."

Giavanna, an 8th grader at Altoona Area Junior High School, leaves us with an important realization that should incite positive action, saying,

"Drug abuse is a serious issue in today's world and will continue to escalate if everyone doesn't work harder to resolve it."

When we work together as a community, we can tackle big issues, little by little. 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 2026!

## Grant Recipients

Continued from A9

to assist women with essential necessities, including clothing, coats, socks, shoes, and personal hygiene items after successful completion of a treatment program.

Family Services Incorporated: Victim Services Program's FSI Justice Project

2022 Broad Avenue, Altoona (814) 944-3583  
Funding awarded will be used to cover court-ordered supervised visitation fees (which are often cost prohibitive for parents who are victims of domestic violence) for the safety and protection of children when domestic abuse is present between their parents.

Gloria Gates Memorial Foundation: Afterschool programs

118 East Spruce Court, Altoona (814) 949-8838  
Funding awarded will be used to fund educational materials, craft materials, prizes, field trips, special events, snacks, and individual assistance to youth-at-risk enrolled in three after school programs in underserved communities.

Health, Opportunity, Purpose, Empowerment (H.O.P.E. Drop In Center): Enhancing Community Engagement through Improved Audio-Visual Equipment

711 9th Avenue, Altoona (814) 515-1175  
Funding awarded will be used to assist with the purchase of a public address system (PA system) for use in daily operations, trainings, meetings, and other programming for attendees. This includes the purchase of on-stage stands, and a wireless microphone system.

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 supplies for their Blair County in-school groups, called Patch Clubs.

Northern Blair County Recreation Commission: Youth Sponsorship 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.

Overflow Church: N.E.X.T. (Nourish the soul, Educate the mind, Xpel the negative, Train the body)

127 5th Avenue, Altoona (814) 389-1774  
Funding awarded will be used to purchase student workbooks, food supplies, instructor guides, and handouts, expanding access to innovative education, personal, and workforce development to underserved communities.

Refuge Youth Network: Altoona After School Program

600 Ritts Road, Altoona (814) 889-9113  
Funding awarded will be used to purchase program supplies, transportation, tech/media resources, curriculum, and printing to aide in a growing after school program for teens in our community.

The Door Student Services, Inc.: The Door Stars Program

534 E. 5th Street, Bellwood (814) 215-1883  
Funding awarded will be used to provide the transportation, meals, and supplies costs for monthly field trips throughout the school year, aimed at mentoring youth towards completing their education and becoming productive community-oriented adults.

The Nehemiah Project: Kids Connect

1809 11th Street, Altoona (814) 201-2096  
Funding awarded will be used to provide meals, snacks, supplies for tutors, and crafts at the Kids Connect afterschool program, which provides a safe and nurturing environment for school-age children.

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

130 2nd Avenue, Altoona



2025 Operation Our Town Grant Recipients

Continued on A24

# 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 15, 2025 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, chips, and cookies for the

school's choice that is aimed at the education and prevention of drug use. The winning boys team was Bishop Guilfoyle Academy and the winning girls team was Hollidaysburg Area School District!

The winners of the Closest to the Pin on Hole 3 were Boys: Killian Worthing, Bellwood-Antis School District



quicker pace of play for the students, the event included a morning and afternoon shotgun start. A total of 46 teams (184 students) from 28 school districts participated! We would like to give special thanks to the 2025 OOT Student Golf Tournament sponsors: Sheetz, Performance Foodservice, Kimmen Plumbing & Heating, Nittany Building Specialties, 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

afternoon student golfers and coaches to take on their way home.

PtIm. Stephen Fox & K-9 Blue from Altoona Police Department conducted a drug sniffing demo for the students to watch during lunch, which provided the students with an example of how Operation Our Town funds benefit the community, since OOT helped to provide the start-up costs for the 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 to be used for a school program or designated to a charity of the

- 3'3" and Girls: Laila Panaro, Hollidaysburg School District - 12'10". The winners of the Closest to the Pin on Hole 11 were Boys: Landon Fisher, Forest Hills School District - 4'10" and Girls: Kiya Thomas, Penn Cambria School District - 5'4".

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

## Save The Date!

September 14 & 15, 2026

PARK HILLS GOLF & GRILLE, ALTOONA

### Schedule of Activities:

#### Monday, September 14th:

- 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 15th:

- 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 & Grille will be awarded to the winners of the putting contests!

#### Golf Sponsorship Levels:

- Gold - \$5,000**
  - 2 foursomes in tournament
  - Company banner displayed, sign on driveway
  - Company name listed on event materials
  - Specialty Gold & commemorative gifts for each golfer
- Silver - \$3,000**
  - 1 foursome in tournament
  - Company banner displayed, sign on driveway
  - Company name listed on event materials
  - Specialty Silver & commemorative gifts for each golfer
- Bronze - \$2,000**
  - 1 foursome in tournament
  - Company banner displayed, sign on driveway
  - Company name listed on event materials
  - 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 on event materials
- Closest to the Pin sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage at the sponsored pin
  - Company name listed on event materials
- Golf Cart sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage on golf cart (limit 4 sponsors)
  - Company name listed on event materials
- Hole in One sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage at the sponsored Par 3
  - Company name listed on event materials
- Refreshment Tent sponsor - \$1,000**
  - Signage on one of the 4 Refreshment Tents or provide your company's tent
  - Company name listed on event materials
- Reception sponsor - \$500**
  - Company banner displayed during event
  - Company name listed on event materials
- “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 on event materials
- Tee sponsor - \$150**
  - Signage at the sponsored tee
  - Company name listed on event materials

# LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT:

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

When we were giving our first-year report at a Blair County Chamber breakfast club meeting in 2008, attendees praised our first year of progress. But they also asked, "Where will Operation Our Town be in three years? Will this continue?"

Now it is 20 years later, and what an amazing 20 years it's been. Never would I have believed that we would be where we are today. One interaction with Attorney General Jim Walstrom and some meetings after that have led to a "spider web" effect, where thousands of people have now been aided by Operation Our Town. We've created solutions to respond to the numerous issues that the ever-changing drug trade throws at our communities.

Ongoing issues haven't changed and they always find different circumstances and levels of sophistication. It's like a game of Whack-a-Mole: We are able to stop one problem, but two more can pop up in its place. 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.

That's where we get into the

heart and soul of Operation Our Town – community outreach with investments of both time and money. We would never

we could ever imagine, thanks to the funding provided by so many. Whether it was a \$5 donation from a grateful elderly

reach success.

Many of our Steering Committee and original Founding Member donors have

to them and community family leaders, as they have all given us the ability to take back our neighborhoods.

To date, no other communities around the state have a program like ours. Our grants have helped law enforcement do their jobs safely and come home to their families every night, kept kids off the streets while investing in them socially and academically, and helped those who need treatment to give them hope for a brighter tomorrow.

Success for us is driven from the outside by the lives we change. Every person in Operation Our Town is important because each person moves our partnership forward. With you, we can continue to keep our community safe.

Blair County is a great place to be because of you. Thank you.



have the resources and grants to give if it weren't for volunteers, community leaders, and community agencies. We have been able to do so many great things and reach further than

woman for making her feel safe, a sponsorship for our annual golf tournament, or a donation from one of our Sustaining Member donors, all levels of contributions have helped us

been with the program for the full 20 years. With cumulative Sustaining Member pledges nearing almost \$200,000 each now, they are essential to this and every anniversary. Thanks



OperationOurTown.org  
814-296-8730

**TAKING BACK OUR NEIGHBORHOODS**

## From Chatbots to Choices: AI's Role in Continuing OOT's Mission

By Nick Gordon, OOT Community Outreach Coordinator

Artificial Intelligence (AI) refers to the development of computer systems capable of performing tasks that typically require human intelligence, such as learning from data, recognizing patterns, making decisions, and generating content. Fundamentally, AI encompasses technologies like machine learning, where algorithms improve through experience and processing natural language (which enables chatbots to understand and respond to user requests), and computer vision, which allows systems to interpret visual information. With today's capabilities, generative AI (Gen AI) can create text, images, code, and even simulate the real world.

In looking ahead to the continuation of OOT's mission going forward, considering AI's impact on preventing young people from substance use, as well as its impact on law enforcement, is paramount. When asked about AI's impact on youth in the coming years, Micah Marshall, who mentors youth throughout the county as the executive director of Refuge Youth Network, offered some key points, paraphrased here:

1. AI is already unlocking unprecedented creativity and productivity for teens.
2. Big risk: over-reliance on AI can stunt critical thinking, decision-making, and personal growth.
3. Other dangers: misinformation, content overload, and losing control of choices to algorithms.
4. In the coming years, AI will be deeply embedded in school, social life, and daily decisions.
5. Core message to teens: AI can't replace faith,

relationships, character, or real-life choices.

6. AI should help us save time and spark creativity, but not be the center of life.

7. Adults' role: teach boundaries, critical thinking, and wise use so that AI amplifies purpose instead of replacing it.

to assist in building materials that help differentiate/modify instruction to meet student needs, creating learning materials that match student's interests, making lessons more relevant and engaging."

Furthermore, he went on to discuss students taking ownership for their own

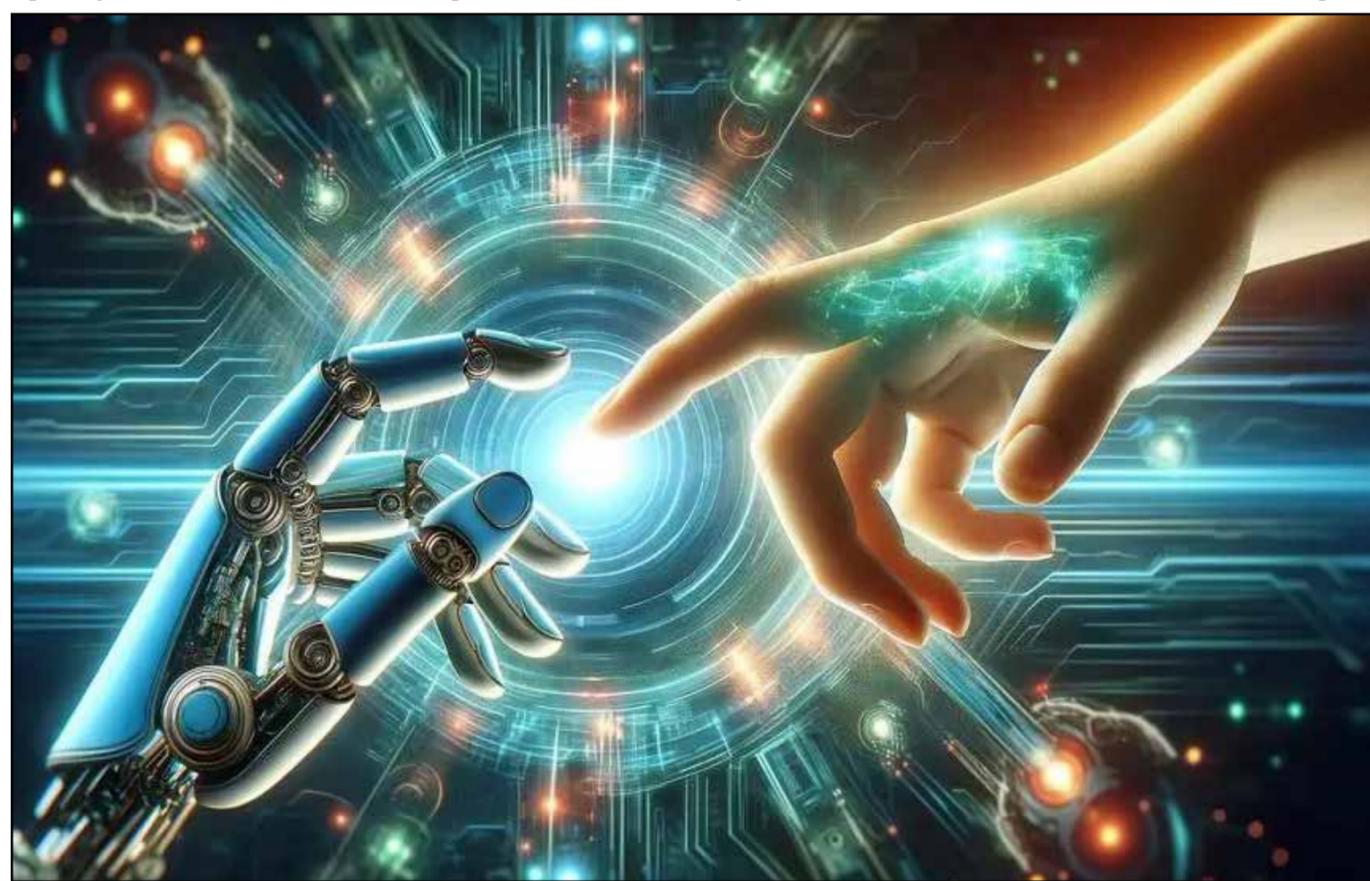
possible outcomes for students going forward, equipping them with the knowledge and wisdom to know how and when to utilize AI tools.

Another area relevant to continuing Operation Our Town's mission is law enforcement. Tom Brandt, Regional Director of the

quality, and connecting evidence faster than humans.

· Surveillance and Monitoring: Computer vision detects suspicious activities, weapons, or individuals in real-time from camera feeds.

· Predictive Policing: Analyzing historical data to forecast crime hotspots,



In terms of AI's increasing role in education for young people, there are challenges and opportunities to consider that ensure these students are equipped with the knowledge to use tools effectively without overly relying on them. Dr. Nicholas Caminiti, Altoona Area School District Director of Instructional Technology, weighed in on this topic, stating, "We are instructing teachers on ways to use [AI] as a tool

learning, noting, "Students are being taught age-appropriate digital citizenship lessons which includes learning ways to use Gen AI... to enhance the student's original work as opposed to offloading the assignment to Gen AI. Gen AI is going to require students to use critical thinking skills as they evaluate information and ideas presented by AI generated materials." The hope is that this holistic approach will ensure the best

Pennsylvania Office of Attorney General's Bureau of Narcotics Investigations and Drug Control, offered some insight into how AI is impacting and will likely continue to impact law enforcement. He believes it will boost efficiency in the following areas:

- Investigations and Data: Analyzing vast data sets, identifying patterns, transcribing audio/video, enhancing image/video

helping police agencies deploy patrols proactively.

· Officer Efficiency: Generative AI drafts police reports from bodycam video, freeing up officer time.

Whether tackling issues through the lens of prevention or law enforcement, Operation Our Town is confident that we can increase our positive impact on the community in the years ahead.



**SHEETZ IS OPEN  
24/7/365!**

# FROM BLIGHT TO BRIGHT!

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

The City of Altoona was busy in 2025. It was our first full year with the newly adopted comprehensive plan: "All Together Altoona" and the new Zoning and SALDO (subdivision and land development) ordinances to streamline the process of building and renovating city housing. The City's Redevelopment Authority (RA) and Land Bank (LB) are working hard, rehabilitating eligible properties and acquiring vacant land to build the housing that we've been lacking for decades, such as townhouses, duplexes, affordable, and workforce housing.

The City has implemented several new initiatives and continued using past approaches in our fight against blight, recognizing the challenges and obstacles faced by many property owners in the City. Not only does blight create a negative effect and appearance in our neighborhoods, it also impacts adjacent property owners and the community as a whole and can result in loss of real estate tax revenue. Our Department of Codes and Inspections continues to identify blight and structures needing repair and maintenance. While the goal is voluntary compliance, significant resources are dedicated to conduct enforcement actions against

non-compliant property owners. The City provides resources to help owners achieve compliance through various County-assisted program funding.

One of the most significant efforts of 2025 was the re-establishment of the City's Blighted Property Review Committee (BPRC), a goal in the City's Comprehensive Plan. Code Enforcement Officers identify properties in need of repairs or structures that require demolition, and present to the BPRC for recommendation of rehabilitation or demolition. If rehabilitation is determined, the City's Redevelopment Authority becomes involved in the process of acquiring the property. Identifying properties in need of repair that can be rehabilitated rather than razed is essential in preserving our tax base. These combined efforts will undoubtedly help strengthen our neighborhoods through revitalization.

A newly-created Blight Manager/Codes Supervisor position was created and filled. This position, both administrative and boots-on-the-ground in nature, serves as a link between Code Enforcement Officers and City committees and boards related to blight and code enforcement. This position works to research and locate absentee property owners,



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proactively survey structures for rehabilitation, and assist with structures that require demolition, primarily homes that were deteriorated and blighted. We are pleased to report that seven new single-family homes and two multi-unit homes were constructed in 2025, the highest in over five years. Assisted by the Codes Department staff and in-house Building Inspector, applicants could apply for permits, request timely inspections, and receive final approvals for occupancy.

The Land Bank, now fully operational, has identified one particular property to redevelop using the tools available to us as a way to fight blight and save a residential neighborhood. This will be the first project we've undertaken where the RA/LB will develop the property for residential use. We are also currently in the process of redeveloping three single-family, affordably priced homes that will be available to the public in 2026.

We are working to redevelop a property in the

downtown area for mixed-use commercial development, as well as higher end residential, that could potentially serve the housing needs of doctors or traveling nurses from UPMC. In 2026, we will be working to add new housing types to create a more robust housing portfolio to offer residents looking to upgrade or move into the City for the first time. These efforts reflect the commitment of the City to address and eliminate blight, making our City bright once again.

## Grant Recipients

Continued from A20

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.

The Salvation Army – Altoona Worship & Service Center: Unsheltered Assistance Programs

1813 6th Avenue, Altoona (814) 215-1883

Funding awarded will be used to provide meals, clothing, laundry & shower supplies, and transportation for unsheltered individuals to help them secure permanent residence and provisions that will help them not revert to negative options.

Tyrone-Snyder Public Library: Read to Rise

1000 Pennsylvania Avenue, Tyrone (814) 682-1016

Funding awarded will be used to provide books, audiobooks, program materials & incentives, signage and marketing to empower teens with non-fiction resources that support drug abuse prevention, mental health, crime awareness, and career readiness, helping them make informed, positive choices for their futures.

United Way of the Southern Alleghenies' Family Resource Center: Parents as Teachers & Parent Education Classes

208 Hollidaysburg Plaza, Duncansville (814) 317-5108

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.

**2026 OPERATION OUR TOWN FUNDRAISER AT PNG FIELD**

**THURSDAY, JUNE 25 – 6:30PM**

**Altoona Curve vs. Reading Fightin Phils**  
**BENEFITING OPERATION OUR TOWN**



**Operation Our Town**  
Taking Back Our Neighborhoods

|   |                               |
|---|-------------------------------|
| <b>BUSINESS PACKAGE</b>   | <b>\$550 (\$100 Donation)</b> |
| Share your product or service with thousands of Curve fans on Operation Our Town Night!   |                               |
| <b>PLATINUM PACKAGE</b>   | <b>\$350 (\$75 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 25. |                               |
| <b>GOLD 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 25 Grandstand game tickets for June 25.   |                               |
| <b>SILVER 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 15 Grandstand game tickets for June 25.   |                               |
| <b>BRONZE PACKAGE</b>   | <b>\$7 (\$1 Donation)</b>     |
| Receive a public address/scoreboard recognition as a community supporter and 10 Grandstand game tickets for June 25.  |                               |
| <b>INDIVIDUAL GRANDSTAND TICKETS</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    American Express

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

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

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# for being

# part of the

# solution.



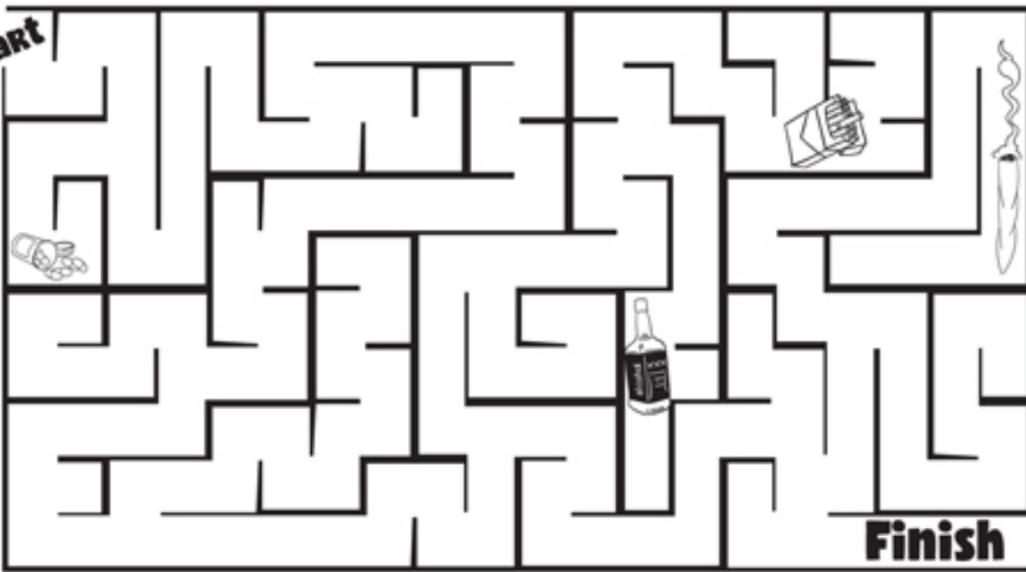
# Kidz Korner

Color Me!



## A-Maze-ing Drug-Free Path

Avoid the dangers of drugs and find your way to a drug free lifestyle!



Unscramble the words below to learn how to stay healthy and drug-free!

FERR DGEU \_\_\_\_\_

LEHTHA \_\_\_\_\_

CSIOHCE \_\_\_\_\_

AFSE \_\_\_\_\_

YDBO \_\_\_\_\_

TSRONG \_\_\_\_\_

AYNSO \_\_\_\_\_

WOPRE \_\_\_\_\_

ATCVIITY \_\_\_\_\_

## Word Search

### Law Enforcement Career

Communicate  
Complaints  
Narcotics  
Subpoena  
Emergency  
Children  
Citation  
Military  
Firearms  
Training  
Academy  
Uniform  
Testify  
Respond  
Officer  
College  
Protect  
Public  
Canine  
Police  
Career  
Radio  
Court  
Rules  
Taser  
Squad  
Serve  
Laws

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



# 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!

On-site Demos Subject to Change.

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

### \$25 ALL-DAY FUN PASS

For each Coupon redeemed, \$3 will be donated back to Operation Our Town!

Coupon Valid August 6, 2026 Only. Not Valid With Any Other Offer. DelGrosso's Park is Cashless.

All-Day Fun Pass Regular Price: \$39.00 ea.

PR - Operation Our Town Day

995-7

MyDelGrossoPark.com Print and Bring this Coupon or Show on Mobile Device Exits 41 & 45 Off 1-99

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# 20 Years of Operation Our Town Continued from A1

has a two-pronged approach in which law enforcement and prosecutors “weed” out criminals who engage in violent crimes and drug trafficking, and “seed” in human services that encompass prevention, intervention, treatment, and neighborhood revitalization.

The mission of Operation Our Town is to facilitate partnerships between community and business to fight drug abuse and crime through proven law enforcement, treatment, and prevention techniques. Operation Our Town accepts donations from businesses, community groups, and individuals, and uses them to fund programs aimed at reducing both the supply and demand for illegal drugs. Funds are distributed to qualified organizations through one prevention grant cycle each year to programs that are aimed at preventing and/or reducing drug abuse and/or crime in Blair County. Funds are also distributed through an annual grant to the Blair County Drug Task Force to reimburse overtime for special operations (search warrants, tactical details, investigations) and support equipment.

Since 2007, OOT has distributed over \$4.3 million in annual grants to support drug enforcement operations and equipment, and fund prevention programs across Blair County. Because of this funding, Operation Our Town has been able to fund 347 total prevention grants to 81 non-profit organizations, schools, and government agencies that have served over 129,000 individuals.

Operation Our Town

operates by supporting roundtables that each focus on a critical area in Blair County, including: Community Revitalization, Early Childhood Education, Faith-based, Housing, K-12 Education, Law Enforcement, Marketing, Northern Blair, and Pharmacy. Below are some highlights from our Roundtable committees:

## Community Revitalization Roundtable:

- Redevelopment Authority is rehabilitating 3 houses.
- New sidewalks and curbs have been installed on Margaret Avenue and Broad Avenue.
- Park Place apartments have been completed.
- Purchased property for a new park on Beech Avenue.
- 60+ properties have been demolished to-date.
- New trails have been put in at Garfield Park.
- Replaced playground equipment at 10th Street Park.

## Early Childhood

### Education Roundtable:

- Held two Early Childhood Education Summits in 2012 and 2018 to bring awareness to the business community of the importance of early childhood education.
- Held a mini-summit in 2014 with business leaders that participated in site visits at early learning centers.
- Held an Early Childhood Symposium in 2022 to identify and address specific challenges caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Held an Early Childhood/Elementary K-6 Symposium in 2024 to work on better coordination and collaboration between

public schools and early childhood providers.

- Developing grant parameters to support early childhood programs and providers with financial assistance from an Early Childhood Investment Fund.

## Faith-based Roundtable:

- Held 8 Lunch & Learn workshops on the following topics: Mental Health Issues; Accessing Services; Prison Ministry; Drug & Alcohol Treatment & Recovery; Domestic Violence; Child Sexual Abuse; Children of Incarcerated Parents; and the Opioid Epidemic Increasing the Need for Foster Care.
- Working with churches and faith-based groups to identify the most urgent needs in the community and connect those impacted by addiction and homelessness with food resources, shelter, clothing, and support services.

## Housing Roundtable:

- Held 13 Landlord Educational Workshops for landlords, property managers, and agencies.
- Created a Landlord Resource Guide that is distributed to workshop attendees.

## K-12 Education

### Roundtable:

- All Blair County Schools continue to utilize the Safe2Say hotline run by the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. This anonymous 24-hour hotline enables anyone to call in a concern regarding school safety or the personal safety of a student who may be considering self-harm.
- Mental health counselors, screeners,

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

## Law Enforcement

### Roundtable:

- Because of Operation Our Town funding, the Blair County Drug Task Force has been able to:
  - o Conduct over 585 special operations (search warrants, tactical details, investigations).
  - o Generate over 1,300 new drug cases.
  - o Conduct over 2,000 arrests.
- OOT has provided K-9 grants to the Altoona Police Department, Blair County Sheriff's Office, Logan Township Police Department, and Tyrone Police Department. Hollidaysburg Police Department will receive a K-9 grant in 2026 to purchase a K-9 trained in narcotics detection.

## Marketing Roundtable:

- Produced 32 Public Access Shows about OOT Roundtables, community projects, and events.
- Created 5 OOT bus wrap designs on Amtran buses.
- Created 10 OOT billboard designs that have been posted throughout Blair County.
- Published 14 OOT Annual Reports that have been distributed throughout Blair County.
- Held 11 Essay Contests for youth in 6th-12th grade on the importance of peer pressure and being drug-free.

## Northern Blair Roundtable:

- Held 5 educational workshops in Tyrone on the following topics: Suicide Prevention; Landlord Educational Workshop; Active Shooter & Stop the Bleed; Understanding Addiction, Mental Health & Co-occurring Disorders; and “My Ascension” documentary film screening and panel discussion on mental health and suicide.
- Partnered with the Tyrone community to support 9 clean-up days.
- Created a Northern Blair Resource Guide.

## Pharmacy Roundtable:

- Held two interdisciplinary panels on drug diversion in 2010 and 2012 to educate the public on the use and abuse of prescription drugs.
- Piloted a counseling and disposal initiative at 6 Blair County pharmacies.
- Published 17 Pharmacy Roundtable newsletters that are distributed to Blair County pharmacies.
- Promote the 15 permanent Medication Collection Boxes in Blair County.

As the OOT Board of Directors stated, *“Our battle is not over. If we let our guard down, we will find ourselves back where we started 20 years ago. As business leaders, we must continue to provide the leadership and resources necessary to continue to protect our children, our neighborhoods, and our quality of life. Our communities’ future depends on it.”*

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## 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. A major benefit of the roundtable meetings over the past year has been the collaboration and networking that participants experience.

The Northern Blair Roundtable is a network of business, education, social services, church and civic organizations who come together monthly to better the community. The group has been working on learning more about the Northern Blair

community, programs and services available, and identifying priority needs. Meetings are held monthly at The Bull Pen restaurant in Tyrone.

The Roundtable has also traditionally held a yearly spring workshop in Tyrone. Topics have included Bullying/Suicide Prevention; Landlord Tenant Regulations; Stop the Bleed/Active Shooter; and Understanding Addiction, Mental Health, and Co-occurring Disorders. This past year, we decided to try something that we hadn't done before, in place of the “traditional” workshop.

In March 2025, our roundtable

hosted a screening of the documentary film “My Ascension” to raise awareness and spur discussion around mental health and suicide prevention. This screening was held at The Bull Pen restaurant in Tyrone and was well attended by the community, with approximately 20 attendees. A panel discussion was held after the film and resource information was provided by mental health related organizations.

Operation Our Town also supports Northern Blair County through their prevention grant cycle. Grants were awarded in the 2025 Prevention Grant Cycle to

the following organizations and programs in Northern Blair County: The Tyrone-Snyder Public Library received a grant for their Read to Rise program to empower teens with non-fiction resources that support drug abuse prevention, mental health, crime awareness, and career readiness. The Northern Blair Rec Center received a grant for their Youth Sponsorship Program to work with at-risk students or those in need by providing programming/activities that promote a healthy lifestyle. The Door received a grant for their Stars Program, which provides monthly field trips throughout the school year,

aimed at mentoring youth towards completing their education and becoming productive, community-oriented adults. The goal of this funding is to prevent drug use and the resulting crime in communities in and around Blair County.

For 2026, we are brainstorming ideas on how to more easily and effectively connect individuals in Northern Blair County with resources. We are also planning to work closely with the new borough council members and mayor of Tyrone on landlord tenant issues, drugs, and homelessness.

# 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\*  
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 First National Bank  
 Jeff S. Long Construction  
 John & Doug Wolf\*  
 Lee Industries, Inc.\*  
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 McLanahan Corporation\*  
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 AGSM Ventures, LLC  
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 Allegheny Lutheran Social Ministries  
 Allegheny Mountain Kennel Club  
 Allegheny Mountain Spring Water  
 Allegheny Mountains Convention & Visitors Bureau  
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 Allegheny Supply  
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 Altoona Center for Clinical Research, PC  
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 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.  
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 Blue Knob Valley Chainsaw Carving Competition  
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 Central PA Cardiology, LLC  
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 Fraternal Order of Police Bald Eagle Lodge #51  
 Fraternal Order of Police Lodge #8  
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 Freedom RV Rentals, LLC  
 Fringe Benefit Group  
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 Joel C. Seelye, Grabill & Seelye, PLLC  
 Johnny's U Pull It  
 Johnston Mechanical, LLC  
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 JP Morgan Chase & Co.  
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 Keystone Custom Homes  
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 Kranich's, Inc.  
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 Mike Servello Garage, Inc.  
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 Moore Power Sales  
 Morrisons Cove Herald  
 Moses & Associates, P.C.  
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 Mountain Lodge #281 – Free & Accepted Masons  
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 Mount Aloysius College – Physical Therapy Club  
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 NAMI PA Blair County  
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 Tippy Tulip, LLC  
 Tomassetti 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  
 Truist Bank  
 Tyrone Area Community Organization  
 Tyrone Area Education Association  
 Tyrone Area School District  
 Tyrone Hospital  
 United Datacom Networks, Inc.  
 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  
 Virago Beauty, LLC  
 Wachovia Securities  
 Wagner & Finn  
 Warren A. Gingrich Agency, Inc.  
 Webber Advisors  
 Webber Seltzer Wealth Advisors  
 Wells Fargo Advisors, LLC  
 Willard Family Foundation  
 WJAC-TV  
 Xanitos, Inc.  
 Young, Oakes, Brown & Co.  
 YTI Career Institute – Altoona  
 Zook's Masonry, LLC

Individuals: 274 individual citizens.

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Professional and OOT Titles

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- Greg Drew**  
 Retired President, Value Drug Company - OOT Board Member

- Philip Devorris**  
 President & CEO, Blair Companies  
 OOT Secretary
- Shawna Hoover**  
 Executive Coordinator
- Nick Gordon**  
 Community Outreach Coordinator

### STEERING COMMITTEE

- |   |  |  |   |
|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Amy Streightiff</b><br>Director, Early Learning Resource Center<br>Co-Chairperson, OOT Early Childhood Education Roundtable  | <b>Rick Seipp</b><br>President, Value Drug Company<br>Chairperson, OOT Pharmacy Roundtable                             | <b>Donna Gority</b><br>Former Blair County Commissioner<br>OOT Government Representative                         | <b>Cheryl Johns</b><br>Executive Director, Altoona Housing Authority<br>Co-Chairperson, OOT Housing Roundtable                        |
| <b>Tom Brandt</b><br>Regional Director, PA Office of Attorney General, Bureau of Narcotics Investigations & Drug Control<br>Chairperson, OOT Law Enforcement Roundtable | <b>Brian Durbin</b><br>Partner, Durbin Companies<br>Co-chairperson, OOT Housing Roundtable                             | <b>Joseph Grappone, Esq.</b><br>Grappone Law Office<br>Solicitor   | <b>Matthew Fox</b><br>VP Business Retention & Expansion, ABCD Corporation<br>Co-Chairperson, OOT Early Childhood Education Roundtable |
| <b>JR DiAndrea</b><br>President, DiAndrea Media, Inc.<br>Chairperson, OOT Marketing Roundtable  | <b>Zane Gates, MD</b><br>Gloria Gates CARE<br>OOT Health Representative  | <b>Lisa Hann</b><br>Executive Director, Family Services Incorporated<br>Chairperson, OOT Faith-based Roundtable  | <b>Matt Pacifico</b><br>Mayor, City of Altoona<br>Chairperson, OOT Community Revitalization Roundtable                                |
|   | <b>Edward DiSabato</b><br>Superintendent, Bellwood-Antis School District<br>Chairperson, OOT K-12 Education Roundtable | <b>Sue Griep</b><br>Former Blair County Victim/Witness Coordinator<br>Chairperson, OOT Northern Blair Roundtable | <b>Judy Rosser</b><br>Executive Director, Blair Drug & Alcohol Partnerships<br>OOT Human Services Representative                      |

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