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# Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

## **May is Mental Health Awareness Month**

Mental Health Awareness Month has been observed in May in the United States since 1949. It is a month of activities and events to raise awareness about mental health and spark conversation to fight the stigma surrounding mental illness. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) states that nearly 60 million Americans experience a mental health condition every year.

Regardless of race, age, religion or economic status, mental illness impacts the lives of at least one in four adults and one in ten children across the United States. These are people needing help, hope and a community that will support them and their families. The Blair County Chapter of NAMI provides many resources, including both structured and casual support groups, school and community based presentations and courses for those experiencing mental health issues and their families.

Blair County NAMI also works with the H.O.P.E. Drop-In Center. This Center, located at 711 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Altoona, provides a safe place for promoting wellness, purpose and empowerment for those in recovery. They offer individual and group support, as well as activities such as yoga, craft and game nights and other activities to help make connections and teach coping techniques.

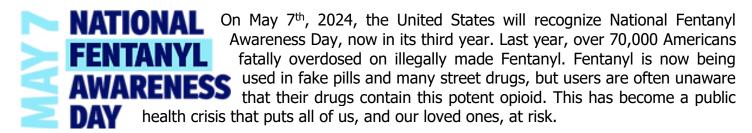


You can learn more about the Blair County NAMI by visiting <a href="https://www.namiblaircountypa.org">www.namiblaircountypa.org</a>

If you would like to know more about the H.O.P.E. Drop-In Center, visit <a href="https://www.hopedropin.org">www.hopedropin.org</a>

Once again, this year, City Hall's lights will be green, the ribbon color for Mental Health Awareness, during the month of May in support of this initiative and we encourage other businesses, homes and agencies to join us in showing support for this critical health issue.

#### **National Fentanyl Awareness Day**



The National Institute on Drug Abuse reports that the rising overdose rates are not being driven by commonly doctor-prescribed opioids, but instead by the use of illegally made fentanyl. Fentanyl is 50 times stronger than heroin and 200 times stronger than morphine. It is often added to other drugs because of its extreme potency, making the drugs more powerful and more deadly.

Naloxone, (brand name Narcan), is the only way to reverse a fentanyl overdose. It is a nasal spray medicine that can be given to anyone showing signs of an opioid overdose, such as unconsciousness, sleepiness, or shallow breathing. Naloxone is safe, only reversing overdoses in people with opioids in their system, with no effects on a person without opioids in their system. Any person or business can keep a dose on hand and administer it without fear of legal action through the Good Samaritan Statute.

Narcan is available free through agencies such as Families United for Change (Blair County Narcan Squad) and the Blair County Drug and Alcohol Program. To learn more, or to obtain Narcan for your home or business, go to <a href="https://www.familiesunitedforchange.org">www.familiesunitedforchange.org</a> or <a href="https://www.familiesunitedforchange.o

#### Blair Senior Services, Inc. Volunteers

Blair Senior Services, Inc. is actively recruiting volunteers to serve a minimum of five (5) hours per week as a Classroom Foster Grandparent or Senior Companion Volunteer. The Classroom Foster Grandparent Volunteers spend one-on-one time with children in a school setting, providing a positive, lasting impact in the lives of those they serve in schools and daycares throughout Blair County.

Senior Companion Volunteers spend one-on-one time with individuals 60 years of age and older, in their homes and senior centers, helping to maintain independence and increase socialization. In addition to helping others, these volunteers also improve their own lives by staying active and healthy through volunteer service.

The Foster Grandparent and Senior Companion Programs offer benefits that include a tax-free stipend (that does not affect any other income-based assistance), paid time off, paid holidays and mileage reimbursement, public transportation assistance and other benefits. Individuals age 55 and older are encouraged to apply.

For more information, or for an application, please call the Blair Senior Services, Inc. Volunteer Program Office at (814) 946-1235.



### **Altoona Salvation Army Hygiene for Humanity**



Citizens of our City may be aware of the many services that the Altoona Salvation Army provides, including Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners and gifts, weekly services, and their food pantry. But did you know that they also have a Hygiene for Humanity Program? They maintain a pantry of hygiene items to be distributed to community members in need throughout the year.

Currently, they are collecting items that are urgently needed, especially as the summer months are approaching. If you, your family, friends or co-workers would like to donate, items can be dropped off at the Altoona Salvation Army at 1813 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, Altoona, Tuesdays through Fridays from 10 AM – 2 PM. Most needed items include:

Deodorant (Men's & Women's) Soap (Liquid or bar)

Shampoo Disposable razors Hair Brushes and Combs

Toothbrushes Toothpaste Lotion Mouthwash Floss Lip balm

Feminine products Hand cream

THANK YOU for helping to support this immense need in our City through the Altoona Salvation Army.

#### **Altoona Farmers' Market**

On Thursday, May 16th, the Altoona Farmers' Market will open for the season. This is a great opportunity to support local farmers and small businesses and to purchase fresh produce, baked goods, jams, jellies and much more. Rispoli's Produce and Blue Barn Farms will be returning, along with vendors of flowers, eggs, soaps, microgreens and honey, among others.

The Market will be open from 11:00 AM until 2:00 PM and is again located in Heritage Plaza in downtown Altoona. The Market will be open every Thursday from May 16<sup>th</sup> through October 24<sup>th</sup>.

If you are a vendor who would like to secure a space in the market, or just need more information, please contact Cheryl Smearman at <a href="mailto:cheryl@



#### **Memorial Day Parade**



The 2024 Memorial Day Parade in Altoona will be held on Monday, May 27<sup>th</sup> at 10:30 AM. The parade is sponsored by the Blair County War Veterans Council and will form at 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 17<sup>th</sup> Street and follow a route to 12<sup>th</sup> Street to 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue to 15<sup>th</sup> Street.

Immediately following the parade, there will be a service at the Robert E. Laws Veterans Mall on 11<sup>th</sup> Avenue and 14<sup>th</sup> Street. Please come out to honor the men and women who paid the ultimate sacrifice to protect and defend our Country and its freedoms, and to show support and gratitude for those still serving and all surviving veterans.

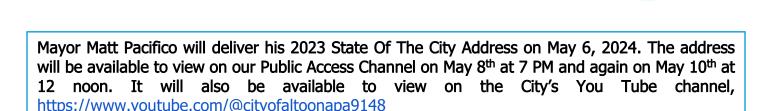
Prior to Parade day, on Sunday evening, May 26<sup>th</sup>, Levity Brewing Co. will host a Memorial Day Eve Concert with Autumn Rising, at Heritage Plaza in downtown Altoona. The concert begins at 7:00 PM, ending at 10:00 PM.

#### **Prospect Pool Opens for Memorial Day Weekend**

Prospect Pool is getting ready to open for another fun Summer season! The pool will be open for Memorial Day weekend, May 25<sup>th</sup> through 27<sup>th</sup> and then will close from May 28<sup>th</sup> - 31<sup>st</sup>. Summer hours are 12 Noon to 7 PM, beginning June 1<sup>st</sup> when the pool will be open six days a week, through the middle of August (dates to be determined and information will be available on the website).

The pool will be staffed by licensed and certified lifeguards and will have concessions and security staff. The season promises to bring lots of fun, special activities and, hopefully, much sunshine.

2024 individual tickets and season passes are being sold by the Blair Regional YMCA. For prices and to purchase tickets, visit <a href="https://www.blairregionalymca.org">www.blairregionalymca.org</a>



## Altoona's Heritage

May is Jewish American Heritage Month. This month we highlight;

#### Jewish American Heritage in Altoona

The earliest recorded Jewish resident of Pennsylvania was in Philadelphia in 1703. Jews later came here from other colonies, including New York and Georgia, and next settled in Lancaster, PA., including landowners, merchants, and Dr. Isaac Cohen, the earliest Jewish physician in Pennsylvania. In the early 1800's, Jewish Americans moved into the areas of Reading, Scranton and Wilkes-Barre. These early Jewish pioneers were primarily of German and Dutch descent.

The movement of Jewish communities to the West came as the result of the arrival of German and Polish Jewish immigrants, who were in Pittsburgh as early as 1804, but did not have an actual community until 1830. The expulsion of Jews from Russia in 1882 was the occasion for many Jews to settle in some of the smaller cities in Pennsylvania, including Altoona. Today, they constitute the majority of the Jewish population.

Currently, Altoona is the home of the very active Greater Altoona Jewish Federation and two synagogues, Temple Beth Israel (founded in 1874) and Agudath Achim (founded in 1883). The Jewish Memorial Center (JMC), which opened in 1949, serves the general community as a sports facility (mainly basketball) and for community events. Over the years, thousands of local children have used this facility, and many continue to utilize it today.



The beautiful and precious Torah, attached here, was hidden by the Jews of Czechoslovakia during the Holocaust. It was buried to save it from desecration and destruction by the Nazi invaders. It was discovered many years after the war and then taken to London, where it was repaired and restored. The Altoona Jewish Community, through the Federation, sponsored the restoration and transportation of this document to Altoona. This Torah is proudly placed and displayed alternately in the Arks at Agudath Achim Congregation and Temple Beth Israel.



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