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**December
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Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

Holiday Fire Safety

During the holiday season, the number one cause of fires is open flames and lit candles. Electrical fires account for about half of Christmas tree fires, and other fires are caused by cooking incidents and space heaters. Here are some hints for a safe holiday:

Keep candles at least one foot away from flammable items or surfaces, in plain sight and away from any area where they can be knocked over. Blow them out before leaving your home or going to bed, or use LED lights instead.

Keep live trees well-watered. If using an artificial tree, choose one labeled as "fire resistant". Keep trees and other flammable decorations at least three to six feet away from any heat source, such as a fireplace, furnace or space heater. Turn off any holiday lights before leaving the house or going to bed. Make sure trees and other holiday decorations do not block any exits.

Use surge protectors for multiple electrical devices. Never connect multiple extension cords together and always check for frayed wires. Make sure to use indoor and outdoor lights only as directed.

Do not leave cooking equipment unattended and double check that all burners and ovens have been turned off. Check smoke detectors to be sure they are working properly.



**HAVE A SAFE
AND HAPPY
HOLIDAY
SEASON!**

Energy Assistance in Altoona

As we approach the cold winter months in central Pennsylvania, utility bills rise and, for many people, this can be a hardship, especially as rising prices continue to be an issue everywhere in the U.S. There are many agencies serving the City of Altoona that can provide energy assistance based on different eligibility guidelines. If you, or someone you know, needs help with utility bills this winter season, the following are just a few of the many resources:

Blair County Community Action - utility assistance for renters, 2301 Beale Avenue, Altoona
Call 814-946-3651 or email at info@blaircap.org

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Salvation Army Worship and Service Center - utility assistance for residents of Altoona, PA
Call 814-942-8104 or email at ashley.fulmer@use.salvationarmy.org

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

Pennsylvania Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) – utility assistance for residents of Pennsylvania. Call the Blair County Assistance Office at 866-812-4431

[VISIT WEBSITE](#)

2023 Holiday Events

Holiday Lights On The Lake, now in its 27th season, will open on Friday, Nov. 17 and run until Jan. 7, 2024, daily from 6 PM – 10 PM. Santa will be there for photos from November 18th through November 23rd. For more information and tickets, visit https://lakemontparkfun.com/?page_id=272 or call 814-949-7275.

Glow Up Downtown Altoona will be held on Friday, December 1st from 6 PM – 9PM. Enjoy music, craft / food vendors, movies, petting zoo, tree lighting, fireworks and more! Visit www.altoonapa.gov for details.

It's not too late to register for the Blair Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon (BESCP) **Ugly Christmas Sweater 5K and 2 Mile Walk** on **December 2nd**. Online registration ends December 1st, but you can register on Race Day as well. The event begins at 9:00 AM at Heritage Plaza. For information /registration, go to www.runsignup.com/Race/PA/Altoona/UglyChristmasSweaterFunRun5K

Then stick around in downtown Altoona for the **Annual Spirit of Christmas Parade**, hosted by Seven Mountains Media and the City of Altoona. The parade begins at 1:00 PM and route details are available at www.altoonapa.gov/calendar/type/events/2023/12/christmas-parade.



Christkindl Market Trip



The Blair County Historical Society is sponsoring its second annual Bus Trip to the Mifflinburg Christkindl Market. Christmas markets (Weihnachtsmarkt) have been a tradition in cities throughout Germany since the 1400's, and it is a special time of music, German food and baked goods, hand-crafted decorations and unique shops. The Mifflinburg Christmas market is the oldest in the United States, begun in 1989.

The trip is Saturday, December 16th and the cost is \$65 per person. The bus will leave from the Lowe's Parking Lot in Altoona promptly at 8:30 am and arrive in Mifflinburg at 10:30 am. The bus will return to Altoona at 5:00 PM. For information and tickets, visit <https://www.blairhistory.org/christkindl.html>

Amtran's Second Annual Stuff the Bus



Amtran is holding its second Annual Stuff the Bus campaign to benefit the Altoona Food Bank and the Mountain Lion Backpack Program, which provides weekend food to over 1,000 elementary school children in need. Amtran will be at Sam's Club on Saturday, Nov. 18 from 1-4 PM and at Weis Markets in Park Hills Plaza from 1-4 PM on Saturday, November 25th. The last collection will be at the Spirit of Christmas Parade at 1 PM on Dec. 2 in downtown Altoona. Volunteers will be collecting food items along the parade route. Donation suggestions include:

- Canned or single serve pasta
- Cracker Packs / Snack packs
- Applesauce / Fruit Cups
- Ramen Noodles
- Cereal Cups / Pop tarts
- Soups
- Peanut Butter (jar or single serve)
- Juice Boxes
- Mac and Cheese (boxes or single serve)
- Canned meats and chili
- Pudding Cups
- Noodle and Rice Mixes
- Lunchables
- Other non-perishables

Please support this great cause by donating a food item or two to "Stuff the Bus"!

Altoona's Heritage

When we think of Altoona, the Railroad and Horseshoe Curve always come to mind. Many of the men responsible for it were from the beautiful land of Ireland, so this month we feature:

Irish-American Heritage

Ireland's great famine devastated the entire country, including a rural parish called Donoughmore. 40% of the town's population died, roughly equal to the population of the town today. As in all of Ireland, the famine resulted in mass emigration. Many people from Donoughmore settled in Altoona, PA. Among them was John Tuigg, who arrived in America in 1849 and was ordained by a seminary in Pittsburgh in 1850. He served as a missionary pastor in Altoona from 1853 to 1876, and is buried here in St. John's Cemetery.

In the early 1850's, about 450 men, most of them former mine workers from Ireland, began working on a colossal engineering project that remains today as a National Historical Landmark and a vital segment of American economy, known as The Horseshoe Curve. Using only picks, shovels and explosives (no machinery), these men shaved two adjoining mountains to lay the grade for a railroad line. Altoona's thriving economy in the latter half of the 19th century, vastly due to the railroad industry, also brought Irish immigrants to the area.

In May of 1836, an Irish-American Fraternal organization was formed in New York City, called the Ancient Order of Hibernians. (taken from the word "Hibernia", the Latin name for the island of Ireland.) In 1899, the Blair County Division of the Ancient Order of Hibernians was formed and exists to this day, promoting the motto of "Friendship, Unity and Christian Charity".



Fun Facts About Irish American Heritage

- Nine signers of the Declaration of Independence were Irish
- 22 American Presidents boast Irish roots
- Halloween was invented in Ireland and brought to America
- The White House was built by Irishmen
- Today, 33 million people in America claim Irish ancestry, seven times the population of Ireland itself.



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