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# *Altoona Proud*

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

## September is National Hunger Action Month

Hunger Action Month was established back in 2008 by Feeding America to create a nationwide push to address the food insecurity of families in the United States. Here in America over 34 million people suffer from hunger, including nine million children (1 in 8 of all children living in the USA). Within the state of Pennsylvania, over 1,200,000 people suffer from hunger, also referred to as food insecurity, with over 325,000 of those being children.

Many organizations exist to address this issue, including local food banks, the Boy Scouts and US Post Office food drives, as well as numerous churches and civic organizations. One of these, specifically addressing children, is the Mountain Lion Backpack Program (MLBP), a program of Blair County Community Action.

The MLBP provides non-perishable foods for the weekends to nearly 1,000 children in the Altoona Area School District. These are children for whom school meals may be the only meals they eat. MLBP provides bags of food at the end of the week for the 35 weeks of the school year, containing breakfast, lunches, dinners, snacks and drinks. The average cost per student is \$5.75 per bag or \$200 for a school year, and the program operates entirely on donations, including food, monetary donations, and volunteer hours to pack the food.

The Mountain Lion Backpack Program packs bags once each week at the Butterick Building. If you would like to learn more about how you can help by donating or volunteering, please visit:

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

or **email** at [mountainlionbp@blaircap.org](mailto:mountainlionbp@blaircap.org)

or contact Billie Egan at 814-946-3651 ext. 108

**WE ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUPPORT THIS PROGRAM  
DURING THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER!**



# National Suicide Prevention Awareness Month



Suicidal thoughts, much like mental health conditions, can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender or background. The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports the following:

- [79%](#) of all people who die by suicide are male.
- Suicide is the [2nd leading](#) cause of death among people aged 10–14 and the 3rd leading cause of death among people aged 15-24 in the U.S.
- Suicide is the [12th leading](#) cause of death overall in the U.S.

September is Suicide Prevention Awareness Month —a time to raise awareness of this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. This is a month to shift public perception, spread hope and share vital information to people affected by suicide. While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, Suicide Prevention Awareness Month provides a dedicated time to come together with a collective desire and strength to address this difficult topic.

Today, there is a nationwide hotline specifically for mental health, substance use and suicide crisis. Their message, [#BeThe1To](#), helps spread the word about actions we can all take to prevent suicide, by being the one to ask, be there, keep the person safe, help them stay connected and follow up. Anyone needing help for themselves or someone else can call or text 988 and be connected to the Suicide and Crisis Hotline. If someone is uncomfortable talking on the phone, they can chat on the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at the link below. You can learn more about the service or order 988 materials by visiting: [www. 988lifeline.org/promote-national-suicide-prevention-month](http://www.988lifeline.org/promote-national-suicide-prevention-month).

Here in Altoona, there are two initiatives taking place around Suicide Prevention Awareness Month. The first is the Blair County Out of The Darkness Walk, scheduled for September 10, 2023 at Lakemont Park. Pre-walk activities begin at 9 AM and the walk is from 11 AM – 12 PM. The walk is one of remembrance, hope, and support. It unites the community and provides an opportunity to acknowledge the ways in which suicide and mental health conditions have affected our lives and the lives of those we love and care about. For details, go to: <https://blaircountysuicideprevention.org/events>

The second is the Community of Hope event, sponsored by UPMC, the Healthy Blair County Coalition and the Suicide Prevention Task Force. The event is free of charge and will be held at the Blair County Convention Center on Wednesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup> from 8 AM – 3:30 PM. The day's events will include messages from community members, interactive workshops and other activities designed to educate, inspire and motivate people to be an example of hope. For details, or to order tickets, visit: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/community-of-hope-tickets-628665494417>

## First Responders' Memorial Race



The First Responders' Memorial Race is run every year to honor those first responders (police, fire and ambulance) who have sacrificed their lives in the line of duty.

2023 will mark the third year of the First Responders' Race, with this year's Race proceeds benefiting the Hollidaysburg Veteran's Home. The event, sponsored by the Appalachian Running Company and Lakemont Park, will be held on September 9, 2023 at Lakemont Park.

The event includes a 5K walk / run, along with a FREE kids' 1 mile race (for ages 0-12) that will take place after the 5K. Lakemont Park will offer a coupon for a \$5.50 wristband that day to all kids who participate in the 1-mile race!

Ticket registration includes a Race packet and a t-shirt. Information on the Race and how to register can be found at: <https://runsignup.com/Race/PA/Altoona/FirstResponderMemorialRace>

Come out to run, walk, or to cheer on the participants in support of all First Responders!

## PA CareerLink® Day and Healthcare Career Fair

Workforce Development Month was created in September of 2005 by the National Association of Workforce Development Professionals (NAWDP) to raise awareness about the importance of a strong workforce to a growing national economy. In addition, September 14 is being recognized as PA CareerLink® Day here in the City of Altoona.

To celebrate these two important events during September, PA CareerLink® of Blair County will host a Healthcare Career Fair at the Altoona Public Library on Sept 14th from 10:00 AM - 5:30 PM. Recognizing the healthcare industry, the largest industry in our area, students and the general public are invited to attend to network with industry professionals about healthcare careers and discover local

job opportunities. In addition, organizations that provide needed training for those careers will be there to answer questions. It will be a perfect event for those looking to move into a healthcare career, or to skill up in an existing one. For more information call PA CareerLink® at 814-940-6201 or, for information on other career opportunities, visit their website:

<https://www.pacareerlink.pa.gov/jponline/>



# History Highlight

On September 13, 2023 an area educational institution will celebrate its 74<sup>th</sup> year, so this month we highlight:

## Penn State Altoona Campus

In the spring of 1939, a citizen's committee raised \$5,000 in just two months to fund an undergraduate center for Penn State University, to be housed at the old Webster School Building in downtown Altoona. On September 13, 1939, the Altoona Undergraduate Center (AUC) of Penn State was opened, with 119 commuter students taught by nine professors.

In 1940, the citizen's committee, now the Advisory Board of the Center, raised another \$3,000 to expand into a second building. When the onset of WWII threatened to close the school, the Advisory Board financed the school's operations, opening a women's dorm for out of town female students.

After the war, the student count overflowed the two buildings, prompting the Board to raise \$50,000 for the purchase of Ivyside Park, an abandoned 38-acre amusement park. The park's concrete swimming pool (the world's largest at the time) became a parking lot, and existing park buildings became classrooms. Ivyside Campus opened in 1948 with 600 students and 30 faculty members.



With the continued addition of academic programs and buildings, the AUC's name was changed in 1958 to the Altoona Campus of the Pennsylvania State University and, in 1997, it became Penn State Altoona, a four-year baccalaureate degree-granting college of the University.

Today, the Ivyside Campus consists of 171.5 acres with more than 30 buildings surrounding the reflecting pond (the original warming dam from the Ivyside Amusement Park). Additional facilities have been opened throughout the area, including the Downtown Altoona Campus. The City of Altoona is proud to be home of this expanding campus of Penn State.



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