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Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

National Irish – American History Month

The month of March is designated as Irish-American History Month, honoring the contributions and history of millions of Irish immigrants and their descendants. Officially recognized by Congress in 1991, the month celebrates Irish-Americans and their role in our nation's founding, culture and development.

Irish-American history is foundational to us here in Altoona, particularly around the construction of the Horseshoe Curve. Over 400 Irish immigrants built the Horseshoe Curve, between 1850 and 1854, using only picks, shovels and mules. They helped in the construction of other crucial Pennsylvania Railroad infrastructure in the mid-19th century. They also worked in local iron furnaces from the 1840's to the 1890's.

Many Irish immigrants were highly educated men with professional careers and part of a growing Irish middle class. However, forced to flee Ireland due to the potato famine, arriving in our area between 1845 and 1855, they took on these difficult manual labor jobs to make a life in America.

Alongside German and Italian immigrants, Irish immigrants built up Altoona and surrounding areas, creating diverse neighborhoods and establishing community roots. Areas like Dutch Hill in Altoona and neighboring towns like Tyrone and Newry are examples of these communities. The Ancient Order of Hibernians, a Catholic Irish – American fraternal organization that has existed in Ireland for over 300 years, established a local chapter in 1899 that continues to this day.



Today, roughly 18% of Altoona and Blair County residents claim Irish ancestry, making it one of the top ethnic groups in the City and making Blair County one of the high ranking counties in the State for Irish ethnicity. This month, we recognize the contributions of Irish – Americans to our City!

Altoona Area Public Library Golf Event

Friday, March 6th and Saturday, March 7th, 2026 are the dates for the second annual Altoona Area Public Library Bookworm Golf Event. All three floors of the library will be turned into a fun, interactive mini-golf course for families and people of all ages to enjoy! Sponsored by Kooman & Associates, the events are as follows:

The Adult-Only Mini Golf event will be on Friday, March 6th from 6:00 PM – 8:00 PM. This is for anyone ages 18+ and the cost is \$20.00 per person. The ticket includes a night of friendly competition, hors d'oeuvres and some refreshing mocktails.

The Family Mini-Golf event is on Saturday, March 7th, from 9:30 AM – 3:00 PM. Cost is \$5 per ticket and includes fun for all ages. Tee times are scheduled every 30 minutes, with the last tee time at 2:30 PM. All children under age 14 must be accompanied by an adult, and there will be special prizes for kids under age 10 at the 19th hole, sponsored by Fanelli Legal.

You can purchase tickets at the library or call 814-946-0417 to reserve your spot. All proceeds benefit the library. You can follow this event and others by visiting Altoona Area Public Library Facebook page at www.facebook.com/altoonapubliclibrary



PA CareerLink® Spring Job Fair and The Hub



PA CareerLink® Blair County will host their Spring Job Fair on Wednesday, April 1, 2026 at the Jaffa Shrine, 2200 Broad Avenue in Altoona. This is one of the largest hiring events of the year, with over 85 employers attending, representing a wide range of industries and job opportunities.

The event will be from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM, with early access for veterans beginning at 9:30 AM. Attendees are encouraged to pre-register for the event and to bring multiple copies of your resume, if you have one. PA CareerLink® offers workshops on preparing resumes and many other aspects of job-seeking. For information on the job fair, or other resources offered by PA CareerLink®, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/pacareerlinkblaircounty/> or call them at 814-940-6201.

In addition, PA CareerLink® has introduced The Hub, a no-cost after school program for kids in grades 6 through 12. The Hub meets every Wednesday from 2:30 PM – 4:30 PM at the Altoona Area Public Library, 2nd floor, PA Career Link Conference Room. No registration is needed; students can drop in on any of those program days.

Students are encouraged to come hang out in a safe and welcoming place, while learning job readiness skills. Each week features fun, interactive activities like how to dress for success, resume tips and games, mock interviews and local employer Q and A's.

Snacks and drinks are provided and all students in grades 6 – 12 are welcome. For more information, contact Tiffany Zimmerman at 814-288-7795 or email her at tzimmerman@gogoodwill.org.

St. Polten Student Group Visit to Altoona

From March 24th through April 1st, 25 students and four adults from our Sister City of St. Polten, Austria will visit Altoona, celebrating 25 years of our Sister City partnership. They will stay with local families who have generously volunteered to host the visitors. Students will attend Altoona Area High School, Hollidaysburg Area High School or Bishop Guilfoyle High School. They will also get to visit local historical and cultural sites, the Altoona Curve PNG Stadium, Penn State University Park and Penn State Altoona Campus, who is hosting a dinner to celebrate our 25th anniversary.



This cultural exchange has had a lasting effect on our own students over the years, some developing international friends for life. St. Polten has a special love for Altoona, with an exact copy of our Altoona Mountain Lion statue in an area of their town called "Altoona Square". The Sister City Program is entirely funded by donations from area businesses and private citizens. If you would like to support this effort to help cover transportation and other costs for the students, simply visit the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF) website at <https://centralpagives.org/ways-to-give/>, choose "Donate to an Existing Fund" and choose "Sister City Fund". Thanks for helping to make this special trip a memorable one for all!

WISE Women Scholarship Opportunities and Tribute Dinner



WISE Women of Blair County and the Donna D. Gority Scholarship are pleased to announce that they are seeking applications for scholarship assistance. Up to \$10,000 will be awarded through one or more scholarships. Deadline for applications is no later than 4:00 PM on Friday, March 27, 2026. Completed applications must be received by email or US Postal mail to WISE Women at P. O. Box 134, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648 or by email at info@wisewomenofblaircounty.org

Scholarships are open to Blair County resident females 21 years of age or older who have overcome adversity or discrimination in their lives, and who are pursuing post-secondary education. The scholarships are awarded through the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF).

The Gority Scholarship is for women whose adversity, education or career aspirations are in areas of domestic abuse, sexual assault, substance use disorder, mental illness/suicide, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, homelessness, juvenile/criminal justice, teen pregnancy, physical or intellectual disabilities, and racial or LGBTQIA+ discrimination, all causes close to Donna Gority.

WISE Women of Blair County (Women Involved in Scholarship and Empowerment) grants up to \$20,000 in scholarships each year for women to continue their education. Their mission is to empower women and encourage acceptance and inclusion of all through collaboration, service, and education. This mission is fulfilled through scholarships, grants, and recognition of the community through the annual Tribute dinner.

To receive an application packet, visit their website www.wisewomenofblaircounty.org. For additional information please email info@wisewomenofblaircounty.org.

Know Your City

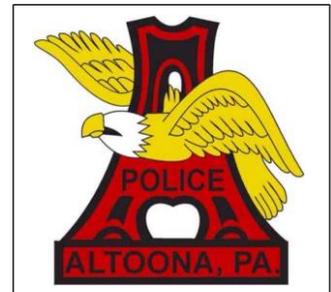
All of us know that the Altoona Police Department works to protect and serve our City. But this month we want to share all that they do, not only in the public arena, but behind the scenes as well.

The Altoona Police Department has officers on duty 24 hours a day, requiring numerous personnel and long hours. In 2025, the Altoona Police welcomed ten new officers and handled nearly 31,000 calls for service, making this the second year in a row where the number of calls has exceeded 30,000. Over 2,700 arrests were made.

Beyond that, however, the Altoona Police Department participates in a significant number of community and fundraising events. Some of these include:

- Conducting K-9 demonstrations and police officer presentations in elementary schools throughout the City.
- Participating in the Polar Plunge, jumping into the frigid waters at Canoe Creek and running 6.7 miles with other law enforcement agencies in the Law Enforcement Torch Run, both to raise money for the Special Olympics.
- Hosting a National Night Out where families interact with police and other emergency services for fun, and fostering of community relationships.
- Shopping with 200 children in the second annual Shop With A Cop, where officers are paired with a child in need to shop with \$150 gift cards donated by local businesses and citizens.
- Visiting City parks, pools, housing complexes and neighborhoods to personally interact with the community
- Attending special events throughout the City, such as parades, marches and festivals, etc. for traffic control and public safety.

We are fortunate to have a hard working K-9 force. K9's Pongo and Blue can be seen on the job throughout the City, with Blue achieving his 200th drug deployment this past year. Our thanks go out to the Altoona Police Department for putting their lives on the line every day to protect the City of Altoona and its citizens!



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