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**February
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Altoona Proud

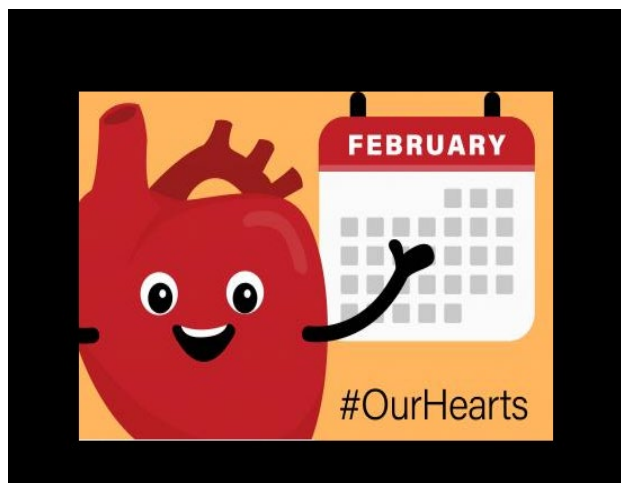
A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

February is National Heart Month

Heart Month 2024 is an annual February observance dedicated to raising awareness about heart health and cardiovascular disease. The CDC states that heart disease is the leading cause of death here in the United States for both men and women, accounting for nearly 700,000 deaths each year.

Some risk factors, such as age, gender and family history, cannot be changed. But each person has the power to take action to protect themselves against heart disease by being aware of other risk factors, including high blood pressure, high cholesterol levels, stress, obesity, physical inactivity and smoking.

It is essential to take steps, however gradual, towards heart healthy living. These include eating healthy, being more active, not smoking, learning to manage stress, and getting regular checkups. For online information about heart health, visit any of the following websites: www.cdc.gov/heartdisease www.nhlbi.nih.gov/health/heart-healthy-living www.heart.org



DID YOU KNOW?

- Women generally develop heart disease about 10 years later than men.
- Quality sleep, defined as between 7 and 9 hours per night for adults, increases heart health.
- About half of all American have at least one or more risk factors for heart disease.
- Both African Americans and Native Americans have higher rates of heart disease than any other ethnicity.

Snow and Ice Removal

Winter has definitely made its presence known and Public Works is working hard to keep roads safe. The City of Altoona has over 360 lane miles of roadway to cover, with 16 trucks. On average, the City uses 4,500 tons of salt, 500 tons of anti-skid material and 5,000 gallons of salt brine each winter. The city has 24 hour snow coverage, using two shifts. The overall goal is to provide timely clearing of City streets, while minimizing hazards and restoring travel conditions throughout the City as soon as possible after each winter storm event.

The snow removal plan prioritizes major arteries, school routes, emergency and mass transit routes. Secondary routes include minor arteries and streets connecting neighborhoods to primary routes. Then the focus is on those alleys that are access points for emergency services and City owned parks, walkways and bus routes.

Property owners are reminded that they are responsible to clear their sidewalks of snow and ice within 24 hours after the storm ends, and snow should not be shoveled into the streets. All residents can help by doing the following, if at all possible:

- If at all possible, move vehicles from City streets to driveways or secondary roads to eliminate hazards for our drivers, as well as other drivers, and improve the plowable area. If that is not possible, move your car as close to the curb as possible.
 - Pull vehicle side mirrors in to avoid damage.
 - Prior to a storm, park in a location that will allow easy access until plows get to your street.
 - If at all possible, wait for plowing to be completed before cleaning sidewalks, driveways or cars to eliminate some of the shoveling and re-shoveling.



2024 Dog Licenses Available Now

Every dog in the City of Altoona, 12 weeks or older, must be licensed. A license can be obtained for a calendar year or for a lifetime. (Lifetime dog licenses require that the dog be either tattooed or micro-chipped.)

Applications for both types of licenses are now available for purchase at the City of Altoona Finance Office, located at 1301 12th Street, Suite 104. Applications for the **yearly license only** are also available at Fiore True Value Hardware at 5514 6th Avenue, or the Central PA Humane Society at 1837 E. Pleasant Valley Blvd. Fees vary, based on factors including the gender and spayed / neutered status of the dog. For questions, please call 814-949-2416.



Remember to be a responsible pet owner by making sure licenses and health checks are up to date and bringing your pets inside on these bitter cold winter days!

Wise Women Scholarship Program

WISE Women of Blair County (Women Involved in Scholarship and Empowerment) is dedicated to empowering women and eliminating racism through collaboration, service, and education, by providing scholarships, awarding grants and recognizing outstanding women in our community. WISE Women is now accepting applications for scholarship assistance. Scholarships are available to Blair County resident females 21 years of age or older who have overcome adversity or discrimination and who are pursuing post-secondary education. One or more scholarships will be awarded in each cycle up to a total of \$10,000.

In addition, the Donna D. Gority Scholarship would go to a woman whose adversity and or education/career aspirations are in an area that Former Commissioner Donna Gority has been involved with in the community: domestic abuse, sexual assault, substance abuse disorder, mental illness/suicide, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, juvenile/criminal justice, teen pregnancy, physical or intellectual disabilities, and racial or LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

The scholarships are not available for a Masters, Doctorate or a second Bachelor's degree. WISE Women has granted \$20,000 in scholarships each year, with the Donna D. Gority Scholarship now adding additional funds. Scholarships are awarded through the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF).

Application packets for both scholarships are available at www.wisewomenofblaircounty.org. The deadline for applications, including two letters of reference, is 4 pm on Friday, March 29, 2024. Completed applications can be sent by mail to WISE Women at P. O. Box 134, Hollidaysburg, PA 16648. To submit the application by email, or to request any additional information, contact info@wisewomenofblaircounty.org.

SAMA Art After Dark

The Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art (SAMA) is an art museum located in downtown Altoona that has been providing art experiences in our community for 48 years. It is part of a network of four such museums, with the others located in Bedford, Ligonier and Johnstown. The Altoona location is also a place where after-hours events are always an experience!

On February 23rd, SAMA will present "Art After Dark". The Museum will transform into a captivating social and cultural hub, where you can enjoy beautiful art, shop multiple vendors and listen to live music. In celebration of National Heart Month, Valentine's themed pinatas will be available for people to beat their heart out.



Admission is \$15 at the door. The event will be held from 6 PM – 8 PM at the Southern Alleghenies Museum of Art, in the former Brett Building, located at 1210 11th Avenue. For information on this, and other SAMA events, visit www.sama-art.org/altoona

African American Heritage

February is African American Heritage Month, and in this issue of the newsletter we highlight:

African American History in Altoona

African Americans have been a part of Blair County since the late 1700's. By 1821, Pennsylvania had abolished the practice of owning slaves, bringing freed African American citizens to the area, many coming to work on the canal or to assist in the beginning of the Underground Railroad, which transported enslaved African Americans to areas north of Blair County. One of the conductors of the Underground Railroad was Altoona native William Nesbit, who holds a significant place in history. As the first President of the Pennsylvania State Equal Rights League, he was instrumental in the passing of the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments to the Constitution, in 1868 and 1870, respectively. These amendments established citizenship rights, voting rights and equal protection under the law for formerly enslaved African Americans. In his later years, Nesbit returned to Altoona to open a barbershop on 10th Avenue. Today, a mural celebrating his life exists on the Altoona Pipe and Steel Building, located on 9th Avenue.

By 1839, African Americans were attending churches established in homes. The current Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church was initially a schoolhouse given in 1839 as a place of worship, and to serve as a station for the Underground Railroad. In 2022, Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church celebrated 175 years of service in the Altoona community.



In 1864, the Eastern Light Cemetery was created on a quarter-acre of land located at 10th Street and First Avenue. It is the final resting place of 200 African American citizens, the last of whom was buried in 1944. One of those buried here was the first African American graduate of what was then Altoona High School, William H. Smith. Many veterans who served in the Civil War and all later wars, are also buried there. These are men and women who enriched our City and our State by their contributions to all walks of society.

PHOTO LEFT: William Nesbit Mural



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