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**January
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Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

❄️ January is National Blood Donor Month ❄️



National Blood Donor Month is a nationwide observance begun in 1970, encouraging blood donations, especially critical during winter when supplies are low, due to holidays, illness, weather and increased need. This year's theme is "Why I Give", highlighting donor stories and the impact of blood donation. During this month, all who are able are encouraged to donate blood, plasma or platelets to save lives.

Every day, thousands of blood donations are needed in the U.S. One single donation can help multiple people, and donating is safe, quick and can actually offer health benefits. Eligible donors can donate every eight weeks.

During this month, local organizations and blood centers will be hosting drives throughout the area. The American Red Cross partners with the National Football League for promotions during this month, including the chance to win Super Bowl tickets.

It is important to learn and remember your blood type. O positive donors are needed more often than any other blood types. O negative donors are considered "universal donors" and B positive donors are considered "universal recipients".

Even though about 38% of the U.S. population can donate blood, only 10% actually do. Every few seconds, someone in the country needs blood. This means there is not enough blood for all of us. When we donate blood, labs check for infectious diseases and other issues, so it actually can help your own health. Each pint of blood donated has the potential to save three lives.

Take a moment this month to find a local donation center or blood drive and give the gift of life, especially during the winter months when it is so desperately needed.

❄️ Spirit of Christmas Parade and Party In The Plaza ❄️

The Spirit of Christmas Parade was held on December 6th. Thanks to everyone who came out to see some wonderful floats from local businesses and organizations, bands from our local high schools and junior high school, cheerleaders from local elementary schools and, naturally, Santa!

Immediately following the parade was the Party In The Plaza, with the popular petting zoo, tree lighting by Mayor Pacifico and Santa, food vendors, free hot chocolate and, of course, fabulous fireworks. Many businesses and restaurants along 11th Avenue were open for shoppers, offering coffee, cookies, soups and other treats. Thanks to all of the sponsors, participating businesses, vendors and organizations!



❄️ Ugly Sweater Run 2025 ❄️

Over 100 people came out to brave the cold for this year's Ugly Sweater Run, hosted by the Blair Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon (BESCP) on December 6th. Proceeds from the event support the work of the BESCP, including a wellness app, available to all of our Emergency Services personnel and their families. Emergency Services, which includes police, fire, EMT and ambulance services, encounter trauma and tragedy on a regular basis. Support for them and their families is vital, so we thank everyone who came out to support the run and congratulate the winners in all categories!



❄️ Winter Safety Tips ❄️

Winter storms and cold temperatures can be dangerous. Stay safe and healthy by planning ahead, preparing your home and vehicles, and planning for power outages and outdoor activities. Winter hazards include fires, accidents, hypothermia, frostbite, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heart attacks. Here are some reminders to help you prepare:

Preparing your Home:

- * Make sure smoke detectors and carbon monoxide detectors are operating properly
- * Check your heating system, including fireplaces and chimneys, weather stripping, and insulation
- * Have a safe alternate heating system or heating fuels available
- * Keep an up-to-date emergency kit in your home and stock non-perishable foods and water
- * Keep your cell phone fully charged

Preparing Your Car:

- * Service the radiator and check antifreeze levels
- * Check tire tread or install winter tires
- * Keep the gas tank and windshield washer fluid full, using winter strength washer fluid
- * Prepare a winter emergency kit for your car that includes cell phone chargers, sand or cat litter for traction, flashlight, first aid kit, booster cables, tire pump, and food and water
- * Keep warm items in your vehicle such as extra coats, hats, gloves, sleeping bags, and blankets

Take Precautions Outdoors:

- * Wear appropriate outdoor clothing, including a wind-resistant coat or jacket, inner layers of light, warm clothing, mittens, hats, scarves, and waterproof boots
- * Sprinkle cat litter or sand on icy patches
- * Work slowly when doing outside chores and always carry a cell phone

❄️ Central PA Humane Society Chili and Wings Cookoff ❄️

Saturday, January 24, 2026 is the date for the Central PA Humane Society's annual Chili and Wings Cookoff. Chili and wing participants will be competing for the titles of Fan Favorite and Judges Favorite. The event will be held at the Bavarian Aid Society Hall, and is open to all adults ages 21 and over. The event is from 6 PM–10 PM (general admission), with a 5 PM entry time for those with VIP tickets. General admission is \$25 and VIP tickets are \$40, with all proceeds benefiting the Central PA Humane Society. There will be raffles, live entertainment by Shallow 9, t-shirts for sale and lots of great wings and chili to sample.



VIP and general admission tickets are available at the Central PA Humane Society at 1837 E. Pleasant Valley Boulevard. General admission tickets are available at Thompson's Pharmacy locations in Altoona and Hollidaysburg. For more information, check their Facebook page at www.facebook.com/ChiliFestAndWingOff

❄️ Learn About Your City ❄️

This month, we focus on a department that is busy throughout the year, but especially during these winter months, the Department of Public Works.

The Public Works Department works to preserve and improve Altoona's infrastructure by resurfacing streets, maintaining City parks and drainage facilities and improving the public right-of-ways, and consists of four divisions: Engineering, Electrical, Highways and Fleet. Working together, these divisions manage activities over three hundred and sixty lane miles of roadway within the City limits.

The Engineering Division is responsible for the review and approval of construction plans including storm water, lighting, signage involving public right-of-ways, sidewalks, floodplain, demolition and driveways. They review sewer cap inspections, inspect the installation of stormwater systems and sidewalks, do post-construction site inspections, employee training and reporting, and assist customers with survey information. Most construction designs and inspections are done in-house.

The Electrical Division maintains over 1,800 street lights, 73 traffic signals, 20 school crossing assemblies and all of the lighting on the City's crossovers. They handle the majority of electrical work at City parks and facilities, install and remove holiday / celebratory banners and decorations in the downtown area, and are responsible for all underground 811 reporting within the City. As per an agreement with Logan Township, this division maintains 37 traffic signals at locations bordering Altoona.

The Highway Division is primarily responsible for the summer and winter maintenance of the City's 360 lane miles of streets. For most of the spring, summer and fall seasons, the Division is involved with street cuts, inlets and drainage, general maintenance, signs and paint. In winter, the Division operates on double shifts to treat roads within the City limits as well as some PennDOT roads under municipal agreement. Other duties include scheduled bagged leaf and brush removal for City residents, pipe, storm sewer, and street cleaning, as well as garbage removal at all City-owned parks and facilities, including downtown areas.

The Fleet Department is responsible for the upkeep and maintenance of over 250 City vehicles including Highway, Codes and Inspections, Police and Fire Department vehicles. This group often goes unnoticed, but their role in keeping vehicles working and on the road is vital.

Please be patient this winter when waiting for snow removal, or when trying to reach someone at the Highway Yard. They are likely out keeping the streets safe for you!



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