

From the desk of:

*MAYOR MATT PACIFICO
CITY OF ALTOONA
1301 TWELFTH STREET, SUITE 101
ALTOONA, PA 16601
814-949-2476*

March 2024



Altoona Proud

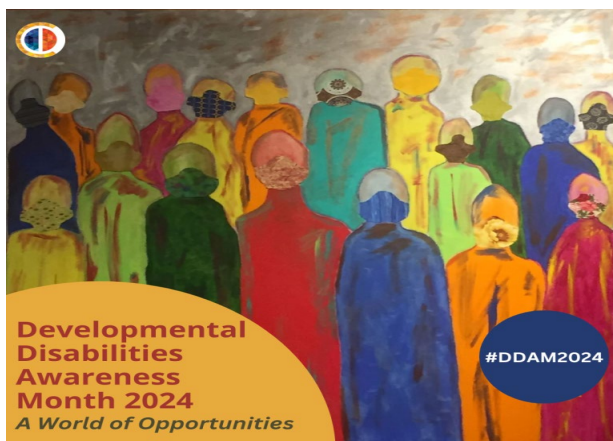
A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month is an annual observance that takes place in March. First established by President Ronald Reagan in 1987, the activities and celebrations during this month are designed to draw attention to the varied and unique experiences of individuals with developmental disabilities. It is a time to celebrate their achievements, advocate for their rights, and highlight the importance of the inclusion of people with developmental disabilities into all areas of society.

Each individual, regardless of their abilities, has the right to be respected, embraced, and provided with opportunities to thrive. By participating in local events, supporting organizations that aid individuals with developmental disabilities and encouraging inclusivity in schools, workplaces and community organizations, every citizen can contribute to this effort.

The City of Altoona has shown its support of this important issue in many ways, most recently in the planning and building of local parks that are designed to accommodate all abilities, such as the newest park in the Garden Heights area of Altoona.



If you would like to learn more about Developmental Disabilities Month, its origins and celebrations, or would just like to learn more about developmental disabilities in general, please visit any of the following sites:

- www.nacdd.org/ddam1
- www.paddc.org
- www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/developmentaldisabilities/facts

Black Balloon Day

Families United for Change (FUFC) is a grassroots organization founded in 2019, focused on increasing awareness of the issues surrounding drug and alcohol abuse, collaborating with treatment providers and increasing family involvement in the process. They work towards the goals of educating the public and erasing the stigma that surrounds the issue of drug and alcohol abuse and its lasting consequences.

On March 6th, throughout the United States, families and loved ones will remember and celebrate the lives lost to overdose in an initiative known as Black Balloon Day. Here in Altoona, black balloons will be displayed in areas throughout the City to commemorate the event. Along with the balloons, information will be posted on ways that every individual can make a difference or even save a life.

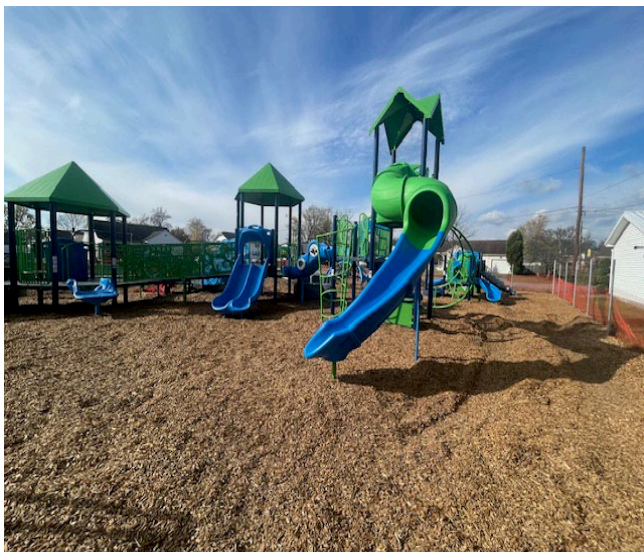
To learn more about this day, or the work of Families United For Change, visit their website at:

Our Nation, our State and our City continue to battle the growing use, and accompanying overdose statistics, of opioids and fentanyl. It is important for citizens to be aware that Narcan (Naloxone) is available and can be administered to anyone experiencing symptoms of an overdose. Naloxone is provided free to the community at Blair Drug and Alcohol Partnerships and it should be noted that bystanders can lawfully administer the drug to someone experiencing an overdose.



Garden Heights Park

The Garden Heights area of the City of Altoona is the home of a new, all-abilities playground and park. Formerly the site of an old basketball and tennis court, the Garden Heights neighborhood was overwhelmingly in support of creating a children's playground and community park.



The result is the Garden Heights Park, designed to be accessible and fun for all ages and all abilities. The park includes a play booster for ages 2-5 and one for ages 5-12, as well as a swing set, benches and two large sway benches. There are also three standalone pieces- a drum circle, sensory dome, and shadow flower. The final piece is a 20 x 28 picnic shelter with four picnic tables. Its opening is scheduled for spring of 2024.

The City is grateful for the Booker T. Washington Revitalization Corporation and other supporters of this project, as part of the City's goal to improve and extend our park and recreation options here in Altoona.

Alto Model Train Show

The Alto Model Train Museum Association (AMTMA), located at 1117 9th Avenue, boasts the largest model train displays in the area, and is open on Saturdays from 10 AM – 2 PM, or by appointment. For anyone who has visited the gift shop at Lakemont's "Lights on the Lake" during the Christmas season, you will be familiar with the amazingly detailed train display there, which is done by the members of AMTMA.

AMTMA will host their Toy Train Swap Meet on Sunday, March 24, 2024 at the Blair County Convention Center from 9:00 AM – 2:00 PM. The event will include displays, railroad artifacts and memorabilia and all scales of model trains for sale. Tickets for the event are \$5 and can be purchased at the door.



CONTACT Altoona Spring Training

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!
2024 SPRING TRAINING

After successful completion of the training, you will be able to:

- * Answer calls on the CONTACT Altoona Helpline
- * Participate in all of CONTACT Altoona's events
 - * Volunteer from home
 - * And much, much more!

When?
Monday April 8th, Tuesday April 9th, Wednesday April 10th, Monday April 15th and Tuesday April 16th. All classes 5:00pm to 8:00pm. Must attend all 5 sessions.

Where?
Administrative Offices, 2729 8th Avenue, Altoona, PA 16602

CONTACT Altoona

Apply today at:
<https://contactaltoona.com/volunteer-training-application/>
or For more information call 814-946-0531

CONTACT Altoona is conducting their 2024 Spring Training for hotline volunteers. Since 1984, CONTACT Altoona has trained volunteers, who staff phone lines seven days a week to listen, help callers identify problems, or provide a moment of company for an individual.

CONTACT Altoona also administers the 211 helpline. 2-1-1 is like 411 or 911, but for health and human services referrals. Volunteers work from home and have flexible hours.

Registration is open now, and training will be held at the CONTACT Altoona office at 2729 8th Avenue, Altoona, PA. To register, or to receive more information, visit: www.contactaltoona.com/volunteer or call 814-946-0531.

Comprehensive Plan

A full draft of the All Together Altoona Comprehensive Plan is now ready!

Tell us what you think!

Visit the Library page on the All Together Altoona website to review and comment on the Draft Plan by April 1st.
<https://www.alltogetheraltoona.org/library>

The City of Altoona has been working for almost a year on a new Comprehensive Plan. The Plan serves as an official public document to guide public and private decisions about physical development in the City. It is a statement of future goals, and a formal vision for the Planning Commission and other public agencies, elected officials, private organizations, and individuals.

The full draft is ready for YOUR feedback! Please visit the website below to review the plan and provide your comments by April 1st, 2024. Your input is essential to creating a successful plan to move our City forward!!

Altoona's Heritage

March is Greek American Heritage Month, also known as Hellenic Heritage Month, and this month we highlight:

Greek Heritage in Altoona, PA

Greek immigrants began to arrive in Allegheny County as early as 1890 and the first Greek immigrants to Altoona, PA arrived in 1891. Many were sailors from various Greek islands and, at first, engaged in manual labor. Soon they began businesses of their own, often as restaurateurs or confectioners. Greek immigration to our area peaked in the early 1920's.

Although the bulk of Greek immigrants remained in western PA with the steel and coal industries, the arrival of approximately 100 families to Altoona, along with individual Orthodox Christian immigrants from the Middle East, served as the beginnings of Greek communities in our City. These communities began holding joint church services in various homes and area halls. These joint services lasted until the end of the First World War, when individual churches began to emerge. Today, Altoona is home to several Greek Orthodox congregations and a Greek restaurant, The Athenian Café.

While today's Greek population in Altoona is very small, it remains significant in the western area of Pennsylvania. The contributions of Greek immigrants to the City's heritage and culture remain in the works of the railroads, the food festivals and the beautiful places of worship.



**GREEK AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH**
*** March ***



DID YOU KNOW?

Today there are over 2.5 million Americans of Greek origin.

A full-scale replica of the Parthenon can be viewed in Nashville, Tennessee.

Tina Fey, John Stamos, Hank Azara, Telly Savalas, Betty White and Jennifer Aniston are all of Greek heritage.

The co-founders of the popular website program Jib Jab are of Greek heritage.



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