

*From the desk of:*

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**April, 2023**



# *Altoona Proud*

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

## **April is Autism Awareness Month**

National Autism Awareness Month began in 1972 as National Autistic Children's Week. Founded by the Autism Society, it raises awareness for autism and Asperger's syndrome and fosters change in schools, communities, medical facilities, and businesses. Autism is a complex brain disorder that often inhibits a person's ability to communicate, respond to surroundings, and form relationships with others.

According to the World Health Organization, about one out of every 270 people in the world has Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). ASD is a group of developmental disabilities that causes challenges in many areas of one's life that include social, communication, and behavior issues. Children with ASD are usually nonverbal or they have restricted or repetitive behaviors. ASD also affects people of all racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

Activities this month are centered around increased knowledge of autism and imparting information about the importance of early diagnosis and early intervention. It also serves as a reminder that autism is a lifelong condition with varying degrees of severity. It's important to continue to support research for treatment and therapies that will improve the lives of those with autism.



Locally, the Central PA Autism Society covers five counties in Pennsylvania, including Blair. The organization creates 4-5 sensory events a month for children with autism and all disabilities. They also host the sensory movie series, the sensory library, and other life skill events. All events are free, but require participants to register. The Central PA Autism Society also meets once a month as a support group to help the area parents network with one another. For more information, please visit:

<https://centralpaautism.weebly.com>

## Senate Hearing on Transportation of Hazardous Materials

In the aftermath of the train derailment in East Palestine, Ohio, the Mayor, along with Fire Chief Adam Free, began meeting to address the situation, looking for solutions to minimize the chances of a similar situation taking place in Altoona.

The PA Senate Transportation Committee was also pro-active in calling a hearing to address the incident. As part of this hearing, mayors were asked to submit testimony regarding the situation as it affects their cities. Mayor Pacifico submitted a strong testimony that included pertinent questions, one of which was quoted by a member of the Senate Committee and posed to the President of the Railroad Commission. We are fortunate to have a Mayor who is passionate about the safety of our City and its citizens. You can read the Mayor's testimony at <https://www.altoonapa.gov/getmedia> or you can listen to the entire hearing at <https://transportation.pasenategop.com/trans>

## 911 Appreciation Day on April 9, 2023

Before 911 was introduced in 1968, there was no centralized number that people could call in times of an emergency. Today, telecommunicators help to save millions of lives every day. If it weren't for the telecommunicators doing their jobs, billions of lives would have been lost due to untimely assistance.

According to an article in "Business Insider," emergency call takers scored 98.5 out of 100 in stress tolerance, making their profession one of the most stressful jobs in America. These lines are open 24/7, so the need for emergency dispatchers is critical and increasing at a steady rate. More than 250 million emergency calls are made to dispatchers every year in the U.S. Despite this, staffing is difficult because 911 operators are often underpaid. So please take time on this day, or in the following week, to thank your emergency providers. You can do so through social media using the hashtag **#Thankyou911**

## National Volunteer Week April 16-22, 2023



National Volunteer Week is an opportunity to recognize the impact of volunteer service and the power of volunteers to tackle society's greatest challenges, to build stronger communities and be a force that transforms the world. It takes place every April during Global Volunteer Month.

We salute the MANY volunteers who serve our schools, churches, benevolent societies, food banks and support services. Their value to the places they serve cannot be overstated.

# Healthy Blair County Coalition-Fighting Fraud

The Healthy Blair County Coalition (HBCC) is a partnership of local individuals and organizations working to promote the social, economic, emotional, and physical well-being of our community. It is made up of 178 community partners who represent individuals and organizations from all walks of life, from healthcare to home issues.

In a recent needs assessment, 77% of residents identified overuse/addiction to cell phones, social media, and the internet, as a major community challenge. In addition, our residents have been victims of fraud and scams.

In response to this, HBCC is sponsoring a program called **Fighting Fraud**, highlighting how to protect yourself from the top ten scams, identity theft, romance scams, social media 101, and elder abuse, with a speaker from the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General. The program is free, but registration is required. Dates and times are as follows:

Wednesday, April 26, 2023, 2pm - 4pm or 6pm - 8pm:  
Blair County Convention Center  
1 Convention Center Drive, Altoona

Thursday, April 27, 2023, 2pm - 4pm or 6pm - 8pm:  
Morrisons Cove Memorial Park Event Center  
201 S Walnut St, Martinsburg

**To register, call (814)936-0417, x 132**



# Associates for Training and Development

Associates for Training and Development (A4TD) administers the Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP), which helps mature people get back into the workforce by providing paid occupational skills and workplace experience training. Designed specifically for income-qualified workers age 55+, SCSEP provides training and skill-building opportunities to program participants while providing much needed community service to local non-profits and public agencies.

Some examples of training sites include hospitals, libraries, senior centers, schools, town clerks, museums and more. These agencies provide internship opportunities where program participants learn updated job skills. In addition to on-site training, each participant receives career assessments, technology skills updates, supportive services referrals, and career counseling.

If you are looking to train for available jobs, learn updated job search skills and connect with local employers, or just want more information please call the Altoona office at **814-569-3355** or visit their website at [www.a4td.org](http://www.a4td.org).

# Career Link Job Fair at Jaffa Mosque



PA CareerLink® Blair County will again host a Spring Job Fair at the Jaffa Shrine. Over 80 local businesses have signed up and they anticipate big crowds of job seekers. In years past the job fairs have drawn between 300-400 people.

## Wed. April 26th @ Jaffa Shrine

9:30 am - 10 am: Reserved for Veterans  
10 am - 2:00 pm: Open to the Public  
2200 Broad Ave, Altoona, PA 16601

No Cost to Attend the Job Fair  
80+ Hiring Employers  
On-the Spot Interviews

For more information or accommodation needs,  
please contact PA CareerLink® Blair County at  
814-940-6201 or TTY: 814-569-1066

Given today's booming job market and tight labor force, these fairs are an asset to our community and a chance for businesses to connect with job seekers in a personal way. As more and more businesses open here in our City, the need for good employees has grown.

Along with partners at the Southern Alleghenies Workforce Development Board, the event is co-hosted by the Altoona-Blair County Development Corp., Blair County Chamber of Commerce, Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center, and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation.

Thank you to our partners.



A proud partner of the AmericanJobCenter network

PA CareerLink® Blair County is an equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. Language assistance services available at no cost. Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) programs are funded with federal dollars. For detailed information see <https://paopc.org/evers-amendment/>

We hope many residents looking for employment will take advantage of this opportunity!

# New Business Openings

The City of Altoona continues to welcome new businesses to our area. Below are some of the ribbon cuttings and openings of the past few months!

*Clockwise from left: Cook's Kitchen, 300 4<sup>th</sup> Ave.; Always A Party, 1205 16<sup>th</sup> St.; Mod Car Wash, 530 W. Plank Rd.; Reliance Bank Reopening, 226 W. Plank Rd.; TOST at Market Square Wyndham, 909 Chestnut Ave.*



# History Highlight

April is the time when the circus comes to town, so this month we highlight:

## Jaffa Shrine Center

If you were born and raised in Altoona, it is hard to recall a time when there was not an annual circus at the Jaffa Shrine! Now referred to as the Jaffa Shrine Center, this 3,200-seat arena was not the original Shrine. The first Jaffa Shrine was located on Chestnut Avenue and 7<sup>th</sup> Street and opened in 1910. However, as membership grew, the facility became too small for the needs of the patrons, so the present facility on Broad Avenue was built.

The idea for the Mosque was formulated by a group of 200 Altoona-based members of the Syria Mosque in Pittsburgh. Its jurisdiction today covers the counties of Blair, Potter, Cameron, Centre, Clearfield, Clinton, Jefferson, Cambria, Huntingdon, Mifflin, Fulton and Bedford. The current Shrine Center, headquarters to the Jaffa Shriners, was built and opened in 1930. Housing an 80 x 30 foot main stage a 25,000 square foot banquet room, and two additional lounges, it was the largest convention center in Blair County until the Blair County Convention Center was built.

In addition to 83 years of hosting the circus, today this beautiful structure is also host to receptions, conventions, sports and dance events, concerts, graduations and more. The Shrine's charitable arm is the Shriner's Hospitals for Children, a network of children's hospitals in the United States, Canada, and Mexico.



### *The 83<sup>rd</sup> Jaffa Shrine Circus*

This year's Jaffa Shrine Circus will be held from Wednesday, April 19, through Sunday, April 23, 2023.

Specific show times and box office hours are available by calling 814-944-5351 or by visiting:

<https://jaffashriners.org/circus>



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*Subscribe*