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Altoona Proud

A Monthly Insight into all that is Altoona

National Suicide Prevention Month

September is National Suicide Prevention Month. This is a time to raise awareness and foster discussion around this stigmatized, and often taboo, topic. The goal of this month is to change public perception, spread hope and share vital information to families and people affected by suicide. It is equally important to recognize and address symptoms that indicate a potential for suicide, to prevent the tragedy before it occurs. While suicide prevention is important to address year-round, National Suicide Prevention Month highlights the issue to encourage action from everyone.

The nationwide hotline for mental health, substance use and suicide crisis, **#BeThe1To**, shares ways we can all help to prevent suicide, by being the one to ask, be there, to keep the person safe, help them stay connected and follow up. Anyone needing help can call or text 988 to be connected to the Suicide and Crisis Hotline. Or, to chat on the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, learn about the service and order materials, visit: www.988lifeline.org/promote-national-suicide-prevention-month

This year, the Blair County Suicide Prevention Group will host their "Out Of The Darkness" Walk on Sunday, September 8th at Lakemont Park in Altoona. On-site registration begins at 9:30 AM and the Walk begins at 11 AM. There is no cost to register and the day includes information tables, merchandise for purchase, kids' activities, the Dirty Soda Shack food truck and opening and closing ceremonies. To register, visit afsp.org/blair.

Did You Know?

- More than 49,000 people in the United States died by suicide last year, one death every 11 minutes.
- Pennsylvania ranks 14th in number of suicide deaths by state (approximately 2,000 per year)
- In number of suicides per year, Blair County ranks 27th among the 67 counties of PA, with an average of 22 suicides per year, lower than both state and national averages.



Family Services Benefit Fundraiser

Family Services Incorporated is a non-profit organization serving a variety of needs in Blair County. Originally begun to serve homeless and needy children, the agency has grown to meet many more needs, thanks to generous donations from the community.

Most recently, they opened a Homeless Shelter at 2300 N. Branch Avenue in Altoona. They also staff a victims' services live chat and hotline, a teen center and shelter, counseling for individuals, families, partners and groups and residential support for those with intellectual disabilities.



On September 7th, Family Services Incorporated will host a "Family Jam Fundraiser", from 11 AM to 8 PM at the Railroaders Memorial Museum, located at 1200 9th Avenue in Altoona. The festival will include music, vendors and food trucks and admission is only \$10, with free admission for children ages 12 and under. In addition, attendees can visit the actual museum for only \$8 on that day.

Come enjoy a fun festival day for the family and tour the Railroaders Memorial Museum, to support Family Services Incorporated and the important work they do for members of our City and community.

Altoona Curve Hosts First 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb



September 11, 2001, is a day that will not be forgotten by anyone around the world who witnessed the terrible tragedies in New York, Washington, D.C. and Shanksville, PA. As we all watched the horrific events unfold, we also saw the best of America's heroes, in the form of individual citizens, first responders and firefighters.

The 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb, established by the National Fallen Firefighters Association, honors the 343 firefighters who lost their lives on that day by symbolically completing their heroic journey to save others. The money raised is used to provide assistance to the families and coworkers of fallen local firefighters. Each 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb participant climbs or walks the equivalent of the 110 stories of the World Trade Center (2,017 steps).

The Altoona Curve will host its first 9/11 Memorial Stair Climb on Wednesday, September 11th, from 7:00 AM – 12:00 noon at the Peoples Natural Gas Field on 1000 Park Avenue. Registration cost is \$35 and can be done before, or on, the event date, and includes one grandstand ticket to the Altoona Curve Game on September 11th at 6:00 PM. To register, or donate, visit nfff.akaraisin.com/ui/altoona

Discovery Night at The Nehemiah Project

You may have heard of The Nehemiah Project but many are unfamiliar with all of the services and programs available here. You can change that by attending The Nehemiah Project Discovery Night on Thursday, September 12th from 6 PM – 8 PM at the Wright Place for Kids at 1809 11th Street in Altoona.

This inspiring night will share the many programs of The Nehemiah Project, how they have impacted the community, how your investments have contributed, and their future initiatives of growth and expansion of their programs. Reserve your spot by calling 814-201-2096 or by email at heather.tnppa@gmail.com. Don't miss this chance to learn more about this important organization!

PA CareerLink® Day and Healthcare Career Fair

In celebration of statewide PA CareerLink® Days in September, PA CareerLink® of Blair County will host a Community Resource Fair on September 12th from 10 AM – 3 PM on the Ground Floor of the Altoona Area Public Library. The goal of the event is to bring together local organizations and agencies that provide resources and support for the community, and to help individuals access these essential services and support.



This is a great opportunity for citizens to match their needs with community resource partners who can help. Veterans' services, mental health services, legal aid, housing and utilities assistance are just some of the services that will be available. The day will include fun, prizes, snacks and food from Big D's Catering. The event is free and open to the public and, while pre-registration is encouraged, attendees can also register on the day of the event. To register, call 814-940-6201 or visit www.pacareerlink.pa.gov

Good news!

- * Altoona's current unemployment rate, at 3.1%, is lower than the State average of 3.4%
- * The number of jobs in June of 2024 was 1,000 higher than the same time period in 2023!
- * From April through June, 2024, over 2,500 job seekers were helped, benefiting 226 local employers.

Altoona is growing its workforce!

BESCP's First Annual Chaplain Platoon Softball Tournament



The Blair Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon (BESCP) will hold its first annual Softball Tournament, "Strike Out The Stigma", September 21st and 22nd at Leopold Park. This co-ed slow pitch tournament raises funds for mental health awareness and services for emergency responders. Team participation is open to all employees and volunteers of Blair County Emergency Services, excluding municipal entities such as police, water and fire departments.

Each team needs a minimum of ten players, with at least two women playing at all times. This double elimination tournament follows USSSA rules, and the winning team will receive a trophy. Registration is \$25 per person or \$200 per team, with a minimum of eight teams. Spectators are welcome and encouraged to attend at no charge. This is a perfect way to recognize and support National Suicide Awareness Month.

This year, a chicken dinner is being offered for the event! The dinner, costing \$12.00, includes chicken, mac and cheese, roll or cornbread, another side and a dessert! Dinners must be pre-ordered and can be picked up at the event or, if you aren't attending the games, you can pick up your chicken dinners at the Catholic War Vets office at 290 Valley Avenue between 12 PM and 6 PM on Saturday, the 21st. To order dinners, visit the BESCP Facebook page at facebook.com/blairemergencyservices_chaplain_platoon.

All proceeds benefit the work of the Blair Emergency Services Chaplain Platoon. For information, or to register, contact Alyssa Wills at (814) 505-8355 or alyssa.wills348@gmail.com. Come support the men and women who support our first responders!

Mountain Lion Backpack Program Starts New School Year

The 2024-2025 school year has begun and, once again this year, the Mountain Lion Backpack Program will be providing weekend meals to over 1,150 children grades K-5 who otherwise have little or nothing to eat when they are not in school. As we all know, the price of food continues to rise, making this year a bigger challenge than ever before, especially since the program receives NO federal funding, making the program dependent upon donations, small grants or fundraising. This year, the Program is collecting demographic information but no student names, making it possible for the program to apply for larger grants in the future. But you can help now!

One way is to support their second annual "Drive Out Hunger" Golf Outing on September 23rd, at Sinking Valley Country Club. The day will include basket raffles, 50/50 raffles and contests for longest drive, longest putt, etc. Registration is open for teams, and includes 18 holes of golf, golf cart, four beer tickets per golfer, swag bags, and lunch! The Program is also looking for sponsors at all levels, as well as donations of raffle baskets and prizes to help defray costs. All donations and sponsorships are tax-deductible and all proceeds will go to the Mountain Lion Backpack Program.

Help support the program and spend a great day of golf with family, friends, or coworkers. This event can go a long way in helping meet the needs of our food-insecure children. For information on sponsorship, registering a team, or general information on how you can support the Mountain Lion Backpack Program through the year, email mountainlionbp@blaircap.org or visit www.mountainlionbackpackprogram.org



WISE Women Scholarship Opportunities

WISE Women of Blair County and the Donna D. Gority Scholarships are pleased to announce available applications for scholarship assistance. One or more scholarships will be awarded up to a total of \$10,000, and are available to Blair County female residents age 21 years of age or older who have overcome adversity or discrimination in their lives. Eligibility is limited to women who are pursuing post-secondary education, not including a Masters, Doctorate or second Bachelor's degree. Scholarships are awarded through the Central Pennsylvania Community Foundation (CPCF). Every application will be considered for both the WISE Women and Gority Scholarships.

The Gority Scholarship goes to a woman whose adversity, education and/or career aspirations are in the areas of domestic abuse, sexual assault, substance use disorder, mental illness/suicide, child abuse, HIV/AIDS, juvenile/criminal justice, teen pregnancy, physical or intellectual disabilities and racial or LGBTQIA+ discrimination.

The mission of WISE Women of Blair County (Women Involved in Scholarship and Empowerment) is to empower women and encourage acceptance and inclusion through collaboration, service, and education. This is done through scholarships, awarding grants, and recognizing outstanding women in our community through the annual Tribute Dinner.

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

Community Health Needs Survey

SURVEY COMMUNITY HEALTH NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The Healthy Blair County Coalition and our community partners are conducting our 6th Blair County Community Health Needs Assessment. Please help by filling out the survey so we can gather your input on strengths and challenges in our community. Your responses are completely anonymous and we are not tracking who filled out the survey. You can use the QR Code below or use the link on our website.



Website: www.healthyblaircountycoalition.org

The **Healthy Blair County Coalition** is a community partnership that was created to provide a comprehensive community health needs assessment. Its purpose is to share resources, engage local partnerships, and make a positive impact on the lives of people in Blair County.

Surveys are due by September 17th – your input is needed and appreciated!!



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