

# Operation Our Town Reporter

a monthly newsletter **by** our volunteers **to** our volunteers **about** our fight against drugs and crime in Central PA

Volume 1, Issue 6

June 2009

## PUSH OUT THE PUSHER 693-3020



[OperationOurTown.org](http://OperationOurTown.org)

### Board Members:

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Pastor Betty Landis  
Dr. Todd Negola  
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### Founding Members:

Altoona Regional Health System  
Blair Candy Company  
Blair Companies  
D.C. Goodman & Sons, Inc.  
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Grappone Law Offices  
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The Hite Company  
Holiday Inn Express  
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McLanahan Corporation  
New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co.  
New Pig  
NPC, Inc.  
Reliance Bank  
Sheetz, Inc.  
United Way of Blair County  
Ward Trucking  
Wolf Furniture

### Committed Businesses:

Grainger Industrial Supply  
Norfolk-Southern Foundation  
Small Tube Products

## 10 Years of Tips *by K.Muller*

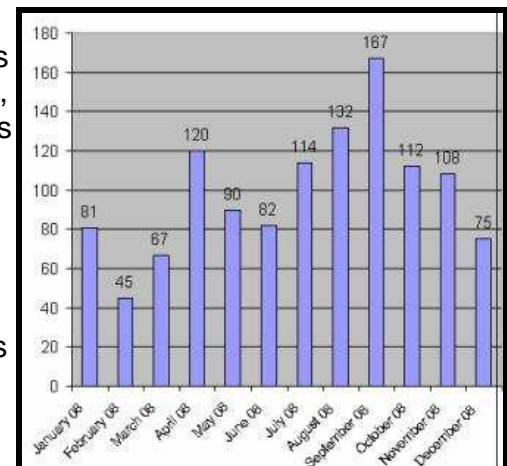
When **Blair Countians for Drug Free Communities** began in 1999, community groups and concerned citizens came together to tackle a growing street drug problem. As the coalition assessed the situation, they discovered the need for a three-pronged strategy—encompassing prevention, treatment and law enforcement.

A tool was already in place in the DA's office that aided law enforcement, remembers Blair County Commissioner Donna Gority. That tool was a "tip line" that received phone calls with information on suspected drug dealers. The newly formed coalition decided to rename the tip line and conduct a county-wide, high profile multi-media campaign to build recognition and to encourage its use.

Rick Reeves, former Altoona Hospital Marketing Director and Chamber of Commerce member, chaired the committee that developed the **Push Out The Pusher** campaign. The newly renamed tip line would not be an immediate response line, but rather an investigative resource. Callers could give information anonymously and law enforcement would collect it and use it to develop cases.

According to Agent Randy Feathers of the PA Attorney General's Office, the value of the tip line increased as the information received began to be formally processed. Today, information is documented on a regular basis and constantly fed to law enforcement agencies.

It is important to note that these tips rarely result in a quick arrest. In most cases, tips help build strong cases over a period of time.



One case that stands out is the Efreem Hidalgo case, involving a heroin dealer from Buffalo, NY. The first lead received by local law enforcement labeling Hidalgo as a suspected dealer came through the tip line. Effective work and investigation led to the arrest of Hidalgo within 6 months. His sentence of 60-120 years is known to be the longest ever received in PA for dealing drugs.

This year we are celebrating the **10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** of **Blair Countians** and the **Push Out The Pusher** tip line, both having evolved since their inception. In 2008, the tip line was connected to the Blair Co. 911 Telecommunications Center. Callers are now given several options to relay their tips:

- Dial 1 for anonymous messages related to drug dealers
- Dial 2 for an attendant for an immediate response
- Dial 3 for the Blair County Crime Solvers line

The tip line received 1,193 calls in 2008—indicating that the citizens of Blair County are invested in ridding our area of drug dealers and the destruction they bring to individuals and families. For more information or to join Blair Countians for Drug Free Communities, visit:

[DrugFreeBlairCounty.com](http://DrugFreeBlairCounty.com)

## Mission

Facilitating partnerships between community and business to fight drug use and crime through proven law enforcement, treatment, and prevention

## Our Partners & Friends

[Blair Countians for Drug Free Communities](#)

[Crime Solvers of Blair County](#)

[Pennsylvania Gang Investigators Association](#)

[United Way of Blair County](#)

## Volunteer Update

Volunteers play an important role in Operation Our Town. Volunteers participate in community events to help us reach more people. Volunteers serve on Roundtables, the Steering Committee & the Board.

Volunteers provide valuable services such as artwork & design, software development, and more.

We thank all our Operation Our Town volunteers. It is only through the support of active community members like yourselves that we will be able to take back our neighborhoods from illegal drugs and crime.

[CLICK HERE to register as an Operation Our Town Volunteer](#)



To serve on an Operation Our Town Roundtable, contact Shawna Hoover by [email](#) or call 296-8730.

## Upcoming Operation Our Town & Partner Meetings and Events

### RECURRING WEEKLY MEETINGS:

Wed. HOPE Support Group Meeting	7:00pm	Blair Co Courthouse Jury Room
6/22 OOT Steering Committee Meeting	6:00pm	OOT Office
6/25 OOT Pharmacy Roundtable Mtg	7:15am	OOT Office
6/25 OOT Marketing Roundtable Mtg	4:00pm	OOT Office
7/06 Booker T Washington Meeting	4:00pm	Community Action Agency
7/10 All American Festival	5:00pm	Evergreen Manors
7/11 3 On 3 Basketball Competition	10:00am	BB Court: 19th St & 13th Ave
7/15 Blair Co. Crime Solvers Meeting	8:00am	Park Hills Country Club
7/16 CJAB Meeting	11:45am	Blair Co. Court house
7/16 Neighborhood Watch-City wide Mtg	6:00pm	Blair Senior Services Building
7/16-7/18 Duncansville Community Days	6:00pm	Duncansville PA
7/20 OOT Steering Committee Meeting	6:00pm	OOT Office
7/25 African American Heritage Festival	12:00pm	Penn State Altoona
7/25 Playground Build Day	9:00am	The Nehemiah Project Office
7/25 Spring Dam Days	12:00pm	Spring Dam, Roaring Spring
7/27 Big Bros/Big Sis 12th Golf Classic	12:30pm	Iron Masters Country Club
7/29 Blair Countians/Drug Free Commun.	8:30am	United Way of Blair County

\*OOT Meetings: For more information about Operation Our Town meetings, contact Shawna Hoover at [oot@lsfiore.com](mailto:oot@lsfiore.com) or call 296-8730.

## Everything You Really Didn't Want To Know About METH

Instances of methamphetamine (METH) trafficking and abuse in the US are increasing. As a result, this drug is having a devastating impact on communities across the nation. METH, also known as "speed," "crank," or "ice," is a powerful and highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. METH is a synthetic drug produced or sold as pills, capsules, or powder that can be smoked, snorted, injected, or swallowed. It is neurotoxic, meaning it damages the nervous system. METH use can cause dependence and addiction psychosis, stroke, dangerously high body temperature, and cardiac arrhythmia. Withdrawal often results in severe depression and paranoia.

Clandestine production accounts for nearly all of the METH trafficked and abused in the US. METH is manufactured in makeshift, illegal labs by untrained individuals using over-the-counter cold and allergy tablets. The tablets are placed in a solvent solution until the ephedrine or pseudoephedrine separates from the tablet. Then, these drugs are "cooked" with other common household products (such as drain cleaner) to produce hydrogen chloride gas and other chemicals for use in the final stage of METH production.

### METH users & "cooks" induce highly toxic chemicals into their system including by-products from DRAIN CLEANER & HYDROGEN CHLORIDE GAS...

Production is extremely dangerous and can cause death or serious injury not only to the individuals making the METH, but to others who may be living in an adjoining house or apartment. The chemical vapors produced during cooking permeate the walls and carpets of houses and buildings, making them un-inhabitable. METH laboratory fires & explosions have destroyed buildings and homes, injuring or killing occupants and endangering neighboring residents and buildings.

Even more tragic is the damage done to the hundreds of children who live with parents who are METH "cooks." More than 20% of the METH labs seized had children present. These children are usually neglected, often have lung ailments and can become addicted to METH just from inhaling the vapors and residue.

Cleaning up these sites requires specialized training and costs thousands of dollars per site in funds that come out of the already-strained budgets of state & local police.

The environmental cost is also severe. Toxic chemicals are used to make METH, and the lab operators routinely dump waste into streams, rivers, fields, and sewage systems. Chemicals from dumpsites contaminate water supplies, kill livestock, destroy national forest lands, and render areas uninhabitable. In just one year, the state of California spent nearly \$5.5 million to cleanup approximately 2,000 METH laboratories and dumpsites.

**WHAT CAN I DO?** Educate your children about the dangers of METH. Talk to them often. Keep your eyes open and report suspected drug activity through the Push Out The Pusher hot-line: 693-3020

Sources: [www.methwatch.com](http://www.methwatch.com)  
[www.streetdrugs.org/methlabs2.htm](http://www.streetdrugs.org/methlabs2.htm)  
DEA Fact Sheet, "Fast Facts About Meth"  
National Drug Threat Assessment 2003, NDIC/USDOJ

## Upcoming Events

### Upcoming Events

**"All American Festival"**  
Information to children & families in a fun, activity filled event.  
**Friday, July 10, 2009**  
5:00 pm - 8:00 pm

Operation Our Town  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
Call 296-8730

Evergreen Manors,  
Eldorado area of Altoona

**3 On 3 Basketball Competition**  
Celebrates the renovation of the Booker T Washington outdoor basketball court.

**Saturday, July 11, 2009**  
9:00 am—5:00 pm

Basketball Competition Help  
Contact: [pjirwin@tsfiore.com](mailto:pjirwin@tsfiore.com)  
Refreshment service  
Contact: [oot@tsfiore.com](mailto:oot@tsfiore.com)

**Duncansville Community Days**  
Community fun-filled event.

**Thur—Sat, July 16-18, 2009**

Operation Our Town  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
Call 296-8730

Finger printing 6:00pm-8:00pm each evening.  
Duncansville Memorial Park

### Playground Build Day

Help build a new playground near The Nehemiah Project.

**Saturday, July 25, 2009**  
9:00 am—??

Meet at The Nehemiah Project  
1533 11th Street, Altoona  
Contact: [pluciano@pvag.org](mailto:pluciano@pvag.org)

### Spring Dam Weekend

Information & children's activities

**Saturday, July 25, 2009**  
11:30 am – 5:00 pm

Operation Our Town  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
Call 296-8730

Spring Dam behind Roaring Spring Water Store

### African American Heritage Festival

Music, food, fun for all

**Saturday, July 25, 2009**  
Noon – 8:00 pm

Operation Our Town  
**VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**  
Call 296-8730

Penn State Altoona Volunteers needed  
11am—4pm

### Contact Info

Operation Our Town - PO Box 2486 - Altoona PA 16603 - 814.296.8730 - [info@OperationOurTown.org](mailto:info@OperationOurTown.org) - [www.OperationOurTown.org](http://www.OperationOurTown.org)

You may [unsubscribe](#) if you no longer wish to receive our emails.

## Booker T. Washington Community Revitalization Project

Excerpts from "Officials courting funds for more renovation work," by William Kibler. Altoona Mirror, June 21, 2009. [www.altoonamirror.com/page/content.detail/id/520146.html](http://www.altoonamirror.com/page/content.detail/id/520146.html)

...across from Booker T. Washington Community Center in the Fifth Ward, nostalgia reigned Friday, and names dropped like basketballs through the nets of the old outdoor court a couple blocks up 19th Street.

Hoops aficionados from around the country would recognize some of the names: Johnny Moore, Doug West, Danny Fortson - all of whom played in the NBA, came from the neighborhood and developed a share of the savvy that carried them to prominence there on the asphalt.

The court has deteriorated over the decades, but now it's undergoing a restoration, with the help of \$75,000 raised by the Booker T. Washington Community Revitalization Committee and the Central Blair Recreation Commission.

It's the first phase of a project that will include play equipment, a pavilion and a gazebo across 13th Avenue. [>>Full Story](#)

The Booker T Washington Community Revitalization Project Committee invites you to a **3 on 3 Basketball Competition & Block Party** to celebrate the completion of Phase I, to help raise funds & awareness for the remaining phases.

**WHAT:** 3 on 3 Basketball Competition and Block Party

**WHEN:** Saturday, July 11, 2009, 10am - 4pm

**WHERE:** The corner of 13th Ave and 19th Street in Altoona. 19th Street will be closed for the event, and tents will be set-up.

**WHO CAN PLAY:** Divisions include male and female teams from 4th—12th grade levels based on the 2009-2010 school year.

**HOW YOU CAN HELP:** Volunteers Needed & Event Sponsorships Available

- **T-shirt Sponsor:** \$200 (includes your name or logo on T-shirt distributed to all participants in the 3x3 competition).
- **Team Sponsor:** \$40 (Each \$40 team sponsorship will provide the opportunity for 4 local youth, who would not otherwise be able to raise the registration fee, to play in the 3 x 3 competition).

**For a registration form, to become a sponsor or for more information, call the Central Blair Recreation and Park Commission at 814-949-2231.**



The Community Engagement Group (CEG) at the United Way of Blair County is proud to announce their first "Stuff the Bus" school supply drive, which will benefit students in Blair County school districts.

**So lets... "Help CEG Stuff the Bus"**

Donations Accepted June 30th—August 2nd

### Donation Sites:

United Way of Blair County	5414 6th Avenue, Altoona
Sorbera Chiropractic	1962 Old Rte 220 North, Duncansville
Blair County Head Start	319 Sycamore Street, Altoona
Kids First Blair County/Lily Pond	2713 Chestnut Avenue, Altoona
Begin With Us Child Care & Preschool	703 Grant Avenue, Altoona
Logan Valley Mall	Route 229 Goods Lane, Altoona
Altoona Area Public Library	1600 5th Avenue, Altoona

### School Supply Wish List:

Back Packs	Handwriting Erasable Mats
Big Pencils	Kid's Scissors
Construction Paper	Markers
Crayons	Notebooks
Easy Read Books	Pencil Boxes
Erasers	Rulers
Flash Cards	Scissors
Folders	Small Writing Tablets
Glue Sticks	Stencils
Handwriting Paper	Water Color Paint

For more information, contact the [United Way of Blair County](#) at (814) 944-0884.