

# Operation Our Town Reporter

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

Volume 1, Issue 1

January 2009

**PUSH OUT THE PUSHER 693-3020**



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

#### Board Members:

Michael A. Fiore  
Phil Devorris  
Joe Sheetz  
Ron McConnell

#### Administration:

Shawna Hoover, Executive Coordinator  
Lynne Mondock, Volunteer

#### Steering Committee:

Cheryl Johns  
Judy Rosser  
Robin Beck  
G. Brian Toth  
Dr. Lori J. Bechtel-Wherry  
Pastor Betty Landis  
Dr. Zane Gates  
Dr. Todd Negola  
Donna Gority  
Randy Feathers  
Honorable Jolene Kopriva  
Richard Consiglio  
Jackie Bernard  
Betsy Hurst

#### Founding Members:

Altoona Regional Health System  
Blair Candy Company  
Blair Companies  
DC Goodman  
Delta Health Technologies  
Fiore Buick/Toyota  
Grappone Law Offices  
Harry Sickler & Associates  
The Hite Company  
Holiday Inn Express  
Lawruk Realty  
Lee Industries, Inc.  
Leonard S. Fiore, Inc.  
M&T Bank  
McLanahan Corporation  
New Enterprise Stone & Lime Co.  
New Pig  
NPC, Inc.  
Reliance Bank  
Sheetz, Inc.  
United Way of Blair County  
Ward Trucking  
Wolf Furniture

#### New Pharmacy Roundtable Organized

A new roundtable met for the first time on December 11. Led by Bill Earnest - Kopp Drug's COO - pharmacists and business owners from Tyrone, Claysburg, Altoona, Duncansville, Roaring Spring and surrounding areas openly discussed Challenges facing our pharmacies. Joining them were participants from the PA Attorney General's Office including Randy Feathers (who leads the Law Enforcement Roundtable), Sherri Cramer and Jim Walstrom. Also on-hand were Operation Our Town board member Phil Devorris and Shawna Hoover, Executive Coordinator.



From improving relationships with law enforcement to raising awareness of prescription drug abuse, the Pharmacy Roundtable unanimously agreed a focused and united approach is needed to achieve successful results. "This roundtable provides a venue for pharmacists and owners from typically competitive businesses to discuss an area of mutual concern - the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs," said Bill Earnest. "In addition, this worthwhile and exciting endeavor to clean up our neighborhoods also provides our area pharmacies with a much needed voice in the fight against crime."

"As the facilitator of partnerships between community and business to fight drug use and crime, Operation Our Town is committed to nurturing these relationships to improve our community," says Phil Devorris. "The new Pharmacy Roundtable is an important addition to our organization. We can already see how this team can interact with and improve the efforts of other existing roundtables."

The next Pharmacy Roundtable is scheduled to meet at 7:15am on January 29, 2009 at the Operation Our Town office. For more information on the Pharmacy Roundtable, contact Shawna Hoover [by email](#) or call 814-296-8730.

#### Upcoming Operation Our Town & Partner Meetings and Events

01/18	Celebrating Signs of Justice	2:00 pm	AASD Jr. High Auditorium
01/19	*OOT Steering Meeting	6:00 pm	Operation Our Town office
01/21	Crime Solvers Meeting	8:00 am	Park Hills Country Club
01/22	Press Conference: Grants	2:00 pm	Altoona Cty Council Chamber
01/23	Heath & Welfare Council Mtg	8:00 am	Becky Sheetz Rec. Center
01/27	Blair Co. Needs Assessment	8:00 am	Becky Sheetz Rec. Center
01/29	*OOT Pharmacy Roundtable	7:15 am	Operation Our Town office
01/30	Curve Hot Stove Dinner/Auction	6:00 pm	Blair Co. Convention Center
02/02	Booker T. Washington Meeting	4:00 pm	Community Action Agency
02/06	Respiratory Dis. Soc. Fundraiser	5:00 pm	UVA, Altoona
02/07	Family Health Cabin Fever Event	10:00 am	2nd Ave United Meth. Church
02/12	Blair Chamber Breakfast Club	7:45 am	The Casino @ Lakemont Pk
02/19	Criminal Justice Adv. Board	11:45 am	Blair Co. Courthouse
02/21	Crime Solvers Dinner/Dance	6:30 pm	Jaffa Banquet Center
03/05	*OOT Faith-based Roundtable	1:30 pm	Pleasant Val. Church/Christ
03/07	Health & Safety Fair	10:00 am	Bellwood-Antis Public Library
03/31	*OOT Education Roundtable	9:30 am	Bellwood-Antis District Office

\*OOT Meetings: For more information about Operation Our Town meetings, contact Shawna Hoover [by email](#) or call 814-296-8730.

## Mission

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

## Our Partners & Friends

[Blair Countians for Drug Free Communities](#)

[Crime Solvers of Blair County](#)

[Pennsylvania Gang Investigators Association](#)

[United Way of Blair County](#)

## Blair County Drug Bust

On December 19, 2008 the Blair County District Attorney, PA Attorney General and Blair County Drug Task Force (comprised of law enforcement officers throughout the county) announced that with support from Operation Our Town, a county-wide initiative resulted in:

- The arrest of nearly thirty (30) subjects on various drug violations;
- The investigation and arrest of a subject in the process of setting up a mobile methamphetamine lab;
- The apprehension of two subjects from Operation Our Town's Most Wanted list. Only three (3) out of the original ten (10) Most Wanted remain at large.



[CLICK HERE TO READ THE WHOLE STORY](#)

## 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 for a complete list of volunteer opportunities with Operation Our Town and our partner organizations.](#)

The numbers below reflect volunteer participation for 2008:

Total Registered Volunteers: 124  
Total Events Attended (YTD): 17  
Overall hours worked by Volunteers at Events (YTD): 201

## Our Town Volunteers at Winter Wonderland

Volunteers from Operation Our Town logged over 20 combined hours during the United Way of Blair County's 2008 Winter Wonderland event. This year's event was held Dec. 5 - 6 at the Station Medical Center. Our Town volunteers distributed over 200 helium-filled "Crime Solver" balloons to children who were also invited to decorate their own Wonderland "goody-bag" with stickers and artwork. Each participant also received "Push Out The Pusher" cards and many parents enthusiastically helped themselves to bumper stickers, window clings and wall stickers. Helium for this event was donated by GTS-Welco, Altoona.



## Spring 2008 Grant Recipients

The Nehemiah Project and The Beacon Operation Our Town Volunteer Committee members Betsy Hurst and Michelle Fiore recently visited two Spring 2008 grant recipients, The Nehemiah Project and Salvation Army's The Beacon.

Currently focused on rehabilitation of the Lower Fairview area, The Nehemiah Project is a faith-based non-profit corporation which will sponsor activities at Pleasant Valley Assembly of God's 11st Street Center and work with PVAG on other rehabilitation projects in the city of Altoona.



Operation Our Town provided funding to pave the way for the Before-and After-School Program that is scheduled to begin during the spring of 2009.

The program will target children ages 6-12 and provide tutoring/homework programs, exercise, nutritious food programs, group activities and mentoring. Michelle and Betsy's tour of the once derelict, condemned church on the corner of 11th Street and 16th Avenue took place on a cold, rainy day in November. A new metal roof, shining new windows and an enthusiastic greeting by Pastor Jim Balzano and executive board member Dave Miller made the facility seem to light-up from within. "We were impressed from the moment we arrived," said Betsy. New offices, kitchens and community rooms were quickly taking shape. Taped to the walls were "before" pictures that helped illustrate how much had been accomplished to date.

"The work that has been done so far is nothing short of amazing," Michelle stated after touring the rooms that will house the Before-and After-School Program. Pastor Balzano is grateful for Operation Our Town's support and knows this project will provide a place for the community to gather and a safe place for children to learn and grow. For more information, contact [Pleasant Valley Assembly of God](#).

**Upcoming Events**  
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**Altoona Curve's "Hot Stove" Dinner & Auction** to benefit Operation Our Town! at the Blair County Convention Center.  
**January 30, 2009** - Doors open at 6:00 pm.  
 Call **The Curve** at **943-5400** to sponsor a table or purchase individual tickets!



**"Operation Our Town Year In Review"** at Blair County's Chamber of Commerce Breakfast Club. The Casino at Lakemont Park.  
**February 12, 2009 7:45 am**



**Crime Solver's Dinner & Dance** at the Jaffa Banquet Ctr.  
**February 21, 2009** - 6:30 pm  
 Dinner, 8:30 - 11:00 pm **Live Music by Ricky Lee & The Mustangs.**  
 Tickets \$30 per person.  
 To purchase, call: Burchfield Towing (695-3232), Hollidaysburg Police (695-3711), Allegheny Township Police (695-3333), Blair

**Spring 2008 Grant Recipients—continued**



Betsy and Michele's next stop was the Salvation Army facility at 1813 6th Ave. The Beacon is a faith-based program that provides an alternative place for at-risk youth ages 12-20 to gather and build relationships. The program meets Friday evenings from 6 pm - 10 pm. The tour was conducted by Jerry Rice who volunteers his time as the program's director. Jerry may use funds provided by the Operation Our Town grant to purchase a large screen television for the gathering room.

It would be used for movie nights, Super Bowl Sunday and ideally be used for video games once additional funding becomes available. The Beacon attracts approximately 20 youths each Friday, and plans are underway to grow the program with the help of additional volunteers. For more information, contact Jerry Rice [by email](#) or call (814) 207-7830.

**PUSH OUT THE PUSHER**

A successful re-launch of the "Push Out The Pusher" hotline in 2008 included billboards At the high-traffic entrances to Blair County, new bright yellow yard signs, window clings and bumper stickers.



Operation Our Town volunteers posted the bright yellow yard signs throughout the area, effectively blanketing our community with the 693-3020 hotline number.

**STILL AVAILABLE: "Push Out The Pusher" Yard signs and other materials are still available at the Operation Our Town office by calling 296-8730.**

The re-launch also lead to an increase in calls to the hotline from local residents reporting drug activity. Effective July 22, a much sought-after enhancement was made to the Push Out The Pusher hotline - callers would be given the option to talk directly to a 911 operator *anonymously!*

With the help of the 911 Center and the District Attorney's office, we are able to track the number of calls into the hotline. Call reports will be provided as they are made available.

	Jan-Jul	Aug*	Sep	Oct	Nov	Total
Calls to Voice Mail	603	80	93	97	85	958
Calls into 911 Center	0	58	132	73	76	339
<b>Total calls</b>	<b>603</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>1297</b>
Ave. 911 Calls / 24 hr period	0	1.5	4.4	2.4	2.5	2.7
Ave. Total Calls / 24 hr period	2.8	3.6	7.5	5.5	5.4	5.0

\*Calls from July 22 - Aug. 31 due to new system implementation

**Contact Info**

Operation Our Town - PO Box 2486 - Altoona PA 16603 - 814.296.8730 - oot@lsfiore.com - www.OperationOurTown.org

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