



Hampden County Sheriff's Shuffle 5K Returns Sunday to Help Domestic Violence Victims

(Media invited to cover the event on Sunday. Visuals include hundreds of race participants in vibrant colors, bands, food trucks, raffles, Sheriff Nick Cocchi and YWCA CEO Elizabeth Dineen delivering opening remarks and available for on-camera interviews, and of course, foliage of Ashley Reservoir in full bloom)

HOLYOKE -- After two years of postponement due to the pandemic, the Hampden County Sheriff's Shuffle 5K will return on Sunday, Oct. 16, with more than \$100,000 already raised to help victims of domestic violence in Western Massachusetts.

Online registration continues through Saturday evening, and day-of registration starts at the site of the race, the Ashley Reservoir in Holyoke, at 8:30 a.m. Sunday. The charity run/walk will step off on Sunday at 10 a.m.

To date, there are more than 400 people signed up to participate in the 5K run or take the 1.5-mile walk.

"I'm glad that we were able to bring the Sheriff's Shuffle back after missing two years due to COVID. And I'm proud that we're raising money to help victims of domestic violence, a societal problem that got worse during the pandemic," said Sheriff Nick Cocchi. "During the pandemic, almost a quarter of all bookings included a domestic violence-related charge. And too many of those offenders are arrested and released by the courts to return home to the same house as the victim. As a society, we can and need to do better."

Since the inaugural Sheriff's Shuffle in 1999, the charity race has brought together the community and raised money to help an agency that is dedicated to making a difference in Western Massachusetts. This year's recipient is the YWCA of Western Massachusetts as it aims to empower and assist the victims of domestic violence and human trafficking in Western Massachusetts.

The YWCA of Western Mass., based in Springfield, has seen a significant increase in demand for services throughout and following the COVID-19 Pandemic, as victims were stuck at home with their abusers for extended periods of time with little to no reprieve. The money raised will help victims with housing assistance.

“Throughout and since the pandemic, we’ve seen a dramatic increase in domestic violence, including instances where children are either witnesses or victims themselves,” said Elizabeth Dineen, CEO of the YWCA of Western Mass. “Our agency helps victims with several services including emergency housing and counseling, and we have a terrific program called ‘Kids Who Witness Violence.’ That program is designed to break the cycle of domestic violence with kids ages 3 through 18, and, sadly, it has a waiting list. Every dollar raised will allow us to help more people in need.”

In addition to the run/walk, the Sheriff’s Shuffle is a fun fall family event. Other attractions include refreshments from the Crave Food Truck & the Holyoke Elks Bar & Grill; fruit beverages from Cellf Juices; top place medals for 10 age brackets of each gender; a raffle with dozens of prizes; the Hampden County Sheriff’s Mounted Patrol Unit of horses; and live entertainment courtesy of the acoustic rock duo CO2 as well as female vocalist Lindsay Maynard.

The Sheriff’s Shuffle will take place on Sunday, Oct. 16, starting at 10 a.m. at the Ashley Reservoir - Elks Lodge, 250 Whitney Ave., Holyoke.

For more information, to register or just to make a donation, visit: <https://runsignup.com/Race/MA/Holyoke/SheriffsShuffle5kRunWalk>