



2023 Hampden County Sheriff's Shuffle 5K/Walk to Support Youth Leadership Academy

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The 2023 Hampden County Sheriff's Shuffle 5K Run/Walk is set for Sunday, Oct. 15 at Ashley Reservoir in Holyoke to raise money for Sheriff Nick Cocchi's Youth Leadership Academy.

The Youth Leadership Academy, now in its fifth year, is a free camp operated by Sheriff Cocchi's office to give young people with incarcerated parents or who live in economically challenged areas of Western Massachusetts a chance to experience a summer of fun, adventure and learning. The camp is operated thanks to donations, so the money raised directly benefits the young people the camp serves.

"This camp is a way of giving back to the community and building a positive relationship with law enforcement at a young age," Sheriff Cocchi said. "Summer camp is typically expensive, and many local families can't afford it. Our Youth Leadership Academy alleviates the financial concern and gives parents a break for a few weeks, while giving the kids some lessons and great memories. My goal is for this to continue to grow each year and have a positive impact on even more young people."

From late June to early August, the camp is held at the Brightwood Elementary School in Springfield. In addition to excursions to destinations around the region, children take part in daily activities ranging from arts and crafts and sports to mindfulness and reflexive yoga. Free breakfast and lunch are provided for all campers, as are positive role models and life experiences.

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The summer day camp began serving around 40 young people in 2019, and has grown in size, now including more than 150 children per week, ages 7 to 12. Outside of the six weeks of free camp, the Sheriff's staff also works with nonprofit partners to buy Christmas presents for YLA campers and their siblings each December.

Over the years, the Sheriff's Shuffle charity race has brought together the community and local agencies whose mission is to provide services to those in need. In 2022, the Sheriff's Shuffle returned after a two-year COVID-19 hiatus to raise money for the YWCA of Western Massachusetts to help victims of domestic violence.

Registration for the race and 1.5-mile walk is open through the day of the event, with a sign-up cost of \$35 per person in advance or \$40 the day of the race. Every registered participant will get an official Sheriff's Shuffle shirt.

Day-of-race registration begins at 8 a.m. and will take place inside the Holyoke Elks Lodge, 250 Whitney Ave., just a short distance from the starting line. The walking course will also be on-site. Both the run and the walk kick off at 10:30 a.m.

In addition to the run/walk, refreshments, food, awards, a raffle with dozens of prizes and live entertainment will be provided immediately following the run. Families are encouraged to stop by.

For more information, to register or just to make a donation, visit:

<https://runsignup.com/Race/MA/Holyoke/SheriffsShuffle5kRunWalk>

