

Sheriff Cocchi Joins Central High School Football Fans for National Unity Initiative

SPRINGFIELD, Mass. — Community unity took center stage Thursday night at Springfield Central High School, where students, local leaders and football fans came together to celebrate connection, kindness and the importance of building stronger communities.

The Golden Eagles added to the celebration with a 55-14 victory over the East Longmeadow Spartans as part of US United's Friday Night Lights Unity Seats initiative. Unity Seats brings people together through their shared love of high school football and encourages Americans to focus on the common ground that connects them.

Hampden County Sheriff Nick Cocchi joined the team captains at midfield for the pregame coin toss, taking part in an evening that emphasized the importance of building relationships, supporting young people and fostering a sense of community.

Students attending the game expressed support for the initiative's message of unity, reinforcing the importance of creating positive connections among young people and throughout the communities they call home.

"Our kids deserve to feel safe when they go to school, attend a basketball game or cheer on their friends under the Friday night lights," Sheriff Cocchi said. "We've seen too many tragedies in our own backyard, and we need to remember that building safer, stronger communities starts with how we treat one another. Unity doesn't start in Washington. It starts right here, in our neighborhoods, our schools and our communities."

The event was part of US United's nationwide Friday Night Lights Unity Seats initiative, developed in collaboration with the Sheriffs Unity Network, local law enforcement and uReport/DistrictWON. More than 100 high school football games across the country have participated in the initiative, which brings people together to discover shared values and build connections across differences.

The effort also highlights the national “Pass the Purple” campaign, encouraging Americans to counter negativity and division through simple acts of kindness, respect and unity.

For the Hampden County Sheriff’s Office, the initiative reflects the importance of community partnerships and positive relationships in helping young people feel safe, supported and connected.

To learn more about US United and its national unity initiatives, visit www.us-united.org.

HCSO photos from the event that can be used for publication, and found here.

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ABOUT US UNITED

US United is a nonprofit organization leading a national movement to build unity in America through storytelling, service and human connection. Co-founded by business leader Adam Mizel and Sheriff Chris Swanson, the organization works to demonstrate that Americans share common values and can bridge divides through community engagement. Its programs include the Sheriffs Unity Network, National Unity Day, Unity Seats at sporting events and monthly 30 For US unity conversations. Learn more at **us-united.org**.