

# Monmouth County Sheriff Youth Week 20th Anniversary Highlighted by Partnerships and Milestones

*By Sheriff Shaun Golden and Undersheriff Ted Freeman,  
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On July 9, 2012, 112 high school aged students with an interest in law enforcement arrived at the Monmouth County Police Academy to begin a week of intense training as part of the 20th Annual Sheriff Youth Week. Classes started at 7:30 AM each morning and ran until 4:00 PM each afternoon. Each day started with an hour of drill and concluded with an hour of physical training. Five days later, at a formal graduation ceremony on July 13th, 108 young men and women graduated at one of the largest graduations ever held at the Monmouth County Police Academy with an estimated 400 family and friends attending.

Monmouth County Sheriff Youth Week started in 1992 under Monmouth County Sheriff William M. Lanzaro with sixteen participants. The program has continued to steadily grow under four successive sheriffs, Sheriff Lanzaro, Sheriff Joseph W. Oxley, Sheriff Kim Guadagno (currently lieutenant governor of New Jersey) and current sheriff, Sheriff Shaun Golden over the past 20 years.

A total of thirty-four municipalities were represented at Sheriff Youth Week including Aberdeen, Allenhurst, Atlantic Highlands, Allentown, Asbury Park, Atlantic Highlands, Brick, Eatontown, Englishtown, Fair Haven, Farmingdale, Freehold Borough, Freehold Township, Hazlet, Howell, Jackson, Keansburg, Lake Como, Manalapan, Marlboro, Matawan, Middletown, Monmouth Beach, Neptune, Neptune City, Oakhurst, Pt. Pleasant, Red Bank, Shrewsbury, South River, Spring Lake, Spring Lake Heights, West Long Branch, and Wall.

The original sponsors of Sheriff Youth Week, William and Marie Wingard and their company, New Jersey Gravel and Sand, Inc., continue to underwrite the uniforms for the participants. "We are blessed to have the continuing commit-

ment of the Wingard family and New Jersey Gravel and Sand Company to keep this program going and growing during the past 20 years," said Sheriff Shaun Golden. "We look forward to continuing that partnership."

With the 20th Anniversary of Sheriff Youth Week came a new and exciting opportunity to partner. Neptune Township Superintendent of Schools David Mooij offered the facilities of Neptune High School for a "fitness day." On Wednesday, July 11th, 108 Sheriff Youth Week cadets reported to Neptune High School where they were offered a rotation of events including swimming, wall climbing, a challenge obstacle course and a runner's clinic on the quarter mile track. The group was broken into four squads and each squad was offered an hour at each of the four activities. After lunch, the cadets were offered a volunteer opportunity to participate in either a 2 mile fun run/walk on the state of the art cushioned track, or could participate in a 5K challenge – challenging Undersheriffs Michael Donovan and Ted Freeman to complete the 3.1 mile event. There was one hundred percent participation with ninety-five electing to participate in the 5K Challenge and thirteen in the 2 mile fun run/walk. Those who participated in the 5K Challenge received an "I Survived the Sheriff Youth Week 5K Challenge" tee shirt.

At Neptune High School, the fitness rotations and events were conducted by Sheriff's Office personnel and Neptune High School staff and students. The swimming rotation was conducted by Corrections Officer William Fancher and Sheriff's Officer David Wentworth with support from Ms. Sara Dyer, Aquatic Director at Neptune High School and Neptune student assistants Dayna Knouse, Tara Maniace, Allison Moen and Amanda Jegou. The challenge course and wall climb events were conducted respectively by Commander Tommy

Atkins, USN (Ret.), Chief Stephen Labenski, USCG (Ret.) and students Ryan Balzarano and Joseph Oates. The running clinic and 2 Mile Fun Run/Walk and 5 K Challenge were conducted by Manalapan Township Police Sergeant Maggie Freeman and her dad, Undersheriff Ted Freeman, Sheriff Youth Week director.

Neptune also provided lunch to the students and staff coordinated by Monica Cipully, Director of Dining Services/Chartwells and Chef Joe Piddington. Neptune provided daily transportation to Sheriff Youth Week for its students and those in the area of Neptune coordinated by Denise Casper, Neptune transportation coordinator.

“Thanks to Superintendent David Mooij and Neptune High School Principal Richard Allen, our Sheriff Youth Week students were given an opportunity to learn about the importance of fitness in law enforcement and have fun at the same time,” said Sheriff Golden. “We are most grateful for that opportunity for these future law enforcement officers.”

Classes during the week included presentations from the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office (Lt. Gary Friedhoff - Narcotics), National Parks Service (Operations Chief Robert Loudon), Naval Criminal Investigative Services (NCIS) (Special Agent Alison Caldwell), United States Marshal’s Fugitive Taskforce (Sheriff’s Officer David Wentworth), and the New Jersey State Parole Board (former Cape May County Sheriff, former US Marshal, and current Parole Board Chairman James T. Plousis.)

Retired State Police Captain Robert Ferguson, who also served as a detective sergeant with the Monmouth County Prosecutor’s Office, and is an adjunct professor at Brookdale Community College, conducted a class on Crime Scene Investigation with the assistance of Sheriff’s Officer Claire Peluso.

Staff from all divisions of the Sheriff’s Office provided training that included a Communications Division class and tour of the 9-1-1 center, an overview of Corrections by Corrections Officer

Tracy Tift, and an interactive demonstration of the Corrections Division Emergency Response Team under Sergeant Byron Jones. Additionally, Emmy Award winning Public Information Officer Cynthia Scott gave a class on law enforcement and the media and Office of Emergency Management Coordinator Mike Oppgaard presented a segment on emergency preparedness. Sheriff’s Officer Jay Aretino conducted a canine demonstration.

The Sheriff Youth Week staff did an outstanding job with the largest class in the history of the program. That staff included Supervisor John Cuccia - assistant director, Sheriff’s Officer Thomas Ruocco - coordinator and PT instructor, Sheriff’s Officer Belinda Cooper and Detective Denise Palmisano - assistant coordinators and PT instructors, Sheriff’s Officer Iliana Nunez - assistant coordinator and student tracking, volunteer Richard Eisenbeis, M.A., - educational advisor, Corrections Officers Brian Johnson - full time drill instructor, assisted mornings by Corrections Officer Edward Brett, and Sheriff Youth Week graduate intern Constance Kniesler, a 2011 graduate of Sheriff Youth Week and currently a Criminal Justice major at Mount Saint Mary’s University in Maryland. Registration, attendance, certificates, programs and all clerical related functions were handled by administrative assistant Kathy Morrison along with printing coordination with Mark Allen and Mike Purdy for document services support for programs and certificates.

Undersheriffs Michael Donovan (Law Enforcement Division) and Robert Dawson (Communications Division and Office of Emergency Management,) along with Warden Brian Elwood (Monmouth County Correctional Institution) were all very supportive in making Sheriff’s Office personnel available as trainers and staff for Sheriff Youth Week.

Public Information Officer Cynthia Scott provided exceptional and diverse media coverage throughout the week with optimum coverage across all media formats. Chief Clerk Ann Merli coordinated all administrative scheduling during the week.



*Rich Eisenbeis, VISCOMP Volunteer and SYW cadets enjoying the swimming challenge at Neptune High School during Sheriff Youth Week*



The 20th Anniversary Class was a class of milestones which included:

- Largest class ever (accepted 132 – 112 reported first day – graduated 108)
- First class to partner with a school – Neptune High School
- First time for a fitness day with swimming, challenge course, wall climb and 2 mile and 5K run/walk events
- First set of quadruplets to attend (the Kenny quadruplets)
- First time to have a graduate of SYW return as an intern (Constance Kniesler)
- First time a hearing impaired person participated in the program
- First time National Sheriffs' Association partnered with us to supply surplus conference bags and name tag holders for the class to use.

Sheriff Youth Week was honored, once again, by having New Jersey Lieutenant Governor Kim Guadagno as a guest speaker at graduation. The former Monmouth County Sheriff has attended every Sheriff Youth Week graduation since being elected New Jersey's first lieutenant governor. Lt. Governor Guadagno makes a point to meet with the graduates in a classroom prior to graduation and orders all staff to leave the room while she shares her time and wisdom with these young men and women.

Does Sheriff Youth Week make a difference? A parent of one of this year's cadets wrote, "I am writing to express my gratitude for your program... The program from day one, revealed itself to be a catalyst ... to help restore self esteem and confidence in my son." "I wish you success with it [Sheriff Youth Week] in the coming years and hope that it is always here for children like my son, who may come away with something invaluable from this experience."

As planning begins for the 21st Annual Sheriff Youth Week in July 2013, the Monmouth County Sheriff's Office looks forward to expanding our partnerships and to continually improve the Sheriff Youth Week experience as we help cultivate the law enforcement professionals of the future by instilling confidence in our cadets today. ★