

EastonPatch

School on Wheels Race/Walk Organizers Aim For a Higher Goal

The event is scheduled for April 28 this year

March 28, 2012

Submitted to Easton Patch:

How do you make a great fundraising Race and Walk even better? If you're the non-profit organization, [School on Wheels of Massachusetts](#) (SOWMA), you start by making it bigger.



That's the goal the co-directors of SOWMA's *Outrunning Homelessness Race & Fun Walk* are aiming for in 2012 by opening the event to teams as well as individual runners and walkers. Generously supported by anchor sponsor Crescent Credit Union with additional support from Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage Cares and lead sponsors ABM, Brockton Animal Hospital, Columbia Gas of Massachusetts, **E.O.M.S. Recycling**, Good Samaritan Medical Center, HarborOne Credit Union, Maplewood Country Day Camp, Mutual Bank, Siemens, the Race & Fun Walk will kick off at 9:00 am on Saturday, April 28, at Borderland State Park, 259 Massapoag Ave., Easton. Registration begins at 8 am.

Founded in 2011 by a group of [Oliver Ames High School](#) (OA) student volunteers and cross-country team members, the first Race & Fun Walk attracted 200 individuals and 25 corporate sponsors. With a deeper understanding of event planning and execution under their feet this year, co-directors Dennis Harkins, a Suffolk University freshman and OA alumni from Easton, and **Lori Besegai, Director of Education & Marketing for E.O.M.S. Recycling, Inc. of Brockton**, are aiming to connect with a broader audience.

"We are hoping to attract 500 people and 50 corporate sponsors in 2012," Harkins projects, noting that just 50 teams of ten are needed to reach their objective. "Sometimes, if you ask a company for a sponsorship, they can't do it. But if they enter a 10-person team of their employees, it's like getting a corporate sponsorship and it gets them involved with SOWMA."

As an added incentive, each team of 10 that registers will save \$50 over the cost of 10 individual enrollments and receive t-shirts and have a separate registration area on the day of the event.

Bringing the community together to support SOWMA's mission of providing academic support and one-on-one tutoring to children experiencing homelessness is the real purpose of the Race & Fun Walk and organizers are already nearing the finish line on that front. The number of companies that have signed up to be lead sponsors exceeds their hopes, and there's been "a tremendous outpouring of support," from local businesses, Besegai says. "We're really excited about the businesses' willingness to support the cause."

With an estimated 50,000 homeless children enrolled in Massachusetts public schools and an estimated dropout rate of more than 75% among homeless teens, SOWMA has seen dramatic growth in the need for its life-changing services. Since its 2004 founding, SOWMA has provided more than 26,000 hours of one-on-one tutoring to students impacted by homelessness in grades pre-K through 12; served nearly 1,200 homeless students in 10 locations, including family shelters, afterschool programs, and community centers; and distributed over 3,000 new backpacks filled with educational supplies. Fifteen SOWMA students have enrolled in college, one has graduated, and 15 more are planning to matriculate in the fall. The money raised by the *Race & Fun Walk* will allow SOWMA to continue serving students who have no place to call home.