

Francis R. “Dick” Ford Distinguished Service Award

Michael J. Ashe, Jr.

Sheriff (Retired)

Hampden County Sheriff's Department

Ludlow, Massachusetts



Retired Sheriff Michael J. Ashe, Jr. is a native of Springfield, Massachusetts who served the Hampton County Sheriff's Department from 1974 to 2016. He holds a master's degree in social work from Boston College. Prior to taking the helm as Sheriff, he served as the first Assistant Director of Downey Side, which provides long-term care to children in need of stability in their home situations.

Sheriff Ashe's motto of correctional supervision was "Strength reinforced with decency; firmness dignified with fairness." Sheriff Ashe strongly believes that every offender who wants to live a law-abiding life should be given the tools and the direction to do so. He adopted a "40-hour work week" policy where sentenced inmates dedicate at least 40 hours each week to activities designed to help them be successful upon release. Facilities under Sheriff Ashe's administration received 27 consecutive audits of 95% or higher by the American Correctional Association.

Sheriff Ashe is a believer in "community corrections." He believes that a county correctional facility should be part of the community rather than an isolated "fortress in the woods." Toward that end, he established more than 300 community partnerships with nonprofit and public agencies to assist in reentry efforts. He also opened the nation's first dedicated reentry center in 1996, designed to help an offender overcome all barriers to living a successful, crime-free life. Most recently, Sheriff Ashe was appointed to the Massachusetts Correctional Funding Commission, which studies how to most effectively spend taxpayer money to maximize the return on investment in corrections.

Sheriff Ashe was a past president of the Massachusetts Sheriffs Association. His many accolades include:

- The White House "Champions of Change" Award under President Obama,
- The Howard B. Gill Lifetime Achievement Award for outstanding commitment to the field of criminal justice,
- The Beverly Ross Fliegel Public Service Memorial Award for "bringing a clear vision of social justice to the criminal justice system", and
- The William Pynchon Award for contributions to the Western Massachusetts community.