

21 arrests in vape sting

Suffolk cracks down on illegal sales to minors

BY STEFANIE DAZIO
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Suffolk County officials on Tuesday announced a crack-down on illegal vape sales over the weekend that resulted in 21 arrests.

County Executive Steve Bellone said vaping products are marketed toward children with sweet flavors and decorative packaging and he will work with the county legislature to increase penalties for repeat offenders who sell to those who are under 21 so they are hit “in the pocketbook.”

The Food and Drug Administration last week called youth vaping an “epidemic” and has threatened makers and sellers of e-cigarettes if they don’t curtail their sales to minors. More than 2 million middle and high school students were users of e-cigarettes in 2017, according to FDA estimates, and use of the products is rising.

“We have zero tolerance for those who would break the law to sell these harmful, addictive products to our kids,” Bellone said.

The police department conducted an undercover sting over the weekend at 101 locations throughout the department’s seven precincts, where



Vape products on display at a news conference by law enforcement officials Tuesday in Hauppauge.

21 individuals allegedly sold to minor undercover agents. They face misdemeanor charges, including second-degree unlawfully dealing with a child, which could result in up to 3 months in jail and a \$500 fine, and the sale of e-cigarettes to people under the age of 21, which could mean 15 days to 1 year in jail and a \$1,000 fine.

“This should serve as a message,” Bellone said. “You will be identified, you will be caught and you will be held account-

able.”

Two of the businesses were repeat offenders, said Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart, who called the issue “a public safety and a public health hazard” that is being combated through education and enforcement.

“Vaping among teens is a growing problem,” she said.

The police department spoke to more than 10,000 students in the county during the 2017-2018 school year about the dangers of vaping — its most-requested

school program — and plans to expand the initiative, she said.

Suffolk officials and non-profit organizations work both with students as young as fifth-graders as well as schools and adults to discourage the use of vaping products.

“This is another aspect of protecting kids in our community,” Bellone said.

Suffolk County Health Commissioner Dr. James Tomarken said some users also vape with marijuana.

Floral Park to allow vape shops, hookah bars

BY KHRISTOPHER J. BROOKS
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Floral Park trustees approved an amendment Tuesday that will allow vape shops and hookah bars to open in the village, but only in a designated section of the community.

Trustees unanimously passed the amendment 5-0, though they said they would rather ban the establishments because of the negative health effects of vape smoke. One Floral Park official noted that the village cannot deny a business its right to open just because it intends to sell vape.

“We do not want this in our community, but the reality of

what we have to do is here,” said Mayor Dominick Longobardi.

Hookah bars and vape shops can now apply to open in Floral Park’s B3 commercial district, an area reserved for massage parlors, tattoo parlors and adult bookstores.

Before trustees voted, Floral Park police officers described the health risks of hookah smoke. Sgt. William Doherty said people who inhale the smoke from a hookah bong were taking in a “veritable periodic table” of nickel, lead, copper, uranium, and chromium.

“An hour of hookah smoking is like smoking a pack of cigarettes,” Doherty said.

Floral Park became interested in regulating hookah bars and vape shops a few years ago when a man submitted an application to open a vape shop on Jericho Turnpike in the village, Longobardi said, and village officials realized they had no law governing vape shops.

“The owner decided not to go through with it, which made us think about how we wanted to go through with these,” Longobardi said about future vape shop applications.

Vape shops sell e-cigarettes, devices that vaporize flavored liquid and often contain nicotine. The resulting smoke fumes contain fewer toxic substances than traditional ciga-

rettes. E-cigarette sales began climbing on Long Island in 2014.

“And we also want to make sure it’s not close to our children,” he said.

Floral Park has no hookah bars or vape shops. The village placed a moratorium on hookah bar and vape shop applications more than a year ago. Village officials spent that time researching how other Long Island municipalities regulate hookah and vape establishments.

In April, the Town of Babylon banned vaping in public parks and barred vape shops and hookah bars from opening in business zones.

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CORRECTIONS

A spokesman for the Northport VA Medical Center provided a response on behalf of Veterans Affairs Secretary Robert Wilkie for a story Tuesday about hiring and repair funds for VA hospitals. Because of editing errors, the story incorrectly identified Wilkie as acting secretary and stated a spokesman for Wilkie did not respond to a request for comment.

The puzzle in Tuesday’s chess column contains errors. A corrected diagram and solution will appear in next Tuesday’s column.

THIS DATE IN HISTORY

1881 The 20th president of the United States, James A. Garfield, died 2½ months after being shot by Charles Guiteau; Chester Alan Arthur became president.

1934 Bruno Hauptmann was arrested in New York and charged with the kidnap-murder of 20-month-old Charles A. Lindbergh Jr.

1985 The Mexico City area was struck by a devastating earthquake that killed at least 9,500 people.

2008 Struggling to stave off financial catastrophe, the Bush administration laid out a bailout plan calling for a takeover of a half-trillion dollars or more in worthless mortgages and other bad debt held by tottering institutions. Relieved investors sent stocks soaring around the globe.

2017 A 7.1 magnitude quake struck central Mexico, killing more than 360 people.