

# A practical step to diversify police

Group to help poor pay \$125 exam fee

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A Suffolk community group has called on the county's police department and sheriff's office to become more inclusive — and is putting its money where its mouth is.

The Economic Opportunity Council of Suffolk will cover the cost of the \$125 exam fee, charged by both departments, for county residents with incomes at or below 125 percent of the federal poverty level.

"We don't have enough law enforcement officers from lower economic groups, especially people of color," said Adrian Fassett, the council's

chief executive. "If we remove the impediment of the fee, we can get more kinds of people in law enforcement."

Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart and Sheriff Errol Toulon welcomed the council's effort to make their agencies more diverse.

"My goal is to encourage as many people as possible to take the correction officer exam," said Toulon, whose office manages the county jails in Yaphank and Riverhead. "But the registration fee is prohibitive for some individuals, especially if they would like to take multiple tests."

For Hart, the council's offer complements the \$215,000 marketing blitz that she and County Executive Steve Bellone unveiled last fall to encourage members of minority communities to take the department's June 15 exam. The department also expanded its recruiting staff last year from one to four officers to attract more minority candidates, she said.

"This is great," Hart said of the council's effort. "It is another piece in our outreach campaign."

The campaign was necessary to help mend the department's once-strained relationship with the county's Latino community, Hart and Bellone said.

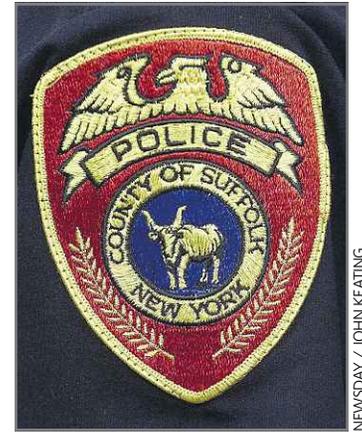
In late 2013, Suffolk police reached an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to overhaul its policing of minority communities after a yearslong federal civil rights investigation prompted by the fatal stabbing of Ecuadorian immigrant Marcelo Lucero by a group of teens in Patchogue. The 2008 death brought to light allegations that the police hadn't fully investigated reports of other attacks on

Latino immigrants.

Last fall, a Justice Department assessment found that Suffolk police had made substantial progress in the major areas being tracked — bias-free policing, hate crimes and hate incidents, language assistance, allegations of police misconduct and community engagement — but warned that "a persistent mistrust" remains between the Latino community and the police. Federal monitoring is ongoing.

Black candidates, Fassett said, are reluctant to take the police exam because of so few African-Americans on the force.

"That is something we obviously want to remedy," Hart said. "We want the community to feel that they are part of this department, that we are all in this together. If they have a desire to



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serve, we have a desire to have them as part of our family."

The sheriff's office correction officer exam will be offered April 27; the registration deadline is March 13. The deadline for the June 15 police department exam is April 3.

The council will cap the amount it spends on the exams, Fassett said. Assistance will be provided on a first-come, first-served basis, he said.

The federal poverty level depends on the size of a family. For an individual, 125 percent of the poverty level is an annual income of \$15,175. For a family of four, the amount is \$31,375.

For more information on the fee-waiver program, go to eoc-suffolk.com.

## SAILOR WHO FAMOUSLY STOLE A KISS ON V-J DAY DIES AT 95

The Associated Press

PROVIDENCE, R.I. — The ecstatic sailor shown kissing a woman in Times Square celebrating the end of World War II died Sunday. George Mendonsa was 95.

Mendonsa fell and had a seizure at the assisted-living facility in Middletown, Rhode Island, where he lived with his wife of 70 years, his daughter, Sharon Mollieur, told The Providence Journal.

Mendonsa was shown kissing Greta Zimmer Friedman, a dental assistant in a nurse's uniform, on Aug. 14, 1945. Known as V-J Day, it was the day Japan surrendered to the United States. People spilled into the New York City streets to celebrate the news.

Mendonsa planted a kiss on Friedman, whom he had never met.

The photo by Alfred Eisenstaedt was first published in

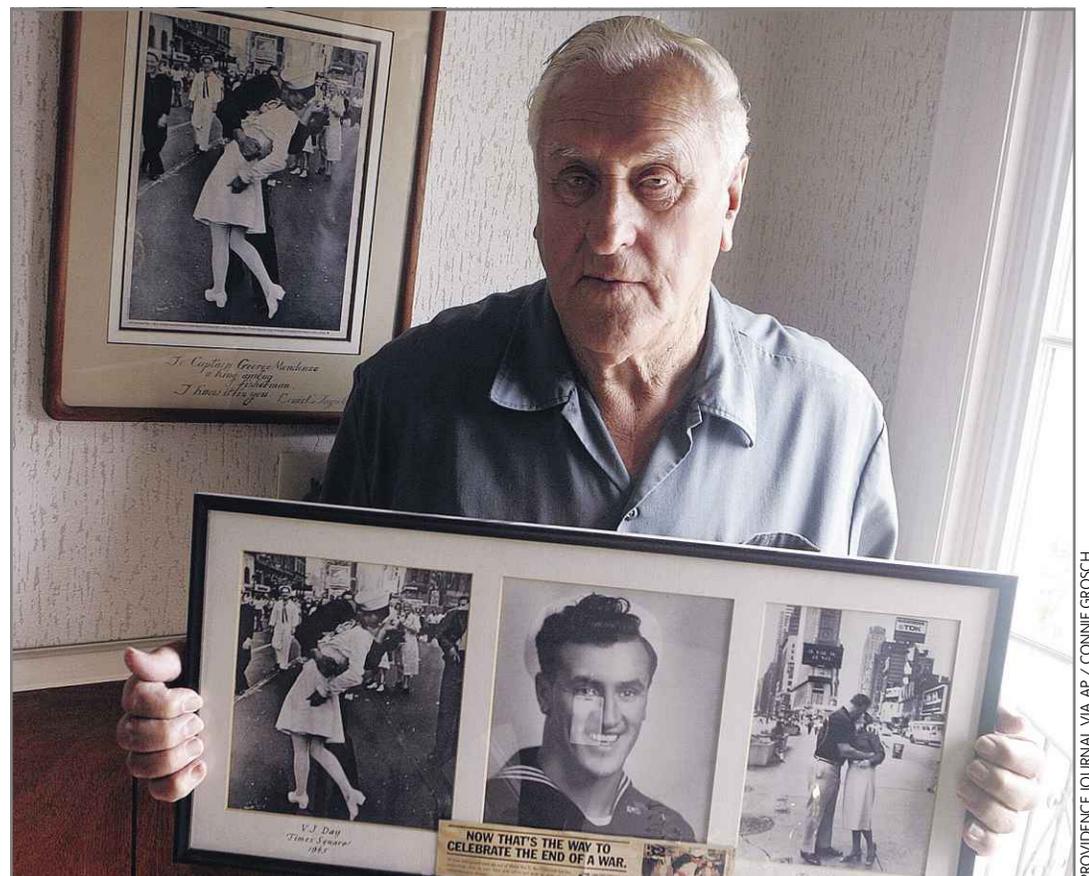
Life magazine and became one of the most famous photographs of the 20th century. It's called "V-J Day in Times Square," but is known to most as "The Kiss."

Several people later claimed to be the kissing couple. It was years before Mendonsa and Friedman were confirmed to be the couple.

Mendonsa served on a destroyer during the war and was on leave when the end of the war was announced. He has said Friedman reminded him of nurses on a hospital ship that he saw care for wounded sailors.

Mendonsa died two days before his 96th birthday. The family has not yet made funeral arrangements.

Friedman fled Austria during the war as a 15-year-old girl. She died in 2016 at the age of 92 at a hospital in Richmond, Virginia, from complications of old age.



George Mendonsa in 2009 with copies of the Eisenstaedt photo taken in Times Square on Aug. 14, 1945.

PROVIDENCE JOURNAL VIA AP / CONNIE GROSCHE