



Laura Curran, Patrick Ryder and Kevan Abrahams announce the Rave Panic Button system.

## Enhanced-alarm app for Nassau libraries

BY CHAU LAM  
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Public libraries in Nassau County will soon have access to a smartphone-based emergency alert system that officials say will allow staffers to instantly notify police of a mass shooting or other emergency.

Starting Tuesday, Nassau County Executive Laura Curran said, officials will begin making the software available to the staff at the more than 50 public libraries in Nassau.

“Reducing law enforcement response time is critical when it comes to reducing the amount of deaths in an active-shooter situation,” Curran said Monday at a news conference outside the Uniondale Public Library in Uniondale.

The app, which offers digital panic buttons, is already in use in most public schools in Nassau, officials said. In Suffolk, officials last week said they will borrow \$2 million to buy the licensing rights for the Rave Panic Button app and make it available to public and private schools in that county.

The people who work at 911 call centers, by law, must answer calls in the order they arrive, regardless of their ur-

gency, Nassau Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said. The app, he said, allows emergency calls to bypass the 911 system, and sends the calls directly to a terminal inside the police department’s communications bureau.

“And because of that separate terminal, we get the call immediately,” Ryder said.

In slightly more than half of active shooting situations, the shooting is over within 2 minutes, Ryder said. It takes Nassau police an average of 3 minutes to respond to an emergency. The app, Ryder said, allows the police department to cut response time by 30 seconds to 1 minute.

“If I can close that gap between two and three [minutes] is how we save lives,” he said.

In libraries where internet-based camera systems are already installed, the police have the capability to enter the library’s system remotely and monitor activities inside, Ryder said.

Like schools, library boards will decide when they want the police to access their internet-based camera systems. Each library will sign a memorandum of understanding with the police department.

Not all officials are con-

vinced that the Rave Panic Button app is effective at improving police response time.

Suffolk Legis. Robert Trotta (R-Fort Salonga), a former Suffolk County detective who worked on the FBI Gang Task Force, said the Rave Panic Button app is redundant.

If the software works, he said, he wonders why the company has disclaimers on its website that include telling users that they “agree the services are provided for convenience only” and that the “services must not be relied upon to provide emergency response services.”

“This is nothing more than a speed dial,” Trotta said.

Todd Miller, chief operating officer for Rave Mobile Safety, the Massachusetts company that designed the app, said he is not in a position to comment on the disclaimers. The app, Miller said, does more to help police cut down the response than just calling 911. At the same time it notifies police of an emergency, Miller said, it also notifies other users on the same system — teachers or library staff — with information such as the type of emergency being reported.

“You don’t get that with a plain 911 call,” Miller said.

# LI SCHOOLS

## All but one of Island’s 124 public districts start in Sept. 4-6 window

BY JOIE TYRRELL  
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Most students in Long Island’s public schools will kick off the 2018-19 academic year on one of the three days following Labor Day, with 111 of 124 districts across Nassau and Suffolk counties holding the first day of class on Sept. 4 or Sept. 5 and 12 systems on Sept. 6.

One district — Jericho — is slated to hold its first instructional day during the last week of August. Teachers and staff will report on Aug. 28 for a conference day, and students will begin classes the next day, a Wednesday, and continue through that Friday. The district is closed for Labor Day on Monday, Sept. 3.

The staggered nature of students’ back-to-school days is typical for the Island, driven by when Labor Day falls and whether teachers unions in individual districts adhere to contracts specifying that classes begin after the holiday.

This year’s opening days are in a relatively compact time frame. Last year, for example, there were seven different “first days” spread over a 10-day span.

Of the Island’s public school systems, Jericho usually schedules the longest year, with a 186-day academic calendar. Most public schools set calendars that fall between the state-mandated minimum of 180 days

of classroom instruction and 184 days. The number of days of instruction above 180 is a matter of district choice.

Officials in the Jericho district noted the value of the extra time.

“We negotiated [with teachers] for a longer calendar about 15 years ago, under the notion that more is better,” said Henry L. Grishman, superintendent of the 3,100-student system.

“I believe philosophically that a longer school day is better for kids and a longer school year is better for kids,” he said.

After Labor Day, classes start in 47 districts on Sept. 4, 64 districts on Sept. 5 and 12 districts on Sept. 6. One district — William Floyd, based in Mastic Beach — splits start dates for students between Sept. 5 and 6.

In addition to the Jericho district, administrators, teachers and staff in 55 districts are slated to report for conference days or staff development days in the last week of August.

Opening days in private and parochial schools vary as well. Many schools under the jurisdiction of the Diocese of Rockville Centre’s Department of Education begin classes on Sept. 5 or 6.

Some have tailored their start. For example, Kellenberg Memorial High School in Uniondale, which serves grades 6 through 12, will hold a day of orientation for new students in grades six, seven and nine on Aug. 29, widen that to include all stu-

## NYCLU: Nassau

BY ELLEN YAN  
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The Nassau County Police Department uses “Y” for yellow to describe Asian-American officers and “I” for Native Americans, the New York Civil Liberties Union said as it published a database of records from police departments across the state.

Nassau police officials said the designations stem from a 25-year-old information tech-

nology system and promised to “immediately” revise them.

The letter designations were found in a chart on the department’s diversity for January 2016, according to personnel documents posted on the NYCLU’s database. Minorities made up 37 percent of the county’s residents but 18 percent of Nassau County police officers, the NYCLU said.

Behind the Badge, an NYCLU report released this month based on three years of public informa-

# OPEN ON TIGHTER TIME FRAME



West Hempstead schools Superintendent Dan Rehman at the Chestnut Street School, where workers prepped for back-to-school days.

dents in those grades on Aug. 30 and 31, and have the first day of class for students in all grades on Sept. 4.

Later in September, public schools are closed for the Jewish holidays of Rosh Hashanah on Sept. 10 and 11 and Yom Kippur on Sept. 19.

The Hicksville district is among those that will be closed Nov. 7 during observance of Diwali, a key Hindu holiday known as the “Festival of Lights” that was built into the

school calendar for the first time last year.

Marianne Litzman, the district’s superintendent, said the district has 180 instructional days and its 5,300-plus students will report Sept. 4 for the first day of classes.

“It is a very hopeful and exciting time,” she said. “Students are eager from the summer to come back and see all of their friends and ... there is a lot of energy in the air.”

Students in the William

Floyd district start over two days, with kindergartners through ninth-graders beginning class on Sept. 5 and those in the 10th through 12th grades starting school the next day. With that approach, school officials said, freshmen have a day of introduction to the high school before the older students also are in the building.

As the first day of high school can sometimes feel overwhelming for students, “we believe that this one day helps to ease the

transition from middle school to high school,” district spokesman James Montalto said.

For West Hempstead Superintendent Dan Rehman, the Sept. 5 opening day in the 2,000-student district’s five schools will mark his first year as the top administrator in the system. He was recently named superintendent and aims to go from school to school at the various times students arrive.

He said he definitely will be at the Chestnut Street School —

## SCHOOL STARTS

When schools open by district  
[newsday.com/data](http://newsday.com/data)

the district’s Kindergarten Center — where a ritual on the first day of school is the taking of photos of teachers, staff, and the new students with their families.

“Opening day does set the tone for the year,” Rehman said.

Kenneth Bossert, superintendent of the Elwood district and president of the Suffolk County School Superintendents Association, noted the importance of districts’ conference days before the start of school, when all staff and employees report to work. In Elwood, the conference day is Sept. 4 and students return on Sept. 5.

Bossert said the district likes to bring the entire faculty, staff and Board of Education together to prepare for the new school year.

Each year has a different theme, and this year’s is “mindfulness,” with school leaders looking at ways to incorporate that philosophy into the curriculum.

He said the first day is one of the most exciting days of the school year.

“I would have to say the students don’t sleep the night before and neither do the teachers . . . or the superintendent,” Bossert said. “It is a pleasant mix of both excitement and anxiety.”

With Bart Jones

## police chart uses racially derogatory tags

tion requests to 23 police departments, also said Nassau, like many departments, resisted the group’s requests for access to public records that covered police stops, use of force, department diversity and other issues.

“We’re really just looking for transparency and accountability and at this point, the Nassau County Police Department is not really answerable to anybody,” said Susan Gottehrer, director of the NYCLU’s Nassau

chapter. “If they get to see us, we should get to see them.”

She said “yellow” to describe Asian-Americans is “obviously derogatory” and that Native American is more respectful and specific than the “I” for “Indian.”

“Language is a real indicator of the culture of an institution,” Gottehrer said. “The Nassau County Police Department really needs to make it clear to all the people it protects that it is sensitive.”

The NYCLU report prompted Nassau County Executive Laura Curran to order a countywide review of all computer programs, her spokesman said Monday.

“There will be no vestige of discriminatory language moving forward,” spokesman Michael Martino said. “Native and Asian-Americans will be properly referenced in our computer systems. We are looking for any other programs throughout the county which may have

improper notations and will make immediate changes.”

In a statement, Police Commissioner Patrick Ryder said the department is not biased as it strives to protect all residents.

“The department enjoys an excellent rapport with all of its residents and has established the Commissioner’s Community Counsel to promote information sharing and enhanced relationships in all of our communities,” Ryder said. “In this

particular situation, this computer program was developed over a quarter century ago and in no way has the use of these letters reflected any bias toward our Asian-American or Native American residents.”

Ryder said his department will review the NYCLU findings and make recommendations. “Our goal is to continue to provide the best law enforcement to all members of our communities,” he said.