

Suffolk adds 33 police

New academy graduates from NYPD, military

BY STEFANIE DAZIO
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Thirty-three Suffolk County police recruits graduated from the academy Friday, including a new officer who said he felt safer growing up in Brentwood and Central Islip when he saw a marked cruiser nearby.

Officer Kevin Vega, 24, attended Ralph G. Reed Middle School in Central Islip and rarely felt safe walking home as he encountered drug activity and gangs.

A marked Suffolk police cruiser's presence, however, reassured him, he said.

"As I walked home at the end of the day, I felt a lot more comfortable, a lot more relaxed and a lot more safe with just the presence of that officer in that car being there," he said in an interview. "So now, I became a police officer because I want to be that officer, sitting in that car, inspiring others, helping others and making others feel safe."

Vega, a 2012 Central Islip High School graduate who is studying criminal justice at Farmingdale State College, will begin his career in the First Precinct in West Babylon. He also is a department-certified Spanish interpreter.

"Now he's one of us," Police Commissioner Geraldine Hart said at the graduation ceremony at Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood.

The class — the department's 174th — includes three officers who came from the NYPD and 10 who are military veterans, of-



Graduates stand during graduation of the 174th recruit class of the Suffolk police department Friday.

ficials said. Twenty-five recruits are from Suffolk County, five are from Nassau and three hail from New York City. Twenty-eight recruits are white, four are Hispanic and one is Asian. Five of the new officers are women.

Thirty-six percent of the class, including Vega, are fluent in Spanish.

"Having organic, native Spanish speakers helps us better serve our communities," Chief of Department Stuart Cameron said in an interview.

After a 30-week academy and more than 1,000 hours of train-

ing — a week longer than previously because it included additional training — the new officers will now go to the force's precincts for field training.

"We expected and demanded the best and you delivered," Hart said.

Recruit Class President Officer Craig Capobianco Jr., a Marine, said recruits had to go home and iron their uniforms, shine their shoes — which were never shiny enough for their instructors' standards — and study for the next day. He congratulated his fellow classmates and told them to be safe out in

the streets.

"Wear that shield with pride and integrity, and know that it can easily be tarnished," he said.

County Executive Steve Belone said the county currently had historically low crime rates and was "turning the corner here with innovative strategies" to fight Long Island's heroin epidemic.

"This department has been in the forefront of confronting and overcoming the challenge of MS-13," he added, and has "put that gang, that criminal organization, on the run."

STATE DEM HOPEFULS RALLY ON LI

BY CANDICE FERRETTE
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Zephyr Teachout, a candidate in the Democratic primary for state attorney general, rallied supporters in Hempstead on Friday evening with a promise to investigate the business practices of President Donald Trump.

"It is not enough to take on Donald Trump. We have deep problems in our society. But we need to take on Donald Trump with everything we have," Teachout told an audience of about 80 people gathered inside the American Legion Post 390.

Teachout, 46, a Fordham law professor and activist, also vowed to be a watchdog against corruption in state government while also protecting student data and the right for students to opt out of standardized state testing.

She was joined by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Democratic nominee in the 14th Congressional District of Queens and the Bronx, and New York City Councilman Jumaane Williams, 42, of Brooklyn, who is a candidate for lieutenant governor.

Many in the audience came to see Ocasio-Cortez, 28, a political rising star since her June 26 defeat of Rep. Joseph Crowley, who has held the seat for nearly 20 years.

All three candidates urged voters to support their "progressive movement" and "fight" the Democratic establishment when they go to the polls on primary day, Sept. 13.

Jeannette Deutermann, an education activist from Bellmore and head of Long Island Opt-Out, said she attended the event and supports Teachout, particularly when it affects student testing, securing student data and opposing charter schools.

"We need someone who will have our back," Deutermann said.

Mike Golan, 39, of Merrick said the candidates represent "a wider progressive agenda that impacts working people."

State creates memorial 9/11 license plates

BY MICHAEL GORMLEY
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ALBANY — A new license plate design will soon be available as an option for New Yorkers that commemorates the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks while raising funds for scholarships for relatives of the victims of the tragedy.

On Friday, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo signed the bill spon-

sored by State Sen. Kenneth LaValle (R-Port Jefferson) and Assemb. Fred Thiele Jr. (I-Sag Harbor).

New Yorkers can request the special plate design for a \$25 fee charged for commemorative plates. The plate carries the official symbol of the Sept. 11 memorial in Manhattan, which includes images of the Twin Towers that were destroyed and the Pentagon, which was damaged

in the attacks, and an image of the American flag. The proceeds will go to the World Trade Center Scholarship Fund.

"These commemorative license plates will serve as a vivid and continuing reminder of the lives lost, the courage found, and the sacrifices made," Thiele said when the bill was passed in June. "This legislation sends a powerful message that they have not been forgotten."

"On September 11, 2001, our nation and, in particular our state, experienced an unforgettable tragedy," LaValle said Friday. "The new license plates will provide a measure of comfort for the families of those who tragically lost loved ones on that day." An added measure of relief, he said, will be knowing children of the deceased will be able to access scholarship funds for college tuition.