

# Updating drug lessons

## D.A.R.E. school program targets opioid epidemic

BY KESHIA CLUKEY  
keshia.clukey@newsday.com

The Shelter Island school district is the first in the state to roll out a new D.A.R.E. program aimed at combating the growing opioid epidemic, and other districts across the Island and state are looking to follow.

"It could happen anywhere, so why not give our kids all the protection, all the information, all the preventative dialogues they can have with other people, so that when they're faced with this they know what to do," Shelter Island schools Superintendent Christine Finn said.

If the program prevents one person from overdosing, it will be a success, she said.

The D.A.R.E., or Drug Abuse Resistance Education, curriculum includes a series of police-led lessons focusing on opioid and over-the-counter and prescription drug abuse prevention.

"We know that children can come into contact with this fairly easy, if they had an injury, if their parent took something, their grandparent took something, and they had it in their house," said Shelter Island Police Officer Anthony Rando, who teaches D.A.R.E. in the 200-plus student K-12 school district. "We want them to know what this medication is and the dangers of it, so they can make safe and responsible choices."

Rando is one of 2,000 officers nationwide who have been trained in the new curriculum, and began teaching it to seventh-graders in mid-October.

"Growing up, I've known people that have abused medication. Being a police officer, I've revived people using nasal Narcan and I know it's a big problem here," Rando said.

There were 555 deaths related to opioids in 2016 — 195 in Nassau County and 360 in Suffolk County, according to data from both county medical examiner's offices.

The remote community of Shelter Island, with its year-round population of about 2,500, isn't immune to the epidemic, Police Chief James Read said. There were 26 drug over-



Shelter Island police Officer Anthony Rando teaches D.A.R.E. program on opioid use to seventh-graders

## Opioid statistics

### CDC statistics

Opioids were involved in 42,249 overdose deaths in 2016, according to the latest data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Drug overdoses accounted for 3,638 deaths in New York State in 2016, up more than 32 percent from 2015, according to the CDC.

SOURCE: D.A.R.E.

### D.A.R.E. New York stats

- 14 Sheriff's Offices and 59 police departments offer D.A.R.E. statewide
- There are 200 D.A.R.E. officers in the state
- 400 schools offer the D.A.R.E. program
- 46,373 students are receiving D.A.R.E.
- About 25 percent of school districts in the state offer D.A.R.E.

doses between 2013 and 2017, he said. "Every community, regardless of size, is battling that opioid addiction."

School districts across the state and Island have responded to the epidemic, with some, including Shelter Island, stocking Naloxone in school buildings. Commonly known as Narcan, it binds opioid receptors in the brain to block the effect of drugs such as heroin.

D.A.R.E. was founded in 1983 in Los Angeles and has continued to evolve, in 2017 developing its newest curriculum, D.A.R.E. America Northeast regional director Mark Medford said. The D.A.R.E. program is 10 weeks, he said, and the new curriculum is an additional two 45-minute lessons.

The lessons for middle-schoolers teach the difference between over-the-counter and prescription medication, how to read prescription labels, the dangers of misusing medications, and introduce them to the opioid epidemic. The elementary program focuses on who to call in case of an emergency and what's safe to touch, smell and eat. The high school lessons go deeper into the relationship between prescription drug abuse, opioid drug abuse and heroin.

"It just keeps getting more and more impactful based on the age group," Medford said.

The curriculum is being rolled out nationwide, and the first training sessions will take place for D.A.R.E. officers in New York State on Nov. 8-9.

The program costs the police department about \$5,000 annually, but the new curriculum is no additional cost other than supplies, Read said.

Kaitlyn Gulluscio, 12, learned the difference between over-the-counter medication and those prescribed by a doctor.

"If I get hurt and I need to take prescription medicine, I know who to call now in case I don't know how to take it, and I'll need to know how much to take," she said.

Gulluscio had D.A.R.E. with Rando in the fifth grade, and said she recognizes the importance of the lessons he teaches.

"If we don't know like how much these drugs could hurt us, we could get hurt by it and possibly die," she said.

Other districts and law enforcement agencies on the Island, including Southampton Village police and Our Lady of the Hamptons Regional Catholic School, said they are looking into the program.

Sister Kathryn Schlueter, principal of the regional Catholic school, said they are going to use the curriculum starting with the sixth-grade program.

"Every week there's something with an opioid issue," Schlueter said. "I think our kids hear about it, but I don't think it means anything until it's explained down at their level."

**Newsday**

**Long Island Office**  
235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY  
11747-4250

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### CORRECTION

Tom Brune was among those who wrote a Saturday story about a bombing suspect being arrested in Florida. Contributors included Laura Blasey, Stefanie Dazio, Nicole Fuller and Robert E. Kessler. Blasey also contributed to another story on the suspect. Those names were omitted from the stories.

### THIS DATE IN HISTORY

**1858** Rowland Hussey Macy opened his first New York store at Sixth Avenue and 14th Street in Manhattan.  
**1886** The Statue of Liberty, a gift from the people of France, was dedicated in New York Harbor by President Grover Cleveland.  
**1922** Fascism came to Italy as Benito Mussolini took control of the government.  
**1962** Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev informed the United States that he had ordered the dismantling of missile bases in Cuba; in return, the U.S. secretly agreed to remove nuclear missiles from U.S. installations in Turkey.  
**1991** What became known as "The Perfect Storm" began forming hundreds of miles east of Nova Scotia; lost at sea during the storm were the six crew members of the Andrea Gail, a sword-fishing boat from Gloucester, Massachusetts.  
**2013** Penn State said it would pay \$59.7 million to 26 young men over claims of child sexual abuse by former assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky.