

# Community Relations Report 2022



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Prepared by the Community Relations Bureau



## Introduction

The Suffolk County Police Department has worked tirelessly during 2022 to gain the trust of the communities that we serve, and the Community Relations Bureau [CRB] has been at the forefront of that mission. With the development of a new police reform plan, the Department as a whole has been working towards a community based policing model. CRB is an integral part of the ongoing efforts to foster understanding and cooperation in developing a superior community policing plan. Our new Commissioner, Rodney K. Harrison, has attended numerous community meetings and thoughtfully listened to the concerns of all members. He has also prioritized partnering with leaders in our communities to foster meaningful relationships to serve as a basis of trust.

As part of its overall mission, CRB supervises the Community Liaison Officer Program, the School Resource Officer Program, the Recruitment Section and the Police Athletic League. CRB also coordinates and oversees the Department's language access plan.

As the COVID 19 pandemic eased during 2022, the world has opened back up and we were able to have more of a traditional year of programs and events within our communities and schools. CRB was able to participate in popular programs such as, *Coffee with a Cop*, *Operation Medicine Cabinet*, *Vamos a Hablar*, *Let's Talk*, *Cooking with a Cop*, *Heroes and Helpers*, and *National Night Out*. CRB also has worked to develop new ideas and services to bring to the communities that we serve, such as new outreach programs for youth in transitional housing, after school mentoring programs, and new police reform initiatives designed to build trust with the community. CRB has also expanded its training role within the department. We now directly train Field Training



Officers in community relations and how to influence new officers to be more involved with the communities they serve.

The Department is enormously proud of the success its community relations programs have enjoyed in recent years and is fully dedicated to expanding these programs in the future to forge lasting and productive relationships within all the communities in Suffolk County.



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## The Community Relations Bureau

**Deputy Police Commissioner Risco Mention-Lewis** is a nationally recognized community leader and advocate. A former Assistant District Attorney, Deputy Commissioner Mention-Lewis is the first female, and the first person of color, to



hold her title in the Suffolk County Police Department. She has presented in an array of venues, ranging from local schools, churches and communities to national conventions and universities. In 2015 Deputy Commissioner Mention-Lewis was invited to the White House by President Barak Obama to discuss strategies for decreasing crime and incarceration.

Her work entails creating comprehensive programs to combat gang violence and recidivism through a synergy of intelligence led policing and community-oriented policing. She coordinates the development of Council of Thought and Action (COTA) groups across Suffolk County, and has spearheaded the Violent Group Insertion initiative which partners with school districts to identify and redirect young people who are showing signs of gang recruitment; evincing, “When we stop the entry...we have less reentry to do.” Deputy Commissioner Mention-Lewis oversees the Suffolk County Police Community Relations Bureau and is intimately involved with all aspects of community engagement, all while maintaining multiple chair positions on local steering committees and youth development and intervention efforts.

**Lieutenant Brian Loughlin** was appointed as the Commanding Officer of the Community Relations Bureau in May of 2021. Lt. Loughlin began his career with the Suffolk County Police Department in 2001 and has worked and supervised patrol operations in many diverse communities. His experiences in communities such as Bellport and Patchogue make him very aware of the challenges that both the community and the police face in coming together to foster trust and understanding. He is responsible for the day to day operations of the CRB staff including Community Liaison Officers, School Resource Officers, Recruitment Officers, and PAL Officers. He is also the Police Department’s Language Access Coordinator, and is tasked with ensuring that the department is providing equal access to persons with limited English Proficiency.



**Sergeant Bonnie Raber** is the Executive Officer of the CRB and has been supervising the unit since August of 2018. Sergeant Raber is one of the most experienced community relations officers the SCPD has ever had. She was one of the Department's original School Resource Officers, operating primarily out of the Central Islip and Brentwood School Districts. She has been a COPE officer and supervisor, a Patrol officer and supervisor. As a Crime Section supervisor she was responsible for cases ranging from violent school incidents to the investigation of child endangerment and domestic violence. Her knowledge and experience in youth and gang violence prevention, investigation, and compassionate intervention is commensurate with the proactive community based intervention strategies vital to the success of CRB.

**Sergeant Apryl Hargrove** is in charge of the recruitment section of CRB. Sergeant Hargrove has been with the department since 2010 and has worked in the Third Precinct and Community Relations as a police officer. In 2021 she was promoted to Sergeant and has worked in the Fifth Precinct, Internal Affairs, and now in Community Relations. Sergeant Hargrove has extensive experience as a recruitment officer. She was a Police Officer in Community Relations from 2018-2021 and was an integral part of the recruitment campaign for the 2019 SCPD exam. Her experiences and the relationships that she has built have made her a highly respected and well known officer in communities around Suffolk County.

The **Police Officers of CRB** are a truly special group of individuals working as a cohesive team to build and maintain the important bonds with our neighborhoods, schools, houses of worship and other voices in the communities we serve. Our Officers possess a wide variety of talents and they reflect the diverse landscape of the communities they serve. CRB officers are more than just visitors to the community or employees of the County. They are members of the community, neighbors, coaches, friends and relatives. They drive the same roads, shop in the same stores, and play with their children in the same parks as those they serve. The officers of CRB go forth every day not only to educate, protect and serve, but to learn from those they interact with. When they do so with sincerity, enthusiasm and a willingness to listen, learn and communicate, that is when we are at our best. The following describes in some detail, an outline of the various jobs and functions of the CRB staff and officers.





## Community Liaison Officers

Community Liaison Officers [CLOs] are assigned to CRB and detailed to each of the seven precincts, serving as a bridge between Headquarters and the outlying commands. They work with an array of individual community members, advocacy groups, business owners, school officials, and other governmental agencies to enhance relations and to help identify important issues. The Department has seven CLO's four of whom are native Spanish speakers.

In January of 2022, CRB said goodbye to two long time CLO's when officers Delfina Rivera and Eiffel Ramirez were assigned to the Commissioner's office to assist our new commissioner in reaching out to communities across our county.



These two officers will bring a wealth of knowledge and experience in community relations and will be a tremendous resource in helping the commissioner bridge the gap between the community and the police. They will be missed by CRB and the communities they served and we wish them well with their new assignment.

With the departure of our two CLO's, we have the pleasure of introducing our new officers to the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> precinct





communities. Officer Yasmin Gallant took over for Officer Rivera as our 5<sup>th</sup> Precinct. CLO. Officer Gallant is a native Spanish speaker and is able to easily foster relationships with the Spanish speaking communities of the 5<sup>th</sup>. PO Gallant is well organized, highly motivated, and works with kindness and compassion. PO Pete Rivera also started with us in January as our new 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct. CLO. PO Rivera is also a native Spanish speaker and served in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Precinct. COPE unit for many years where he developed strong relationships with clergy, community organizations, and community leaders. His prior experience and dedication to the residents of the 3<sup>rd</sup> makes him a perfect fit for the role of CLO.

The precinct CLO's work very closely with precinct COPE officers to help develop plans and programs for the community. CLO's organize and run many events throughout the year which include, "Coffee with a Cop", "Vamos Hablar" (Let's Talk), "National Night Out", and "Faith in Blue". CLO's will also partner with PAL officers to help engage with the youth within their precincts. A great example of this are the ongoing PAL soccer programs in Patchogue and Huntington. When not participating in organized events, CLOs and precinct COPE Officers visit with community members and local organizations in order to increase crime awareness, crime prevention, and personal safety. They also coordinate with our Recruitment, Police Athletic League and School Resource Officers to assist them in providing training, outreach activities and presentations that are tailored to their communities

Precinct CLO's are also at the forefront of our county's police reform initiative. A major component of the initiative is for increased community engagement efforts. For example, events held in a relaxed atmospheres, such as at a barber or beauty shops within a community, where residents get together with members of the department to get to know one another, have real conversations about important social issues, community issues, and policing issues that affect us all. The true spirit of such events is to help break down the barriers that inhibit getting to know one another on a level separate from an enforcement situation and to foster understanding and respect for each other as people who want to better the communities we live and serve in. Another reform program that the CLO's helped create is the community reading events for children. Officers plan reading events at local spots where children frequent outside of school, such as a laundromats with their parents or libraries. Such interactions between the children and officers builds lasting familiarity and comfortability.

CLOs and COPE Officers also utilize social media such as Instagram, Nixle, Facebook, and Twitter to advertise events and programs in an effort to provide



the most up to date information possible. SCPD has eight different Twitter feeds, one dedicated to Headquarters and one for each of the precincts.

## School Resource Officer Program



School Resource Officers (SROs) provide hundreds of informational presentations to high schools and middle schools across the County, including: *Dangers of Opioids, Gangs & Associated Violence, Internet Safety, Alcohol & the High School Student, Social Host & Pre-Prom, What to do When Stopped by the Police, The Dangers of Vaping, Vehicle Survival-Behind the Wheel, and Distracted Driving.*

SROs make it their top priority to present these topics in a manner that engages young people and speaks to them in relevant terms. In turn, it is CRB's mission to make qualified SROs available to any school district that requests, or will accept, assistance. Presentations and assistance are also offered to

elementary schools as appropriate and when the SROs' schedules permit. SROs also conduct informational forums on topics such as, the Heroin epidemic, safe usage of the internet, and proper conduct in social settings.

CRB currently has 5 county-wide SRO's on staff. During 2022 we added a new addition to the unit, PO Karl Allison, who was a member of the 6<sup>th</sup> Precinct. before moving into the unit, brings his passion and dedication for inspiring kids with him. PO Allison wants to show students what's possible when you work hard to achieve goals and he strives to be a positive role model for them.

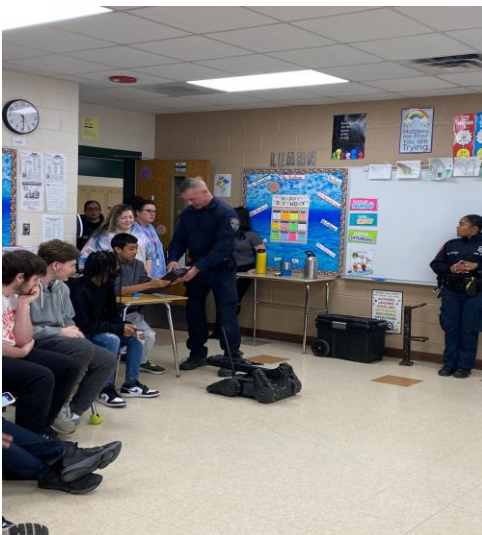
CRB lost two SRO's in 2022 as well. Officer Tom DiLena, who was a long time beloved SRO in many school districts, moved into our recruitment section where his outgoing personality and his ability to engage the public will be utilized to find



candidates to take our next SCPD entrance exam in 2023. PO DiLena will be missed by the many districts where he taught and built relationships. PO Jessica Romano, who served as an SRO for the 2021-22 school year, moved into our PAL unit where she focuses on the communities of Brentwood, Central Islip, and Bay Shore.

SROs assigned both to CRB and the individual Precincts meet together with CRB on a monthly basis in order to share information and receive group training. This ensures that all SROs possess the most current information concerning the schools in which they work. These monthly meetings and training sessions also enhance the consistency, accuracy and quality of the information that is provided to students county-wide. Not only do SRO's present many topics to students to guide healthy decisions and keep them safe, but they themselves participate in training sessions in relation to active shooter response. Our Homeland Security Section also works with districts to develop safety plans, and routinely hosts department active shooter training drills which SRO's attend regularly. SRO's don't stop working with children just because school is out. They regularly attend several summer camps for kids that are run in towns and communities throughout Suffolk and continue to interact with children and provide a positive influence.

One of the most important roles of the SRO's is to work closely with school officials in identifying at-risk youth. Officers engage these students through mentoring, and then guide them to resources in their area to help form more positive behavior and choices. In 2022 SROs continued mentoring programs in multiple school districts throughout the county.



2022 has seen the end of many mandated COVID 19 restrictions on students, faculty, and associated staff within our schools. The challenges and difficulties that we all have faced have hopefully made us stronger and more grateful for a "normal" atmosphere in which learning and growing can take place. The courage and creativeness with which our SRO's have shown throughout the pandemic is a testament to their dedication to engaging with students across Suffolk County.



## Recruitment Section

The SCPD Recruitment Section is responsible for recruiting quality candidates for law enforcement and civilian positions with the Police Department.

Recruitment practices are continually analyzed and enhanced to identify and employ the most effective measures. The Recruitment Section works closely with colleges and community groups to identify qualified candidates, with a special emphasis directed toward recruiting Latino, African-American, female, and Spanish speaking candidates in order to reflect the demographics of the communities served by the Department.

CRB currently has two full time officers assigned to Recruitment, and due to the upcoming police entrance exam in 2023, we have added two temporary recruiters to assist with this very large task. They attended local NAACP meetings, Latino community events, multi-denominational religious services, and job fairs at military bases, high schools and colleges. They actively partner with influential members of minority communities to encourage Black, Latino, LGTBQ and female residents to consider SCPD as a viable opportunity for a career in law enforcement. They also utilized social media outlets such as Twitter and Facebook, as well as job search engines such as Linked-In and PoliceOne.com.



The Recruitment section is now lead by Sergeant Apryl Hargrove, who was a long time member of CRB as a recruiter herself during the 2019 police exam campaign. Her insight and experience into what it will take to achieve our recruitment goals is essential to our ability to diversify our department.

Similarly, efforts to recruit civilian positions within the Department including crossing guards continued in earnest in 2022. Recruitment Officers, CLOs, and other community officers distributed informational flyers which include numerous non-sworn positions such as Crime Analysts, Computer Technicians, and Forensic Analysts, Dispatchers, and Emergency Complaint Operators.



## Police Athletic League

The Police Athletic League (PAL) is a recreation-oriented organization that utilizes sports and activities in order to tighten the bond between police officers and young members of the community. The goal of PAL is to engage our youth in hopes of decreasing the lure of gangs, drugs, and other destructive influences.

The program enables more than 20,000 children to engage in a variety of sporting events and activities, and PAL is proud to host the largest youth football and lacrosse programs in the State of New York. In addition to team sports programs, PAL programs also include cooking classes, gardening, fishing trips, and host of after school and summer camps. The PAL was very fortunate to be able to resume many of these activities after many COVID-19 restrictions have eased throughout the year.

As the year began, some health related restrictions were still in effect within schools across the county which limited some of the traditional programs that PAL could participate in with students. Despite these restrictions, officers did participate in many "Cooking with a Cop" events at local schools from January through June. Under the direction of a professional chef, this program helps young students develop the necessary skills to be able to prepare and cook their own healthy meals. Many of our officers, not just in PAL, have participated in these events and we see how creating these skills in many young students will help develop self-confidence, which can hopefully translate into other areas in their lives.

In May of 2022, the PAL unit lost Officer Ed Groce to a promotion to detective. Detective Groce was a long standing PAL representative in the Central Islip, Bay Shore, and Brentwood communities and was responsible for running many successful programs such as Bay Shore summer basketball and Boxing. We wish Detective Groce the best on his new assignment and know he will be missed. With the departure of Detective Groce, PO Jessica Romano, who was an SRO within CRB stepped up to help take over one of the biggest programs that PAL runs. She took over our PAL Bay Shore summer basketball league and was able to have it run seamlessly. PO Romano is a former Division 1 lacrosse player at SUNY Stony Brook and has been a coach in her spare time for many years. She has experience working with children within the context of sports as well as her experience with them in the classroom. PO Romano has the necessary skills and passion to create programs that will engage many young individuals in the communities she will serve. PO Romano has been made a permanent part of our PAL staff and she has already shown how valuable she can be.





PAL football and lacrosse had a very successful year in 2022. PAL football had 39 different organizations making up approximately 180 teams of kids from ages 5-13. The competition this season was fierce and culminated in the championships for all of the divisions taking place at the PAL stadium in Holtsville. Lacrosse had a big transition this year as it merged with the Nassau PAL lacrosse league to become the largest youth lacrosse league in the nation. This was very exciting for so many kids because this added additional competition at all skill levels so more kids will be able to be involved in this

fantastic program.

A new grant was also awarded to the department from the COPS office for youth engagement. The grant allowed officers to create programs and engage with underserved youths residing in transitional housing across the county. PAL provided funding for many of the activities, field trips, supplies, and instruction. PAL officers helped to create recurring events at local shelters to engage with the youth and bring new activities into their lives such as cooking, science experiments, painting, sports, and crafts. The largest program that was developed was in May and June called "Sunday Fun day". This program was run at the PAL Central Islip facility and occurred over a 4 week period where youth from local shelters came and participated in various sports and activities including capture the flag, corn hole, kickball tournament, rock climbing, races, tug of war, t-shirt making, cookie spin art, mini golf, video game truck, spin art, and freeze dancing/musical chairs from a live DJ.

In the fall and winter months, officers organized several recurring events at shelters where the activities included pumpkin decorating, painting, a science experiment presenter, and decorating gingerbread houses for the holidays. The kids would always be excited to participate in the activities with the officers and these types of meaningful interactions is what CRB and PAL can help foster together. In addition to these recurring programs, PAL organized field trips for



the children to have experiences outside of their normal routine. Some of these trips were to the Riverhead aquarium, fishing expeditions from Captree, and to the minor league baseball stadium in Central Islip to see the Ducks. These young individuals were able to participate in activities that many of us take for granted and PAL will look to continue these programs in 2023 in order to help bring a sense of normalcy and belonging to these young children.

PAL continued its support to the Wyandanch Summer Youth Camp Program in 2022. The program provides mentoring by First Precinct SROs during a 5 week camp. Campers were taught lessons in safety, anti-bullying, internet safety, self-esteem building, and drug awareness. They also took numerous trips to museums, farms and parks, exposing them to a host of new experiences.

PAL is truly a dedicated partner of the SCPD and has always shown a willingness to assist in any way they can in order to help the children in Suffolk County. PAL is ready to assist any community with sports or activities that kids want to be involved in within their communities. A new and very successful program that began in 2021 and continued in 2022 was the gardening program. Kids had a weekly lesson with an owner/operator of a real nursery who closed his business for a period of the day and dedicated his time to showing young kids the value and beauty of growing and maintaining all sorts of plants. Dedication like this from community volunteers is what continues to keep PAL programs such a success. PAL continued to charter several fishing expeditions during the summer months for so many different community organizations, such as Big brothers/Big sisters, Suffolk transitional housing youth, and many others. These trips really let these kids take in some of the most beautiful sights on Long Island, take a boat ride on the Great South Bay, and introduced many of them to this exciting activity.

PAL once again partnered with the special needs running group Rolling Thunder for several events in 2022. CRB officers participated along with some outside commands, including Emergency Service officers. This was a great opportunity for outside commands to experience community events and to have fun interactions with young kids. The children also benefit from seeing new faces and getting to know about these officers in a relaxed atmosphere. Officers are paired with a runner for a 5k race and they work together to finish the challenge, and believe it or not, all of the participants have smiles the entire time.

PO Anthony Guzzone partnered with the Copaigue school district for a summer school sports camp which included floor hockey, volleyball, and basketball. These sports were a great way for the kids to spend time between the classes that they needed to attend. The last week of the camp, the PAL hosted a carnival to celebrate the end of summer school with games, food, and rides and



all of the school participants enjoyed a much needed day of fun together. The partnership with Copague schools will continue in 2023 with the development of a floor hockey league due to a large interest.



The PAL is perhaps one of the Department's most valuable community outreach tools. The inclusion of patrol and COPE officers in its activities takes them to a new level of involvement with community. Activities are light-hearted and fun and involve a shared joy and sense of accomplishment, too often absent from routine police interactions. The breaking down of social, racial, and economic barriers that results from these programs creates multifaceted rewards. Community spirit is enhanced and those who donate their time, money and resources to these programs are rewarded with the knowledge that they are a part of something important, and that they are promoting equality and benevolence.

## Police Explorers

The Community Relations Bureau oversees the Suffolk County Police Explorers Program, which is coordinated through the Boy Scouts of America. The Police Explorers Program is a goal-orientated program for individuals between the ages of 14 to 21, who are interested in pursuing law enforcement as a possible career path. Although the Police Explorers is described as a "learning for life" program, it also serves as a volunteer public service program.

Each of the seven Precincts maintains an Explorer Post where participants are taught criminal law, and police procedures and tactics. Participants also engage in community outreach events and many other law enforcement activities. Police Officer Advisors help guide Explorers by teaching them valuable life skills and giving them insight into the daily life of a Police Officer. The Department has thirteen Police Officers and six civilian volunteers who oversee more than 200 participants.

In 2022, our Explorers participated in the Explorer Youth Academy, where they are instructed in physical fitness, defensive tactics, military drills and other areas of law enforcement practices by Police Academy staff. They are typically joined by several Sea Cadets, who are Coast Guard Explorers and together learn about





law enforcement as well as working as a team. This is a very valuable experience for these young individuals and gives them real life experience in a law enforcement training setting.

## Presentations and Services

### Car Seat Inspections:

The Suffolk County Police Department has 25 Community Liaison, COPE and School Resource Officers who are professionally trained to inspect and install car seats. The SCPD partners with Education Assistance Corporation (EAC) to host car seat safety events where trained officers physically inspected child seats for



defects, recalls and proper installation. EAC provides replacement seats at no charge to the participants to ensure the safety of their children. This partnership with EAC has continued through 2022 with CLO, COPE and SROs participation. SCPD also partners with Latino advocacy groups in

communities such as Brentwood, Patchogue, and Huntington Station to provide car seat inspection and installation to dozens of participants, explaining the importance of safety for their children while conducting a much needed community engagement activity to strengthen trust between police and the immigrant community.

### S.A.V.E (School Active Violence Emergency):

The Community Relations Bureau continued monitoring the S.A.V.E. Program in 2022 and make sure that all participating school districts have the appropriate resources to continue with this valuable program. CRB will continue to be responsible for coordinating the implementation of this program and will act as a liaison between these schools and the police department.



## Youth Academy

SCPD has been hosting four Youth Academies each summer at the Police Academy. The Youth Academy provides teens age 14-18 an opportunity to experience the tasks and physical training that SCPD Recruits undergo. Two of the weeks are dedicated to minority youth through the Suffolk County Executive's Youth Bureau Program. The Department and the Youth Bureau work directly with social workers from the Central Islip and Brentwood School Districts recruiting participants for the program. CRB sends Officer Justin Fernandez, a Spanish speaking SRO, to the program for the week to assist LEP attendees.

## Crash Course In Crash Avoidance:

This program is a half-day safe driving instructional course for teenagers between 16-19 years old. The goal of this program is to educate teens in avoidance measures under dangerous driving conditions. Typically, SCPD Emergency Vehicle Operations instructors provide one week of instruction to 40 teenagers to complete the program.

## Swim For Survival

SCPD and the Police Athletic League sponsor a swimming program for youth that is geared toward young children who have very little experience with swimming. The goal is to have kids develop the skills necessary to survive in any type of water emergency. This program has two sessions accommodating 20 swimmers per session. It has been a very successful program over the past several years, but due to COVID, the program had not been run. We are presently excited to partner with Patchogue YMCA and restarting this program with a six class session in April and May 2023.

## National Night Out

National Night Out is a yearly event sponsored by Target Corporation and local community partners. Every year in August the Community Relations Bureau hosts 7 National Night Out events throughout Suffolk County. Each of the 7 Precincts hold events, either at their local Target Store or at area parks. National Night out is always one of the most fun and positive events of the summer for the Police Department and the



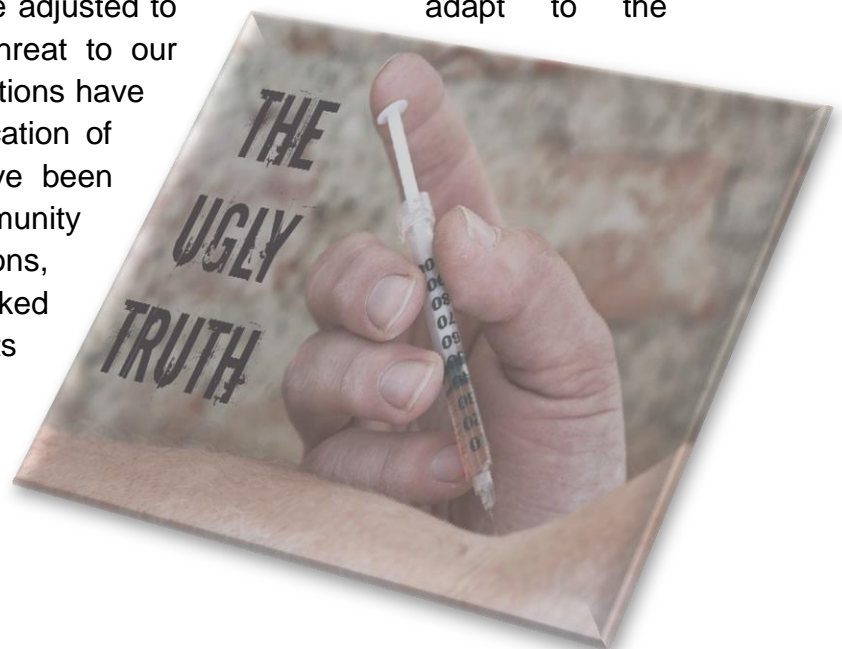
communities. Its success is due to the strength of the partnership between neighborhood and police organizers. Attendees are able to view equipment used by specialized units such as Canine, Marine Bureau, Aviation and Emergency Services. Additionally, SCPD partnered with the FBI at 3 of the locations to help foster community feelings of safety with all law enforcement agencies. 2022 was a very successful year and we look forward to this event in 2023.

### Spotlight on Fentanyl

The Community Relations Bureau continues to evolve this education and awareness program to proactively combat the prescription drug, heroin and fentanyl epidemic in Suffolk County. Community Liaison Officers have teamed with SCPD EMT academy staff to develop a new presentation that focuses on the ever growing fentanyl problem in America. Initially, School Resource Officers provided “*Prescription Drugs to Heroin*” presentations to students in assemblies or classroom settings during school hours. This was followed by evening presentation of “The Ugly Truth”, which involved parents, students, faculty and other members of the community and was strictly focused on heroin, but as the issue has evolved into fentanyl, so has our presentation to the community. SCPD EMT trainer Jason Byron is a vital resource of information and is able to provide up to date numbers of overdoses and deaths associated with fentanyl. He also provides information on the Good Samaritan law, discussed signs and symptoms of an overdose, the history and dangers of fentanyl, and demonstrated how to administer Narcan. Participants were provided with an opportunity to practice assembly and administration of the Narcan nasal applicator, and were given two doses of Narcan for emergency use.

In 2022, these presentations were adjusted to ever-changing information and threat to our communities. Ugly Truth presentations have been streamlined to avoid duplication of efforts and information, and have been offered at monthly precinct community meetings, community organizations, and schools. SCPD has also worked closely with many school districts to educate and train their staff members in the signs and symptoms of overdose and the use of Narcan as well.

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## Operation Medicine Cabinet:

In an effort to address the increase of prescription drug use among young people and ensure the proper disposal of unwanted or expired medications, the SCPD was the first police department in New York State to initiate a permanent, continuous drug reclamation program. Operation Medicine Cabinet offers the public the option of disposing unwanted pharmaceuticals 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Receptacles for unwanted pharmaceutical are in the lobby of each of the seven Precincts.

Community Liaison and COPE Officers hold events out in communities and respond to senior citizen meetings as well to assist in properly disposing of unwanted pharmaceuticals to keep them out of the hands of drug seeking individuals and to protect the environment.

## Police Week



Every May, the Suffolk County Police Department hosts Police Week at Police Headquarters in Yaphank. Community Liaison, COPE and School Resource Officers engage nearly 4130 students from elementary level through high school level over the 4-day event. All participants viewed demonstrations by specialized police functions such as emergency driving skills, Emergency Service response to serious traffic accidents, Canine operations, Aviation support, and motorcycle operations.





Static stations display information on the different services, investigative skills and equipment provided by the Department. Tours of the 911 Call Center are given to participants as well, giving them a better understanding of how emergency calls are received and dispatched to officers

on the street. High School students are educated in topics such as Distracted Driving and What To Do When Stopped by the Police. A civilian Crime Analyst provides an overview of her role with the Department, providing students an opportunity to see other job opportunities in policing.



SCPD, in partnership with Stony Brook University provides high school students with education regarding Distracted Driving. University professors and Police Officers provide several stations where students are put through various activities designed to replicate distracted driving and distracted walking situations. By timing students through obstacle courses, driving simulator and sobriety tests without distraction, then putting them through the courses while texting or wearing impairment goggles, students are able see first-hand the negative effects of distraction whether by texting or use of alcoholic substances upon driving and walking. Like many other events, Police week was canceled for 2022 still due to COVID restrictions and time constraints. SCPD will look to run this very successful event in 2023.

### **Faith and Blue weekend**

2022 was our third annual celebration of the Faith and Blue weekend, which advances the premise that communities are stronger and safer when residents and law enforcement professionals can relate as ordinary people with shared values, hopes, and dreams. The partners who sponsor National Faith & Blue Weekend believe we can find ways to work together around our many commonalities instead of being divided by our differences. National Faith & Blue Weekend is an extension of the One Congregation One Precinct initiative (OneCOP), a program of MovementForward, Inc., which is a bridge-building,



solutions-focused human and civil rights organization based in Atlanta, Georgia. The OneCOP initiative pairs together officers at the beat or precinct level with local houses of worship.” (<https://faithandblue.org/>). This national movement was celebrated with multiple events at each of the seven precincts here in Suffolk County. Suffolk County Police Department’s involvement in this was orchestrated by Deputy Commissioner Risco Mention-Lewis and events included: “Crucial Conversation” forums with local faith leaders and precinct Command staff, community park cleanups, food and clothing drives, group prayer sessions for unity and empathy, shared meals and BBQ parties, police equipment displays, singing, laughing and just simply talking with each other. This weekend event highlighted the need for Police Departments to collaborate with local faith leaders, and more deeply recognize the value and importance of these institutions which are the pillars upon which many of our communities were founded. Faith leaders are often involved with victim advocacy and are invaluable in reconciling disputes. Furthermore, they represent the values and traditions of a community that should be given strong consideration in policing.

### **Language Access**

In 2022, the SCPD continued its efforts to enhance the delivery of police services to those with LEP as well as those with unique communication needs. In October and November of 2022, the Department partnered with a Spanish Language Professor from Stony Brook University to introduce Spanish Language Education Courses in order to improve the skills of our Spanish speaking bilingual officers in preparation for their certification tests to become Department Authorized Interpreters. Bilingual officers are required to pass the DAI certification test offered by Language Line Solutions with a minimum standard of seventy-five percent in order to be recognized as a DAI when providing translation services in the course of their duties. In January of 2022, the Department had forty-five (45) Spanish speaking DAI’s and 173 Spanish speaking officers certified as bilingual. Following preparation classes and improved recruitment of Spanish speaking officers, by the end of 2022 the Department had certified twenty eight (28) new Spanish speaking DAI’s and increased our Spanish speaking bilingual officers to a total of 192. This was the largest increase and improvement of our language access enhancement in department history. The department currently has 68 DAI’s, all Spanish speakers, and 215 Bilingual officers, of which 192 are Spanish speakers. The numbers have continued to increase due to the many languages spoken by Department employees. The availability of in person translation continues to be a priority throughout the Department.



## Latino Community Engagement

SCPD has continued to conduct *Vamos a Hablar* events to educate the Latino/Hispanic community on the role of the police department. Topics include the availability of language assistance services, the importance of reporting crimes, the reporting procedures for crimes, police misconduct, and hate crimes. Other advocacy groups such as Adelante have continued their partnership with SCPD by providing venues to host this program, which the Department tailors to meet the needs of their specific audience.



SCPD also has various other ways in which we reach out to the Latino community, such as PAL soccer programs in Huntington Station and Patchogue, Holiday events (Three Kings day, thanksgiving food giveaways, and “shop with a cop” events), Car seat inspections and installation events, as well as monthly community meetings at precincts in Patchogue and Brentwood that are in Spanish.

Officer Yasmin Gallant, our Fifth Precinct Community Liaison Officer, was requested by the “Madras Latinas”, a Patchogue community group consisting of concerned (mostly Latino) mothers, to assist in CPR training. Officer Gallant, a native Spanish speaker, jumped at the opportunity to help. She reached out to Jason Byron, a SCPD EMS officer highly trained in Narcan and CPR training, to assist. He taught the class at Patchogue- Medford Library and Officer Gallant translated, resulting in 25 Spanish speaking community member trained in CPR. This led to an additional class certifying 30 more community members in the use of Narcan, a medication used for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose. This is particularly important and relevant to our communities since there has been an ongoing increase in heroin and fentanyl overdoses where had this medication been administered, the overdose would not have been fatal. Since this CPR training was so successful, EMS officer Jason Byron trained our CLO’s and SRO’s in CPR instructor training resulting in 13 Community Officers trained to instruct and certify CPR. We have plans to train our volunteer PAL coaches, youth and additional community groups.

Unfortunately the residents of Puerto Rico were devastated by Hurricane Fiona which swept through that island in September 2022. Our seven Community Liaison Officers worked to collect needed items such as toiletries, diapers, canned goods and more. Within each precinct officers flooded the collection

boxes with donations. CLO's worked with community businesses to gather donations. The radio station "Latino Mixx" held a donation event at SCPD headquarters where items were collected from the public. Ascina, a Long Island shipping company, transported hundreds of boxes containing the donations, providing the shipping for free. This relief drive was culminated with Officer Gallant flying to Puerto Rico with a representative of the radio station and coordinating with the San Juan Police Commissioners detail. Together they hand delivered to goods to over five hundred affected families in Puerto Rico.

### **Monthly Community Meetings**

Each Precinct organizes a monthly meeting to engage members of the community, address their concerns, and inform them about public safety issues. Meetings are scheduled at the beginning of the year and publicized through the web, social media and postings in local libraries, government buildings and high traffic areas. The meetings are held both at the Precinct buildings and also in large facilities such as libraries or community centers. Local patrol and precinct officers now attend these meetings in an ongoing effort to foster better relationships between SCPD and the specific communities we serve. Precinct command staff, (Inspectors, Deputy Inspectors and Captains), also attend meetings and events at a multitude of venues across the police district.

### **Clergy Council Meetings**

The SCPD holds quarterly meetings with clergy members from all faiths across Suffolk County in order to present relevant topics and listen to concerns and issues facing their communities. SCPD will have a presentation geared toward topics that are ongoing within many communities that leaders can share with their members such as local and nationwide scams, safety issues within the community, and SCPD policies and procedures. This is also a great opportunity for the department to hear from faith leaders who have questions and concerns about law enforcement issues and activities.

### **Coffee with a cop**

This national program allows for conversations between the community and law enforcement officers in a relaxed atmosphere. The traditional setting is in a coffee shop, but many events have been held in libraries, shopping malls, and





even hardware stores. SCPD will go to where we can engage with the public and have meaningful interactions.

## Precinct and Local community engagement

The mission of community relations and engagement is not the exclusive responsibility of the CRB. The SCPD actually has over 2400 community relations officers; because every single member of our department represents us with every interaction they have in the community. Every aided case, vehicle stop, call for service, response to a victim of a crime, and every casual encounter, affects the manner in which we are perceived and ultimately judged. As the SCPD moves towards a more community based policing model it is so important that the actions of our officers on patrol and in the community embody this philosophy which will foster more trust and understanding between us all.



The expectation of excellence starts at the very top and extends all the way down to the officer on patrol. For example, in 2022 Commissioner Harrison created the position of Precinct Community Ambassadors where every precinct will have members within the community who will work with precinct commanders and the commissioner to advise the department on local issues and help enact plans that are tailored to each community.



