

EDITORIALS

Opiate truths and consequences

In 2007, the company that makes the opiate painkiller OxyContin pleaded guilty to federal felony charges that it misled physicians, regulators and the public about the drug's addictive qualities and the dangers it posed.

OxyContin isn't the only painkiller that caused problems, and manufacturer Purdue Pharma LP isn't the only company that pushed painkillers. The question is whether the companies can be held responsible for the opiate-addiction epidemic that is sweeping Long Island and the nation. One answer could be lawsuits, much like the landmark suits more than three decades ago against major tobacco companies.

Suffolk County has filed suit in state Supreme Court, charging that pharmaceutical companies knowingly and deceptively promoted dangerous opiates. The county argues that because it administers Medicaid, purchases health insurance for its employees and enforces criminal laws, the industry's deceptions are costing it money.

Suffolk is not the first municipality to try such a strategy. So have West Virginia, Chicago and several California counties. The suits could lead to payouts that can help us fight this battle.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention says 165,000 people nationwide have died from prescription painkiller overdoses since 2000, while millions more have become addicted to opiates, including heroin. Suffolk leads the state in opiate addiction deaths, and Nassau County isn't far behind.

A big part of the problem is overly aggressive marketing of painkillers that downplayed studies showing how dangerous the drugs are. The drugmakers now will have to address the consequences.

— *The editorial board*

Active-shooter app is a good call to save lives

After mass shootings in schools, officials and terrified parents often search for new ways to keep children safe.

There are proposals for armed guards, weapon detectors, intense security protocols and technical devices. After the Sandy Hook Elementary School shootings in 2012, Nassau County Executive Edward Mangano promised handheld panic alarms for local schools. The problem, however, was that such systems generally aren't affordable or workable, and they won't necessarily stop a determined shooter.

But smart changes can be made to improve law enforcement responses. Having moved away from panic alarms, the Nassau County Police Department is implementing an app-based alarm and response system that balances affordability and caution.

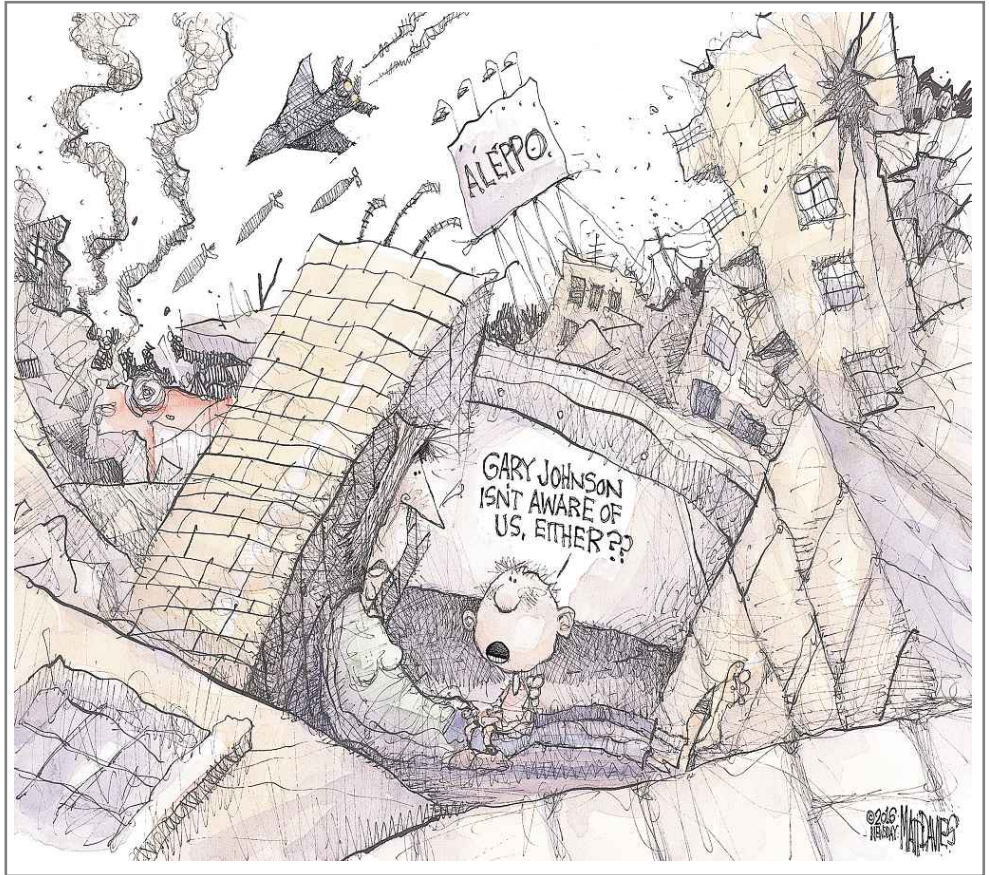
Certain school officials will have an "active shooter" icon on smartphones that can initiate a 911 call, send text messages to police, sound an alarm inside the police department's 911 center, and share information and displays from live cameras. The system will also allow the police to lock and unlock doors in schools.

The system will be provided at no cost to schools, which in many cases have paid for new camera systems and broadband capability with funds from Nassau BOCES. So far, about 20 of the county's 56 districts say they will go live with the app by the end of September. At \$1.5 million, the program is about half as expensive as the panic alarm plan. Police officials say other districts are signing on quickly, and they believe colleges and private schools will also join in.

In an emergency, good information and fast response matter. This is a promising way to keep students safe and our fears at bay.

— *The editorial board*

MATT DAVIES



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LETTERS

Create a 'dream card' for immigrants

Immigration policy can only be fair if it protects the rights of the population, whether you are here legally or illegally ["Right and wrong on immigration," Editorial, Sept. 2]. Possibly the easiest way to get a fair agreement would be to give people here illegally a path to citizenship while protecting the rights of citizens.

One idea to give immigrants here illegally a way to come out of shadows is a "dream card." The card would be to require people to register with Social Security in exchange for a guarantee that they will not be deported.

Social Security officials could record names, addresses, birth and contact information. Officials could verify wages and conduct background checks.

Social Security could ask

for proof that such immigrants have paid taxes during their time in the United States. If they have not paid taxes, a minor fine would be attached to the dream card. The fine could be paid over a period of years, if necessary.

Once a person is naturalized, his or her dream card information would be removed, and new citizens would be entitled to apply for federal and state benefits.

For those who bypassed this process and didn't register, deportation would await.

*Peter Bonna
Holbrook*

We need cheaper medications

The recent increase of the cost of the EpiPen is just the tip of the iceberg ["Outraged by cost of prescription drugs," Letters, Sept. 4].

A bad case of psoriasis

sent me to a dermatologist who prescribed topical ointment for \$120 per tube. The ointment did nothing.

I refused injections of Stelara because of potential side effects — and the outrageous cost of \$1,000 per shot.

After research, I purchased probiotics for \$30. Problem solved. Today I am clear of it.

Why wasn't I told about this safe and inexpensive approach?

*Donald Meurlin
Huntington*

Why did stables have to be closed?

Investigating, testing and cleaning up the sites in West Hills County Park are necessary ["New dumping probe haunts LI," News column, Sept. 4].

Why, however, did they force the closure of Sweet