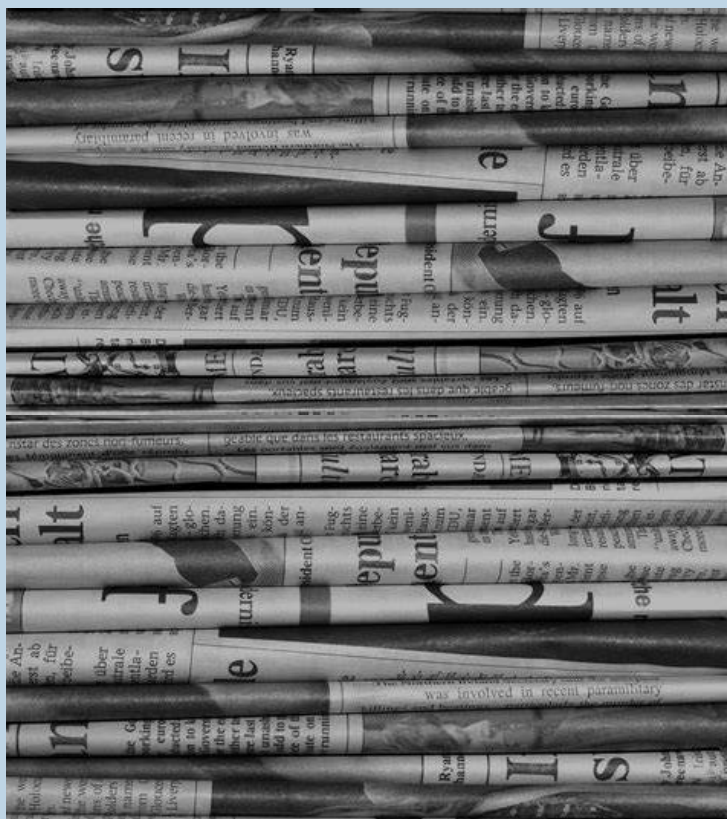


Journalism + Design Article Compilation



By Tyler Naimoli

Staten Island: The Forgotten Borough for All Except the Deer

Tyler Naimoli

01/27/2018

Staten Island is in many ways considered to be very different from the other four boroughs of New York City. It has the lowest population, it is the most rural borough, it is geographically isolated from the rest of the city, it has a massive deer population...



Yes, that's right. Since 2015, Staten Island has been overrun with a deer crisis. Although deer sightings on the island have been reported as far back as 1991, according to Verge writer Brendan O'Connor, it wasn't until the 2000's did inhabitants begin to take notice of an apparent population. What was once a series of sightings soon became direct encounters. In time, it was discovered that the deer were not native to the island but were migrating there from New Jersey by crossing a tidal strait between Jersey and Staten Island called the Arthur Kill. Deer have not only been filmed making the swim, but according to George Sutton of the New York City Parks Department,

fisherman who do their catch at the Kill have also sighted deer making the trip as well. At first, Staten Islanders were quite intrigued with the presence of such animals in their borough. But that was before their numbers started to increase dramatically afterward to approximately 2,000 individuals. Before both people and the deer knew it, encounters escalated to car collisions. And that's when the people had it.

According to the Staten Island Blue Heron Parks Department, people's complaints about the borough's deer population enticed city officials to come up with a three-year management plan in an attempt to remove or at least mitigate the deer population, to the point that both the deer and people can co-exist relatively peacefully. Despite these efforts, the crisis remains ongoing with little success made. Several methods were proposed before reaching a final decision: sterilizing the male deer by performing vasectomies to hinder reproduction. Sterilization was originally attempted on the females, but this proved to be a harder task and efforts were soon focused on the males instead. Previously proposed methods were dropped due to moral and practical concerns: one idea was to legalize hunting on the island, but was dropped due to Staten Island not having enough open space for proper hunting grounds, which could've conflicted with surrounding urban areas. There were also concerns with directly killing the animals, as well as the potential implications of Staten Islanders being exposed to hunting. Another approach was to relocate the population, but was also dropped due to fears of disrupting the migration patterns and natural behavior of the deer. With sterilization, it was seen that both deer and people would be relatively unaffected while in theory, the population would see an effective decline.

However, even that decision has been considered questionable by some, despite the fact that there appears to be no other reasonable solution. Opposition to sterilization

makes sense from the fact that it does not seem to be working as planned: according to Anna Sanders of SI Live, even with most males on the island now sterilized, the few males that still aren't can impregnate several females at a time. Not only that, but according to Sutton, the cost to sterilize a single deer can reach prices of up to \$7,000, going so far as to call these efforts "a complete waste of time".



One other approach is to consider the possibility that Staten Island's deer boom is temporary, and that nothing might as well be done: it will only be a matter of time before the deer population naturally declines on its own. Interestingly, even though the three-year management plan is almost over, Blue Herron personally could not provide an actual end to the crisis. With this in mind, it will be interesting to see what comes of the future of deer on Staten Island in the years to come.

Staten Island: The Borough That the Turkeys Certainly Remember

Tyler Naimoli
02/11/2018

Staten Island may be different from the other boroughs of New York City in many ways, some being more surprising than others. Aside from the island's concerning deer population, there is another kind of unique animal that one would never guess has also similarly exploded to undesirable numbers.



And that's the turkey. No one knows exactly how they arrived. But it is known that the birds are of a unique domesticated-wild hybrid that presents much difficulty in solving what has become a problem that is almost as bad as Staten Island's deer crisis. It's become an urban legend of sorts: roughly 10 to 15 years ago, it was believed that a person who owned a few of the birds released them into the streets after no longer being able to care for them. Since then, the birds' numbers have increased dramatically, becoming something of a delightful novelty to an

unpleasant nuisance. Although it's not impossible to find turkeys anywhere else on the island, their populations are most frequent on the grounds of Staten Island University Hospital and the surrounding neighborhoods of Ocean Breeze and Dongan Hills.



And now, no one knows what to do. Citizens began pressuring borough officials to address the turkey population once the birds started crossing the same streets as driving cars, eating out of residents' gardens, leaving behind feathers and droppings, and waking up homeowners with their gobbles. But the approach was unexpected: animal welfare groups were outraged when the first response from the USDA was to round up the birds for a mass slaughter. Since then, the situation has been approached more humanely, but still with no clear solution in sight. Multiple proposals have been made, all without success. According to Joseph Berger of the New

York Times, the state first tried to smear eggs with corn oil to prevent them from hatching, which failed. Residents were then suggested to spray them away using water hoses, which also didn't work. Little action has been made since, with only proposals being considered. Not helping matters is the birds' biology – due to not being completely domesticated, they may be unsuitable for consumption compared to the turkeys that are eaten by the millions every Thanksgiving. And due to not being completely wild, there are complications in relocating them, as their partial domestication may render them unable to adapt to the wild.

Until the problem is solved, Emily Liebert of the Blue Herron Parks Department stresses to citizens that it is important for people to try to remain at peace with the animals, and to farther not complicate the issue with human-turkey conflicts. And while there isn't an exact end in sight yet, interesting moves have been taken on the part of certain people who have proven that there may indeed be an end in sight. Andrew Amelinckx of the Modern Farmer tells the story of Kurt Andernach, who has an animal sanctuary in the Catskills. After learning of the turkey crisis on Facebook, he proposed to take approximately 100 of the turkeys to his farm in his own personal attempt to relocate them. Although he had to come to certain agreements with the New York Department of Environmental Conservation on some of the concerns of relocation – clipping the birds' wings to prevent them from flying out of two-acres big fencing and shelter – it nonetheless worked. So much so that the DEC asked Andernach to take more in, although more shelter – and money – was required to build more fencing and shelter for new flocks.

By comparison, it's been said that the turkey crisis is not as bad as the deer crisis, and perhaps Andernach's efforts are an example of that.

Amid School Shooting Threats, Staten Island's South Shore Looks to Curb Its Crime

Tyler Naimoli

03/14/2018

It started at 11 p.m., at Staten Island's South Shore. Ralph Moretti, a father to Ricardo Moretti, a New Dorp High School student, receives an email from Principal Deirdre DeAngelis. It hits too close for comfort in the wake of recent events: the threat of a school shooting.

"There have been posting claiming that there is a rumor that has been circulating, claiming that a student will have a gun at New Dorp High School tomorrow," DeAngelis says in her email. "As you know, with social media, that kind of news travels fast. Please know that we have been tracking this for the last couple of hours and the Department of Education and the 122nd Precinct are involved in tracking the posts and investigating the validity of this information."

Ralph is stressed out, not knowing what to do. He brings the news to his wife Laura and Ricardo, and much to the couple's surprise Ricardo wants to go to school anyway. Laura questions whether she should send Ricardo, but Ralph lets him go. "Look, that's up to you," Ralph said to Laura. "My thing is, I mean I worry about my son but, I don't want him to live his life in fear saying that somebody stupid enough – and thank God they're stupid enough – posted whatever, saying 'I'm going to bring a gun to school', I mean..."

The next day, Ricardo would tell Ralph about two cops he sighted that were sent to the school in reaction to the threatening email – Officers Joseph Ranola and Anthony Gomez. Moretti, Ranola and Gomez would also find that the school became something of a ghost town – approximately 1,200 students didn't attend school, roughly 37% of the

school's enrollment. Typically, Ranola and Gomez are assigned to watch over the school during arrival and dismissal, as well as the occasional walk through the school. But once the scare happened, they and two other cops were sent to inspect the school throughout the day, every day until the threat blew over, Ranola said.

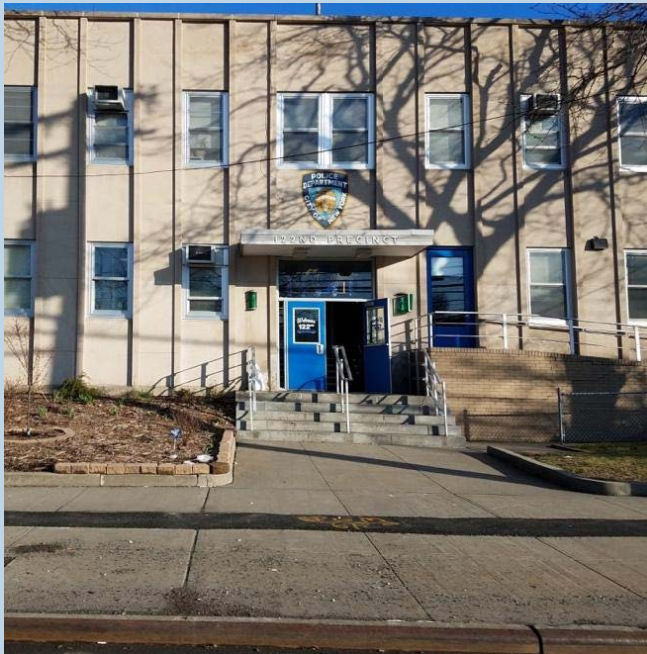


The incident comes not long after the February 14 Florida Stoneman Douglas High School shooting, of which residents have been making connections as part of a bigger picture to an ongoing nationwide issue about gun control. It's not the first time a school shooting threat happened on Staten Island – Susan E. Wagner High School was subject to a similar scare, according to Ranola.

"It's just getting out of hand," Ralph said. "You see Florida, you see it in other places...and now, you hear it in New York."

The circumstances surrounding the threat at New Dorp High School appeared to be part of a larger issue with

threats of similar severity across the South Shore. At a monthly community meeting at Rab's Country Lanes, a bowling alley at Hyland Boulevard, Ranola and Gomez discussed multiple issues befalling the Staten Island sector. They stated that thieves have posed as Con Edison, National Grid and even cops to commit burglaries through earning false trust.



Ranola and Gomez strictly advised attendees during the meeting to change their approach when it came to these thieveries – some having to do the simple task of closing their doors, which they honestly find hard to believe. Ranola told attendees of one woman he encountered who had felt so safe in the neighborhood that she never locked her door for the 16 years she lived there – until the thieveries. Another woman who attended the meeting, Sarah Joyce, stated the same thing – except she had been living there for a much longer 24 years and had an alarm she never used until recently. “It’s a whole different world out there,” she

said.

And everyone’s getting tired of the increasingly severe threats. Although New Dorp High School uses metal detectors, it chooses to use them on random days. DeAngelis requested them to be brought in on the day of the scare even before it happened, but efforts ended up unsuccessful. Ranola and Gomez have not personally heard any talks from high-ranking officials about putting cops in schools. Some attendees called President Donald Trump’s announcement to arm teachers “ridiculous”.

“You can get a teacher in a shooting range”, said Joyce, “But when they are actually faced to possibly shoot a 16-year old kid, that’s a completely different ballgame. I don’t think that’s the teacher’s responsibility. They need to put it on somebody that knows what they’re doing.”

Now, residents want more guaranteed means of security in schools. Joyce considered putting veterans and retired cops back in work that were willing or desiring to continue their careers in some way, which was far more favorably received by everyone in attendance. Gomez also pointed out the benefits of the vast amount of law enforcement available in a region like New York City. “A lot of these shootings happen in places where the department is so much smaller; in New York you have 20,000 cops available to lessen the odds of an actual shooting. That’s the one good thing about New York, if there is one good thing.”

He elicited a laugh from the crowd before continuing. “Nah, I love New York.”

The attendees agreed, even despite the problems facing the city. “There’s no place like New York.”

How Naloxone Is Remembering the Forgotten Borough
Tyler Naimoli
04/01/2018

In a New York City borough with the highest number of opioid-related deaths, Staten Island has found hope in naloxone, a medication known under the common brand name Narcan which is used to counter the effects of opioid overdose. Mayor Bill de Blasio has been making strides in increasing the availability of naloxone since 2015, when the city unveiled its plan to allow New Yorkers to get the drug at various locations without a prescription. In March 2017, de Blasio launched HealingNYC, a program which focuses on the increased training and distribution of naloxone to reduce opioid overdose deaths.



Opioids cause life-threatening impairment of the respiratory system and central nervous system, and naloxone counteracts these effects to allow victims to breathe properly. Naloxone's role in stopping drug crises such as the one in Staten Island is important in that it has few pitfalls. It is non-addictive, so it has no potential for a victim to abuse it. It has no effect if opioids are absent and only works if a person has opioids in their system. It can be

administered by those with even little training, using either nasal spray or injection through the vein, muscle or under the skin and wears off after 20-90 minutes.

But much progress is yet to be made in the distribution of naloxone across the borough. The drug is currently available to medical professionals, police and firefighters. It is also accessible on the Internet, at needle exchange programs and certain community-based organizations that work with drug abusers for free. "But depending on the drug use, they may not have the supplies needed for that community," said Stacey Pasquale, 46, a registered nurse.

Dr. Maggio, 57, is a urologic surgeon at the Sovereign Health Medical Group on Clove Road. He doesn't know them personally, nor does he remember how many. But he recalls several individuals who didn't have naloxone that succumbed to their addiction by overdose. "The problem is bigger than anyone really knows," he said. He considers issues concerning finance, educating the public, training people and liability as factors in hindering the spread of naloxone.



Alice Van Pelt, 50, is another registered nurse with experience in drug detox at Staten Island University Hospital, and currently works at South Beach Psychiatry on Seaview Avenue. Over the last five years, most of the cases she had encountered have resulted in multiple dosages rather than a single dose. “In my opinion, the challenge is educating the community,” she said. “Education should start with social media, schools and congressmen. The more people know about the drug and where to obtain it, the more we can decrease the number of deaths from these deadly opioids.”

Efforts to educate the public include the “I Saved a Life” awareness campaign as part of HealingNYC, enacted in May 2017. It focuses on the distribution of posters throughout the city which detail the accounts of six New Yorkers – Billy, Brian, Evelyn, Shantae, Theresa and Will – who used naloxone to save the lives of friends and family. However, there is a perceived disconnect between the advertising and the accessibility of the drug. The campaign was created under the assumption that naloxone has been made available to anyone, but this has not always been realized in practice. “Some pharmacies will fill your request with or without a prescription, and then it becomes a matter of how much it costs and whether someone could afford to pay for it,” Pasquale said. She also hasn’t seen too many advertisements for naloxone, or has she heard a public service announcement about the drug or where to get it.

To solve these issues, Van Pelt and Dr. Maggio both believe that it is important for all people to have naloxone, whether they are an addict or not. However, Dr. Maggio and Pasquale also both believe that drug abusers may not be able to self-administer the drug. “If they are at a point of overdose, they aren’t alert and aware enough to administer it,” Pasquale said. Dr. Maggio also suggests making naloxone more available to schools, law enforcement and

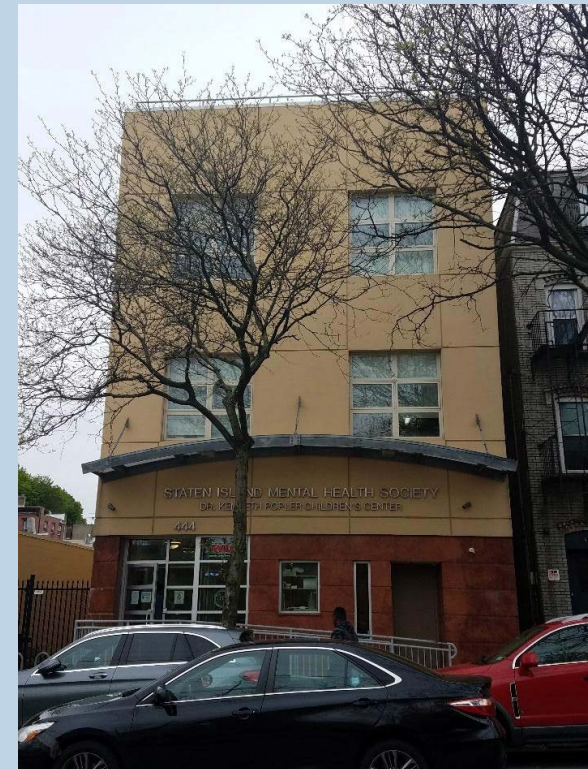
even parents. “If naloxone was more available in general, I feel it would be used more by the individuals who need it, or those associated with them such as parents and friends,” he said. “As naloxone becomes more available to those that need it, the number of overdose deaths should decrease.”

Bringing Drug Prevention Programs to Staten Island Public Schools

Tyler Naimoli

05/06/2019

A raging drug epidemic. 81 public schools. And only about half of them have drug prevention programs.



That’s the situation on Staten Island, in which a long-term solution to the opioid crisis has been found but is in the

process of being completed. The purpose of these programs is to educate children about preventing substance abuse. Yet efforts to bring programs to every public school on the island are ongoing. The use of drug prevention programs is significant, particularly to elementary school students who are too young to experiment with opioids, as education can stop drug abuse and overdose before it ever starts.

“What is paramount is the need to expand evidence-based programming to younger students to truly prevent substance use issues before they begin experimenting,” said Jazmin Rivera, Director of Behavioral Health Initiatives at the Staten Island Partnership for Community Wellness (SIPCW). Among its projects include Tackling Youth Substance Abuse (TYSA), described by Rivera as “a community coalition of over 50 different partners aimed at preventing and reducing youth substance use”.

Rivera couldn’t point to when or how the first drug prevention programs were established on Staten Island. However, the practice of educating youth in the borough about drug abuse has been around for decades. Rivera’s colleagues remember a time when the Drug Abuse Resistance Education (DARE) program was taught in schools, which was founded in Los Angeles in 1983. More recently, there has been an emphasis on the use of evidence-based prevention programs, or EBPs. Rigorous research has demonstrated that EBP’s indeed prevent substance use among other social emotional issues. A registry of approved EBPs is provided to students across all age groups by the Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services (OASAS).

Drug prevention programs are implemented by new schools in many ways. A Substance Abuse Prevention Intervention Specialist, otherwise known as a SAPIS, is a specialized counselor that is trained to deliver EBPs in

school classrooms. Community-based organizations such as United Activities Unlimited and the YMCA Counseling Service are also tasked with delivering EBPs during and after school. Another method is through Social Emotional Learning (SEL) programs, which can also be implemented by teachers and other school personnel.

Since not every Staten Island school has a relationship with a SAPIS or a community-based organization, bringing programs to these schools can require extra research and efforts to establish those relationships. “However, TYSA has a school-based workgroup that had developed a menu of services to help schools navigate this and other resources,” Rivera said. “The SAPIS Director works closely with the community-based prevention providers to bring EBPs to schools that do not have a SAPIS.”



In November 2018, data from TYSA revealed that 32 of the 81 schools on the island have programs. Rivera has stated that the number has increased since then, but what hasn’t changed is that most schools without programs are elementary schools, at about half of these schools. By comparison, all middle schools on the island have

programs. For high schools, only CSI High School for International Studies and Gaynor McCowan Expeditionary Learning School have yet to receive these programs. For charter schools, only John W. Lavelle Preparatory Charter School, New World Preparatory Charter School and New Ventures Charter School don't have programs.

"Though it is essential to begin building up protective factors and decision-making skills in the earliest grades, the limited resources that are available are often channeled into EBPs for older students," Rivera said. "Regardless, given the current state of Staten Island, and the epidemic across the nation, it is urgent to expand programming to all schools."

Rivera is grateful that despite the lack of resources, SIPCW continues to work hard at what she refers to as "filling the gaps". She adds that TYSA has meetings with legislators, where they advocate for what she also refers to as "universal prevention programming". Currently, OASAS is working to deliver EBP's through SEL programs to over 20 schools from kindergarten through the second grade. As this program is being carried out by teachers, it requires less complexity and resources than others, enabling younger students an easier time to understand the topic.

The prospect of explaining a topic as complex and mature as drugs to elementary school students may sound uncomfortable to educators. But Rivera explains that in elementary schools, EBPs place more of an emphasis on decision making skills and emotional regulation rather than drugs. "EBPs build skills and set the foundation so that later in their life trajectory, students are armed with the tools to navigate difficult situations," she said.

Still, the case for addressing prevention to children remains a challenge. In a predominantly conservative borough in an

otherwise liberal city, Staten Islanders have been reluctant to address the issue of substance abuse to children, despite the impact of the drug epidemic on the island. Among the tactics from schools and parents include a "not my child" approach. Though as the opioid crisis grows, residents are more willing have conversations and take proper steps to address prevention.

It's true that a lot has yet to be done, but the objectives are clear. "I'm confident that we have come to a viable solution to expand programming to every Staten Island student," Rivera said.

