

# The Suffolk Times.

## Narcan rescue stations expanding across Southold

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A Narcan rescue station hangs in Greenport Harbor Brewing Co.'s Peconic location (Credit: Nicholas Grasso).

With the ongoing rise of fentanyl and opioid overdoses on Long Island, Southold Town is doing its part to combat this epidemic — and potentially save lives — by installing more Narcan rescue stations throughout the community.

In collaboration with Stony Brook Eastern Long Island Hospital and the not-for-profit organization Community Action for Social Justice, roughly 20 locations in Southold now house Narcan rescue stations, including Southold Town Hall, the Human Resources Center in Mattituck and several schools and local businesses.

The program expansion comes two years after six area residents — Navid Ahmadzadeh, Swainson Brown, Nicole Eckardt, Fausto Rafael Herrera Campos, Matthew Lapiana and Seth Tramontana — died from opioid overdoses after ingesting fentanyl-laced cocaine over the course of a single August weekend.

“Unfortunately, it took the tragedy of losing six members of our community to recognize that Southold is not immune to the dangers of fentanyl and of drug and opioid use,” said Southold Town Supervisor Scott Russell. “It really hammered home that it is serious.”

Paul Connor, chief administrative officer for SBELIH, said that with thousands of overdoses happening more frequently across the country, these Narcan stations and other harm reduction methods are needed now more than ever.

“The community needs to rise up and say this is our problem, we need to be part of the solution,” Mr. Connor said. “It’s very gratifying that the community can recognize and respond to a very critical and serious problem.”

Typically administered as a nasal spray, the medication Narcan — also known by the generic name naloxone — reverses a fentanyl overdose by preventing the opioid from binding to a person’s brain receptors. The drug specifically targets drugs that contain opioids, including heroin, fentanyl and prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and Vicodin.

When encountering someone who has possibly overdosed, Mr. Connor said there are some signs to look out for. If the individual is unconscious, falling and/or unable to communicate, they may need Narcan administered to them immediately.

“Even if you don’t know what the problem is, you can still administer these Narcan kits — it will not have any type of negative medical effect,” Mr. Connor said. “If you have direct knowledge of the person consuming an opioid, time really is of the essence.”

In Southold Town Hall, there is a Narcan rescue station situated near the Town Clerk’s office, adjacent to an AED kit. Each station contains two doses of Narcan and instructions on how to administer it. The stations are also stocked with test strips to check if potentially ingested drugs contain fentanyl.

Linda Sweeney, vice president of SBELIH Foundation external affairs, said expiration dates are listed on the outside of the kits and noted they last up to two years.

It is the participating establishment’s responsibility to make sure the kits are up to date. If the stations need to be restocked, they can reach out to the hospital or Community Action for Social Justice directly for Narcan supplies, Ms. Sweeney said.

Mattituck Park District commissioner Kevin Byrne said Narcan kits are currently available at Veterans Beach and the district plans to add another station at Bailie Beach.

Early next summer, Mr. Byrne said lifeguards will participate in a training session on how to recognize signs of an overdose and properly administer Narcan.

“We need to train our people, our staff and we need to make it clear that we have these kits,” Mr. Byrne said. “It costs nothing for the park district to put it in and if we can save a life, that’s a wonderful thing.”

Rich Vandenburg, owner of Greenport Harbor Brewing Co. and former president of the Greenport Village Business Improvement District, helped jump-start the project by installing some of the area’s first Narcan stations in his Greenport and Peconic breweries.

After the string of fatal overdoses in Southold and Greenport, Mr. Vandenburg knew he needed to act and encouraged other local businesses to do the same. He said he suggested the idea of creating these emergency Narcan rescue stations and designing them to mimic AED stations.

All Narcan rescue stations are supplied free by SBELIH to local businesses in Southold Town. Community Action for Social Justice offers free Narcan training as well.

“We worked to get them into as many restaurants and other locations as possible because you want to have immediate access when it’s needed,” Mr. Vandenburg said. “While initially, there was hesitancy from local businesses, we’ve had success in getting broader acceptance.”

This reluctance to installing the Narcan rescue stations stems from concerns they may enable dangerous drug use. Some critics believe widening the access to Narcan may prevent individuals from seeking treatment.

Mr. Connor and Ms. Sweeney said the first step to treating substance abuse disorders is ending the stigma, which can be accomplished by emphasizing the life-saving capabilities of Narcan.

“Even in health care, there are people with biases that we try to actively identify and change because there is no room for that in our business,” Mr. Connor said. “Substance abuse disorder is a real disease and people are still not convinced of that — we’re becoming more aware of these diseases, how they manifest and what can be done to treat it.”

Any local business looking to install a Narcan rescue station can visit the hospital’s website to sign up for the initiative. For confidential, in-home training, call 866-599-7260 or email [info@nysocialjustice.org](mailto:info@nysocialjustice.org).

**Narcan rescue stations can now be found at these locations:**

- Mattituck, Southold, and Greenport school districts
- Claudio’s
- Ellen’s on Front
- Front Street Station
- Greenport Harbor Brewery Co.
- Greenport American Legion
- East End Seaport Museum
- Macari Vineyards
- Noah’s
- NoFo Wellness Center
- Raphael vineyard
- Little Fish
- Eastern Long Island Kampground
- Southold Physical Therapy