

# Drug-sniffing dogs prowl WM High School Tuesday

## Surprise Sheriff's Dept. search comes up empty

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A "modified lockdown" was ordered Tuesday morning at Ward Melville High School as two teams of drug-sniffing dogs and their handlers arrived to canvass the building, according to Assistant Principal Mike Owen.

In order for the dogs to search the hallway lockers in the two-story building, as well as the basement, students were restricted to the classrooms they were in when the sheriff's deputies arrived just after 9 am. By 9:45 am the teams had left the campus.

"It took about a half-hour" for the teams to complete their task, Owen said. "They found nothing."

The 20-year assistant principal at Ward Melville said the effort was nonetheless worthwhile. "The message we send," Owen said, "we're aware — we know what's happening." Owen said the administration is aware of drug activity among high school students and is working diligently to address it. "We have zero tolerance," he said. "We find drugs, you're going out of here in handcuffs." Owen added, "We're in better

shape than most high schools" because "we're very, very aggressive."

Owen said this was the first time the county Sheriff's Department had conducted a search of the high school, but not the first such effort. "We did random searches before," he said, using contractors with specially trained dogs hired by the district. Owen said those hired teams were discontinued "a year or 18 months ago" by the Board of Education.

**'We find drugs, you're going out of here in handcuffs.'**

— WMHS ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL MIKE OWEN

WMHS Principal Alan Baum said his office knew the search was coming — and kept it quiet in advance of Tuesday morning's effort. Asked about the failure to find even one trace of illegal drugs, Baum said he was a bit surprised. "Honestly, I expected a hit

or two. It's a problem our entire community is facing." The principal added many students "are as concerned as we are" about drug and alcohol abuse, particularly in teenagers. The high school sponsored its most recent drug and alcohol awareness forum only two weeks ago.

Superintendent Don Webster said he requested the Sheriff's Department teams to perform the search "about a



Photo by Lee Lutz

WMHS Assistant Principal Mike Owen, standing, and Principal Alan Baum each accompanied one of the dog teams 'in case of a hit,' said Owen. There were none this time.

month ago." Webster said that although the Suffolk County Police also have trained dog teams, they charge the district for the service. Sheriff Vincent De Marco provides the service to school districts without charge, according to Webster.

Assistant Principal Owen said the class schedule was barely disrupted. "Students stayed in the classroom about 15 minutes longer than normal," he said. The school's students, faculty and administration quickly returned to its normal Tuesday routine.

# Society honors local 'historic' stars

Three local businesses and two community organizations will be among those honored by the Three Village Historical Society at its 33rd annual Awards Dinner to be held Tuesday evening, March 16, at the Stony Brook Yacht Club.

The Community Award Certificates are given by the society for enhancing or restoring a building to be used as a commercial structure in a way that contributes to the historic beauty of the area. Honored this year are Swan Cove Landscaping, Joseph H. Troffa Landscaping & Mason Supply and **Stone Gate Landscaping Construction**. These three local businesses, working together, donated the materials and labor for the new brick

walk at the society's History Center at 93 North Country Road in Setauket.

Also honored in the Community Awards category are Dianne and Michael Fitzpatrick of Setauket for the ornamental plantings and landscaping that enhances the beauty of the Three Village area.

Casey and Jason Ellin of Stony Brook are recognized for house restoration or renovation and on-going maintenance and preservation in keeping with the original architectural design.

The Kate Wheeler Strong Memorial Award, given in recognition of significant contributions toward the fostering of interest in local history, will be presented to the Setauket Fire

Department and the Stony Brook Fire Department for the 100th anniversary of both volunteer organizations.

The Gayle Becher Memorial Award, given in recognition of volunteer efforts during the past year to help the society, will be awarded to John and Shelley Broven of Setauket.

Gelinas Junior HS student Caroline Cain is 2010's recipient of the R. Sherman Mills Young Historian Award for outstanding contributions to the society by a young person.

Tickets for the 33rd annual Awards Dinner, with entertainment by An Rince Mor School of Irish Step Dancing, are \$55 per person. For information contact TVHS at 751-3730, email info@tvhs.org or visit www.TVHS.org.



John and Shelley Broven of Setauket will be honored for their tireless volunteer work for TVHS. Courtesy John Broven



Casey and Jason Ellin of Stony Brook are this year's winner of the Community Award. Courtesy Michael O'Dwyer



Dianne and Michael Fitzpatrick of Setauket will be honored for enhancing the Three Village area with their impressive landscaping.



Gelinas JHS student Caroline Cain will receive the Young Historian award. Courtesy Patricia Cain

Christopher Graf, left, David Fortuna and Joseph Troffa, right, with TVHS President Peter Paul Ostapow in front of the society headquarters in Setauket.

Courtesy TVHS

