



The Nassau County Police Department (NCPD) Foundation Nassau police hold 'academy' for people with special needs

November 15, 2014 by CANDICE RUUD



Thirty young adults jumped and cheered as a Nassau police helicopter stirred up a cloud of leaves as it touched down Saturday in Massapequa Park.

The half-hour spent with the pilot -- swarmed as the pack jockeyed for a better look inside the chopper -- was a highlight of a daylong behind-the-scenes look at policing for people with special needs.

Participants also met K-9 and mounted unit officers and their animal counterparts, scrambled over obstacle courses, learned about police equipment and took turns "subduing" an officer pretending to be a criminal -- insulated in head-to-toe protective gear.

Time after time, the "suspect" would take a few hits from a baton-wielding officer-in-training and fall dramatically to the ground, triggering loud applause from the sidelines.

The event was hosted by the Nassau County Police Department Foundation and training was provided by police academy instructors. Saturday's group belongs to the Nassau Police Athletic League Special Needs Program.

"It's such a great, special event," said Nassau PAL Special Needs board member Harvey Pollack, whose grown son participated. "They're just happy for the day -- that they got some new experiences and saw some things they wouldn't have seen otherwise."

For some of the participants, who are dealing with a range of behavioral and cognitive challenges, the program proved to be a perfect career day.

Tom Maughan, 18, of Massapequa Park, said his girlfriend wants to work in the K-9 unit, and he wants to someday be a police detective.

Pollack's son, Brian, 24, took the day off from his job at Home Depot to join his friends. He said he enjoyed spending time with the police horses and proving himself on the obstacle course.

"The big 6-foot wall was hard; I wasn't sure I could get my foot over, but I did," he said.