

Re-examine age for adult charges

When New York decided in 1962 that anyone older than 15 charged with a crime should be prosecuted as an adult, the law was supposed to be temporary. The State Legislature was to revisit the standard at some point and, with the benefit of research and experience, determine the most reasonable age of criminal responsibility.

Half a century later, New York and North Carolina are the only states that still view such youthful offenders as adults in criminal cases. It's time for that informed review. Sixteen- and 17-year-olds should be treated as the juveniles they are. The status quo hasn't worked well for teenagers herded into adult courts and prisons, and has undermined public safety.

We know now that teenagers in adult prisons are at increased risk of violent or sexual assault, solitary confinement, mental health problems and suicide. And young people who've done time in the adult criminal justice system have about 34 percent more rearrests for felony crimes than those retained in the juvenile justice system. That's no good for public safety. And yet in 2012, nearly 40,000 16- and 17-year-olds in the state had cases handled in adult criminal court. More than 2,700 of them were sentenced to adult jail or prison.

To prod the legislature to act, Gov. Andrew M. Cuomo this month created a Commission on Youth, Public Safety & Justice and gave it until Dec. 31 to develop a plan to raise the age of criminal responsibility — the age at which youths are treated as adults — and to handle the small number of young offenders who commit violent crimes.

The Supreme Court has ruled in separate cases that the death penalty and life without parole are unconstitutional when applied to people younger than 18, noting they have a diminished moral culpability and are too immature to be held accountable for their crimes to the same extent as adults. New York should follow the court's lead in recognizing that reality. ■

Badminton is an economy booster. Watch the birdie!

The shuttlecock is in Long Island's court, which is both good news and fun news.

A shuttlecock is the "birdie" that badminton competitors bat back and forth across the net. The air will be full of them in July when Suffolk County Community College hosts the U.S. Open Badminton Championship for the first time. The championship is one of 11 major events on the international badminton circuit. For the past 18 years, it took place in Orange County, Calif. This will be the first such event held in the northeastern United States.

Clearly, the tournament won't single-handedly boost Long Island's economy into the stratosphere. A representative of the Long Island Convention and Visitors Bureau estimates the economic impact to be about \$400,000. That amount certainly can't hurt, and the metropolitan area does seem like a great place to hold an international event in a sport that's hugely popular in China, Indonesia, India and South Korea. Plus, Long Island does have a badminton connection. The Miller Place High School badminton team amassed what is often referred to as the longest winning streak in team sports history, with 504 victories from 1973 to 2005.

The tournament will use the college's nearly 60,000-square-foot field house in Brentwood, and the school will be paid \$80,000 for its use. The U.S. Open offers \$120,000 in prizes and should attract participants from 30 nations, as well as fans, to our hotels and restaurants for six days. Organizers say the venue will be set up to allow for as many as 3,000 spectators a day.

Besides being a creative event to pursue, this also seems like it might be a lot of fun. So bring on the top players and fans, the hairpin net shots, flicks, feints, carries and kills. Perhaps by July, as proper hosts should, we'll have learned what all those terms mean. ■

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LETTERS

Drug test kits free to parents

Regarding "Fatal turn to heroin" [News, Jan. 26], free in-home drug-test kits are available to parents through the Suffolk County sheriff's Test, Don't Guess program. Parents can obtain them at locations including the Huntington, Babylon and Brookhaven youth bureaus, as well as from county legislators.

These kits are not just another tool to help prevent, discover and even stop drug abuse, but can indicate whether professional help might be needed.

Phil Enright
Medford

Story compromised police investigation

The Coalition of Suffolk Police Unions condemns Newsday's decision to publish "Sources: Suffolk rob-

ber may have used body shop vehicles to flee hold-up" [News, Jan. 14]. The article contained specific investigative details that not only compromised an ongoing investigation, but more important, put Suffolk families and police officers at risk.

By disclosing facts about Suffolk County Police operational tactics and strategies that were specific to this investigation, and could have alerted the suspect that he had been identified and lived "in Medford," Newsday could have compromised the success of the investigation, aided the suspect in avoiding apprehension and carelessly put at risk both the safety of the police investigators and the Suffolk County families we work so hard to protect.

The article revealed confidential and specific details

from "intelligence documents" that were critical to the success of this investigation — details neither the reporter nor Newsday was entitled to.

We urge Newsday to re-evaluate its criteria for printing improperly obtained, sensitive information that compromises safety. We are aware of the importance and obligation of news outlets to report news to the public. However, journalistic integrity requires responsible reporting of news that does not come at the cost of public safety or the ability of the authorities to protect the public and prosecute criminals.

Noel DiGerolamo
Bohemia

Editor's note: The writer is the president of the Suffolk County Police Benevolent Association, a police officers union.