



Plenty to read.
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Longboat Key first responders begin using resource guide

The guide helps connect people in need to area's service organizations.

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Victoria Kasdan was in the right place at the right time. The chair of nonprofit Making an Impact Inc. attended a May 21 festival in the Newtown neighborhood of Sarasota and approached a group of Sarasota police officers to tell them about the Community Connections Resource Guide.

"I approached the officers that were standing there and said, 'I'd like to see a copy of this guide in every squad car' because police find themselves in a lot of situations that involve social services in addition to crime," she said. "What I didn't know at the time was that the group of officers that I approached included the Sarasota Police Department chief."

The guide helps people throughout Manatee and Sarasota counties identify and connect with essential service organizations. It lists 200 agencies organized into 17 categories, including addiction treatment, education, food pantries, immigration, mental health, utility assistance and veteran's services.

Shortly after the May event, the Sarasota Police Department began using the 148-page guide.

Kasdan said she reached out to someone who connected her to Longboat Key Town Manager



Interim Police Chief George Turner, Fire Chief Paul Dezzi, Town Manager Tom Harmer, Making An Impact Chair Victoria Kasdan and Kasdan's husband, Ira, meet in June. *Courtesy photo*

Tom Harmer to tell town leaders about the guides. It led to a June 1 meeting with Harmer, Fire Chief Paul Dezzi and interim Police Chief George Turner.

Town leaders agreed to have the guides put in all of the town's fire-rescue and police vehicles.

Dezzi explained how the guides help first responders provide better care to someone in need.

"What would happen is we arrive on the scene of an inci-

dent, or we have somebody who needs a service, it may not be an emergency in our eyes, but it is to them," Dezzi said. "That manual has a lot of information in there to where we can go ahead and offer maybe the name of the service that's in there, and then they contact them on their own. It prevents another 911 call to us."

Making An Impact has distributed more than 1,000 guides in Manatee and Sarasota counties.

The nonprofit started in April 2020 after Kasdan connected with co-Founder Lindy Hoy. Kasdan said she could find a similar guide for Manatee County but not for Sarasota County.

Hoy created her own version of a Sarasota resource guide as part of her church's volunteer work, Kasdan said.

"We decided to start a nonprofit in the midst of COVID because we said, 'We need this now,' and

with this COVID thing, which we had no idea how long it was going to last, (we said), 'We're going to need it more,'" Kasdan said.

Making An Impact's mission is to reduce disparities and unmet needs for disadvantaged people in the community.

"As a registered nurse for almost 40 years, I have been in a caring situation no matter what type of industry I was working in," Kasdan said.