

Sarasota Police Department's 'Shop with a Cop' a holiday hit with underserved children

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The Sarasota Police Department recently partnered with the Sarasota Housing Authority and Sarasota County Area Transit to provide 150 underserved children with a unique opportunity to "Shop with a Cop" for holiday gifts at the Target store on Fruitville Road.

"Shop with a Cop is an annual event both sworn and civilian members of our agency are humbled to volunteer at," Sarasota Police Chief Rex Troche said. "We've partnered with the Sarasota Housing Authority for more than a decade to foster strong relationships with children in our community. We're looking forward to another year of building relationships with local children and their families, especially during the holidays."



Sarasota Police Officer Larry McQueen provides backup during SPD's "Shop with a Cop" holiday event on Dec. 10 at Target on Fruitville Road. Partners included the Sarasota Housing Authority and Sarasota County Area Transit. Provided By SPD

The Sarasota Housing Authority raised more than \$15,000 for the event through the Sarasota Housing Funding Corporation, its nonprofit affiliate. This year's event was made possible through donations by the Community Foundation of Sarasota County, Communities Unified, Target, First Horizon Foundation, Gary Dornbush, United Universalist Social Justice Committee, and private donors.



SPD Lieutenant Thomas Quinlan huddles up with a young shopper last week at Target during "Shop with a Cop." Provided By SPD

"This special event showcases SHA's commitment to providing positive, uplifting experiences for our youth while promoting mutual respect with our Sarasota police partner," Sarasota Housing Authority CEO William Russell said. "Many of our kids who have participated in past events reminisce about what a positive experience it was to shop with and get to know SPD officers." Donations paid for Target gift cards that SPD officers used at checkout.

"We are excited to help give kids the experience to interact and shop with Sarasota law enforcement during the holiday season," Charlie Hugill and Aubrey Robbins, two sophomores who founded the charity Communities Unified, said in a press release. "When we founded Communities Unified, these were the exact type of events we wanted to be involved with."

To donate to the joint agency initiative, checks can be made payable to the Sarasota Housing Funding Corporation with "Shop with a Cop" in the memo line.

Checks or cash donations can be dropped off at the Sarasota Housing Authority, 269 S. Osprey Ave., Sarasota.

For more photos from "Shop with a Cop," visit facebook.com/SarasotaPoliceDepartment.



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