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## Getting a point across



By Brian McBride - Editor on  
Thursday, March 12, 2020

### KPD conducts operation to keep pedestrians safe



A Kissimmee Police Officer pulls over a driver to inform him that he did not stop for a plain-clothed officer in a crosswalk. NEWS-GAZETTE PHOTO/BRIAN MCBRIDE



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On Wednesday, the Kissimmee Police Department walked the walk.

After recently conducting an educational campaign on pedestrian safety, officers were testing whether drivers would stop for pedestrians at three locations in the city. It started at 8 a.m. downtown at the intersection of Broadway and Dakin Avenue. Kissimmee Police Lt. Omar Berrio, equipped with a radio, was in plain clothes as he continually crossed Broadway in the crosswalk. If drivers didn't stop, Berrio radioed to waiting officers down the road to pull them over.

The fine for violating is a minimum of \$164 plus three points on the license.

On average, about 24,000 vehicles travel Broadway each day, a study showed.

"Obviously we have a lot of pedestrian traffic, it is always a concern," Kissimmee Police Chief Jeff O'Dell said.

"When it's a car versus a person, it's not a fair outcome." Nobody knows that better than Kissimmee Downtown Business Association President Jeremy Lanier, who was hit by a vehicle about two months ago in a crosswalk at the intersection of Darlington Avenue and Broadway.

He had just finished jogging at Kissimmee Lakefront Park and was in the crosswalk when he was hit by a vehicle that had first stopped, but then lunged forward.

"I went up on her (driver) hood and landed on the ground," Lanier said. "It highlighted the fact the responsibility is not just on the driver, but also on the pedestrian to make sure you are as cautious as you can be when you cross the street at night or early in the morning when lighting is already an issue."

Luckily, Lanier said he did not have to go to a hospital.

When asked if he was concerned about getting hit, Lt.

Berrio said, "It is always a concern."

"It's (downtown) such a heavily populated area with a lot of visitors coming to the area," he said. "It's important to us to be out here constantly reminding drivers the hazards of disregarding pedestrians."

It can also be bad for business, said Lanier, who helps run the family business, Lanier's Historic Downtown



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“Having a pedestrian strike would be devastating to our local economy,” said Lanier. “It would taint our downtown as a place that is dangerous.”

The two other enforcement areas on Wednesday that followed Broadway were Thacker Avenue and Kissimmee Trail and West Donegan Avenue and West Carroll Street.

The enforcement numbers were:

- Downtown (Broadway and Dakin Avenue): 12 stops, 6 tickets.
- Thacker Avenue and Kissimmee Trail: 38 stops, 23 tickets and 15 warnings.
- Carrol Street and Donegan Avenue: 11 stops, 9 tickets and 2 warnings.

The St. Cloud Police Department and the Osceola County Sheriff’s Office also conducted enforcement operations.

The operation was a partnership with local law enforcement and Best Foot Forward, which is a behavior change-based program designed to improve road safety through consistent and persistent education, high-visibility crosswalk enforcement and lowcost engineering at marked crosswalks in close proximity to elementary schools and LYNX bus stops, in urban areas and cross-sections of low and high-speed roads.

A new study shows traffic crashes spike during the first six days following the switch to daylight saving time, pinning the causes on adjusting to darker morning commutes to work or school and sleep deprivation.

Since 2012, more than 167 crosswalks have been enforced and nearly 8,000 warnings and tickets have been issued to drivers violating Florida’s driver yield law.

According to the traffic report, the Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA has consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous regions in the nation for pedestrian deaths and injuries for the last 10 years. In 2019, 988 people were struck and 91 were killed while doing something as simple and necessary as crossing the street, according to the most recent data.

But for the most part, people seem to stop for people on Broadway as a local study showed about 96 percent of the

drivers halted for pedestrians, O'Dell said.  
“We are not at 100 percent, but we really do have a safe downtown,” the chief added.

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