

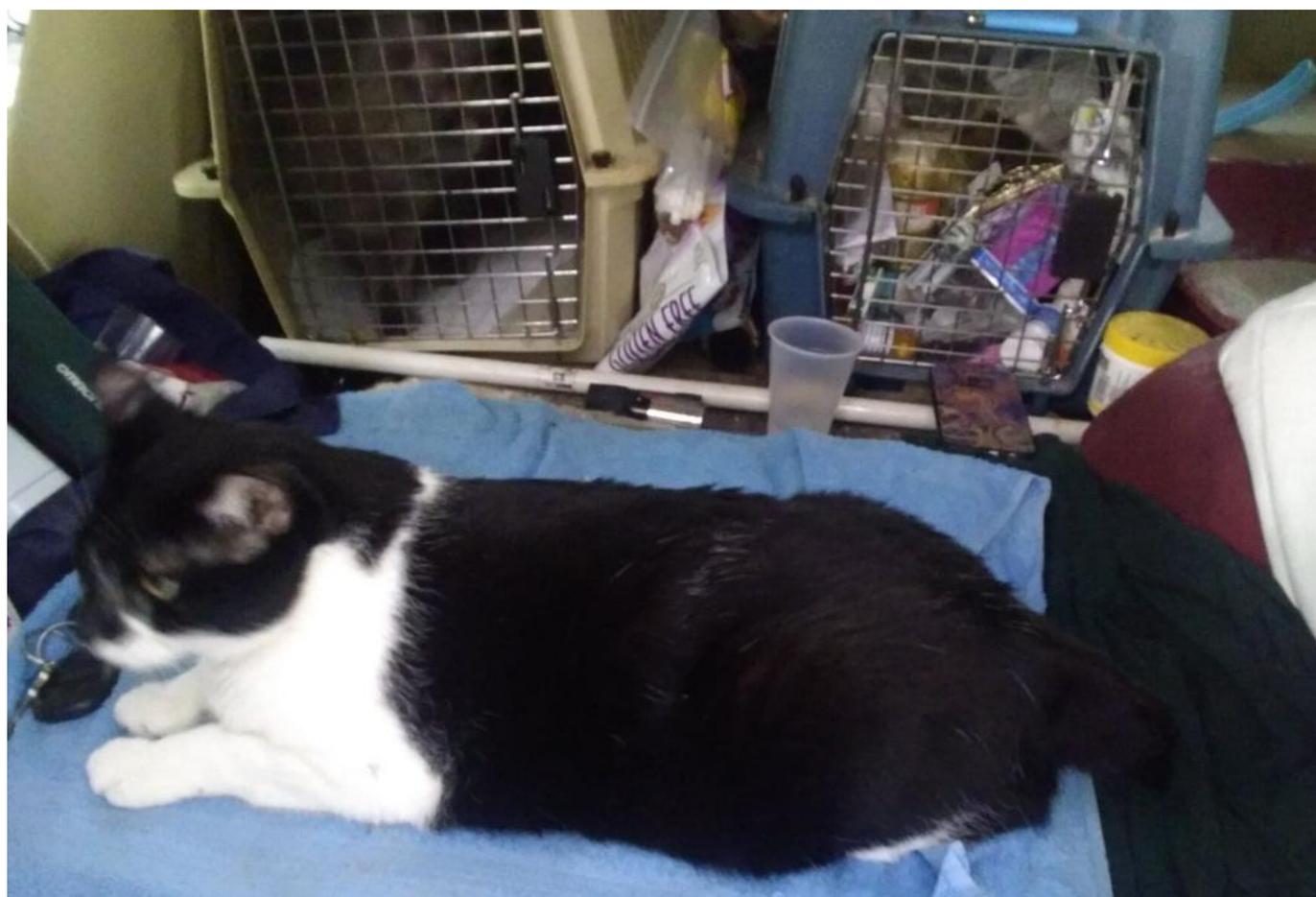
https://www.yoursun.com/englewood/entering-homelessness-at-61-years-old/article_69de36aa-f82c-11ec-add6-5fcbdef23617.html

FEATURED

Entering homelessness at 61 years old

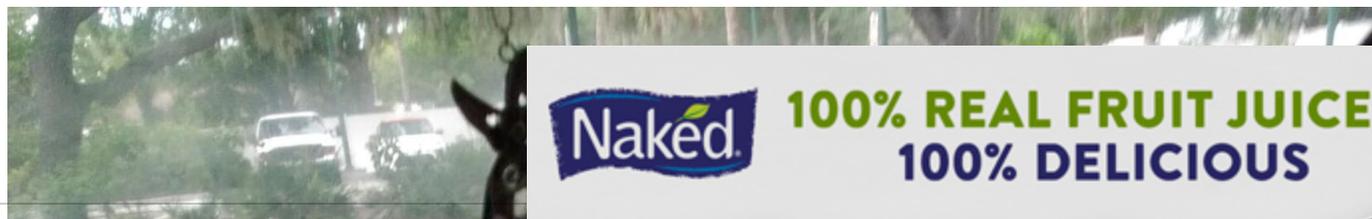
By ELAINE ALLEN-EMRICH STAFF WRITER

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Cat cages are temporary homes for cats Bailey and Minne in Kathleen Kozlik's 2008 minivan.

PHOTO PROVIDED





Kathleen Kozlik and her cat Minnie live in a 2008 Saturn minivan after Kozlik lost her Englewood apartment in February.

PHOTO PROVIDED

ENGLEWOOD — Every night, Kathleen Kozlik crawls up with her two cats and sleeps on a couple of pillows in her 2008 Saturn minivan.

Kozlik quit her job at the Tervis factory in Venice to care for her aging mother, who has since died. Kozlik then caught COVID-19 and fell behind on her rent. She applied for jobs but couldn't get one. Eventually she was evicted.

Since February, the 61-year-old learned to navigate homelessness in Englewood.

She stays overnight in well-lighted parking lots.

She uses the mobile shower in parking lot of the Elsie Quirk Library.

She has figured out how to find food.



On Tuesday nights, several churches bring hot food to the homeless at Indian Mound Park. Sometimes she goes to Englewood Bible Church on Thursdays for a hot meal.

She gets pop-top canned goods from Helping Hand and St. David's Jubilee Center pantries twice a month.

Kozlik says she's not homeless by choice.

More Information

St. David's Jubilee Center, 401 S. Broadway, Englewood, is accepting donations for Kathleen Kozlik and other homeless in the Englewood area.

The North Port Chamber of Commerce, 1337 Sumter Blvd., will also accept gift card donations for Kozlik.

"I used to have a nice apartment in Englewood," she said. "Everything hit me a year and a half ago after I got COVID. I applied for the Sarasota County rental assistance and was denied because my job loss wasn't related to COVID-19."

Kozlik applied for 22 jobs and despite having a few good interviews, she was not hired.

"I know many places said they were hiring because they had COVID-19 money, but I never got call backs," she said. "I even applied at a convenience store and didn't get the job. I have experience as a secretary and manufacturing work for nearly four years and as a caregiver."

Kozlik said she deals with torrential downpours from inside her minivan by



petting her cats, Bailey and Minnie.

She said the pantries give her cat food. She tries to keep the cats groomed. When they get hot, she turns on the van's air conditioner and drives to shaded areas to ensure they are all OK.

"They are my family," she said.

Kozlik says others ruined her ability to use running water throughout the evening at some Sarasota County-maintained parks in Englewood.

"There was a man in the woman's bathroom at one of the parks and that caused a problem when he became irate after a woman wanted to use it," she said. "Some people make such a mess in bathrooms.

"The water gets shut off at 4 p.m. and doesn't come back on until 6 a.m. It's not fair for those who need it and don't do anything wrong. I just don't understand why people can't respect common areas?"

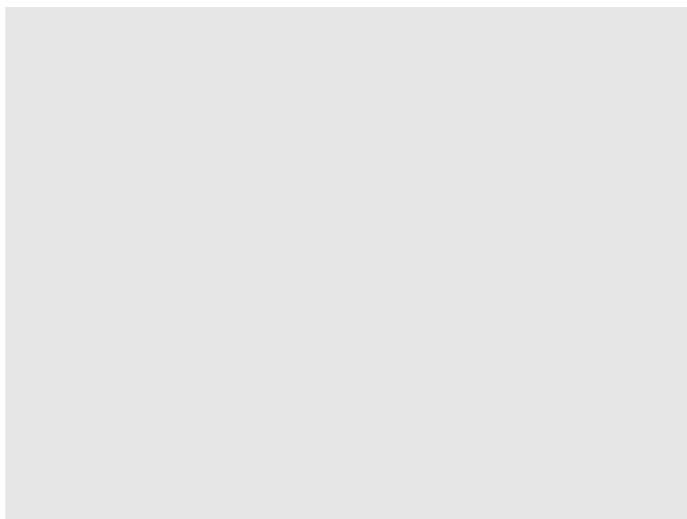
Kozlik says she follows directions from the Sarasota County Homeless Outreach Team to stay out of trouble.

"I was told to go to the Walmart parking lot (on the Charlotte County side of Englewood) to sleep at night," she said. "I was in a nice parking lot that was safe, but someone made a mess. Deputies told us to leave."

Kozlik met Cynthia Voortman, co-founder of On The Spot, at a dinner at Indian Mound Park. The grass-roots nonprofit organization provides care, including some medical care, to homeless people in the area.

"It's so difficult to enter into homelessness in your 60s," said Voortman. "There's

no shelters in Englewood or North Port. There's no place for a person to go during a storm or when it's over 100 degrees, or when the temperature drops in the winter. There's limited resources for the homeless in South County."



Kathleen Kozlik uses these two pillows for a bed in the back of her 2008 Saturn minivan.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Ruth Hill, St. David's Jubilee Center administrator, knows Kozlik and is collecting donations for her.

Donations can be dropped off at 401 S. Broadway, Englewood. Food is accepted, as are donations of Walmart gift cards, gas cards, hotel vouchers and restaurant and fast-food gift cards.

Kozlik can use the cards to buy hot meals.

"I give Kathleen bottles of Ensure when she comes to the pantry because she is skin and bones and I want her to stay healthy, she's had so much happen to her," Hill said.

Kozlik says one place she thinks she can go is Oregon, to live with her sister.

Hill said she would like to get Kozlik help getting there, if that's her choice. "I'm hoping a business will step up and help her give her minivan a tune-up so if she does have to drive across country, the van will make it," Hill said.

However, Kozlik said she is afraid for her safety if she goes there.

"My sister's car was recently stolen and there were 16 shootings in that area, so I'm really not sure that's the best place for me," she said.



“I deal with alcoholics and drug users in the homeless circle in Englewood, but I’ve never been assaulted. I would hate to leave an area where I feel somewhat safe and then have something happen to me.”

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