

Dear Friends,

Twenty-seven years ago I moved to Brevard County after completing 38 years of military service. In 1993 I became involved with the Alzheimer's Association of East Central Florida Chapter. During the course of my work with those suffering from dementia, I realized there were many other wonderful services in the county that remained a well-kept secret. In order to inform, educate, and connect seniors and those who care for them to the services they need to remain independent, Helping Seniors of Brevard, Inc. was formed in 2011.

At that time, the primary provider of information was 211 Brevard. Their mission is similar to ours but does not develop the same type of in-depth help targeted to elders. Other community assistance programs include Aging Matters, which provides services such as Meals on Wheels, and the Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation, which offers adult day health care and respite to those suffering from dementia. I could mention several others but suffice it to say that we have many outstanding service providers. However, we still lack the capability to inform Brevard residents – now more than half a million people – about these services.

For instance, it is one thing to say that we have a Veterans

Affairs Office. Does that tell us what they can do for Brevard's 70,000 veterans or the many widows of veterans who live on minimal incomes? While speaking to groups of retirees, I have discovered women living on \$600-\$800 a month who are the surviving, non-remarried spouses of World War II, Korean War and Vietnam War. This makes them eligible for financial assistance greater than what they were currently receiving. Yet they have no knowledge of these benefits. This is our job ~to educate and inform.

We have directories, speakers, pamphlets, health fairs, etc., but somehow the message is not getting through about the benefits that can be accessed through SHINE, the VA, One Senior Place, and other resources. Too often, we call a number and get another number to call, or just leave a message, or simply wait and never get an answer.

At Helping Seniors, our Information Specialist carefully listens to callers and gets them to the best source of assistance. Often the real problem is not the first stated, rather it is what is uncovered through what I call the listening process. Every call to Helping Seniors is logged and the calls not immediately answered are returned by the end of that working day.

In addition, Helping Seniors has a media outreach program that highlights an array of services and benefits available to all in Brevard. Our articles appear regularly in Senior Scene and Spotlight Magazines, Hometown News, Ebony News Today, and AL Dia Today, with an eight-page newsletter appearing each month in the center section of Senior Scene Magazine. Our television shows air at dedicated times on Bright House channel 199 and Space Coast Government TV channel 499, while our radio show is broadcast each Thursday at 1 PM on WMEL 1060 AM.

All these outlets feature programs that can help people in Brevard County. Information and education enable us to connect with sources of help for each other and for ourselves. No one can be forced to call about a needed service but it seems terrible to know about a way to help someone in need and not be able to tell them about it. If you or someone you know needs help, call Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770 or visit our web site at www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org. Become involved and help promote the many wonderful senior services that are available to help elders in Brevard.



Joe Steckler, President

Helping Seniors of Brevard, 571 W. Haverty Court Suite W, Rockledge. Joe Steckler is the President of Helping Seniors of Brevard, a non-profit organization designed to advocate, educate, and fundraise on behalf of Brevard's senior citizens. Feel free to contact us at: info@helpingseniorsofbrevard.org or calling: 321-473-7770 ~www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org

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