



## Become a Senior Advocate

by Joe Steckler, President

Readers of my column are well aware of my efforts to inform our community about the needs of seniors. Today's topic concerns seniors who have not been able to adequately prepare for unknown needs; they may have tried but been unsuccessful due to any number of reasons. Nevertheless we must still consider our overall capability to assist those who will at some point need our help to live with dignity.

Brevard County has a huge number of senior citizens, including many who need help finding affordable housing and transportation, medical and dental care, nutritious food, assisted living and nursing home care that does not increase already excessive levels of stress, and other services necessary to live and not be a burden on our community. If you are not aware, the needs I have just spelled out are things that most of us take for granted.

We have programs, many of which are provided by nonprofit organizations, that do their very best to meet these needs. But finding information on such programs can be a challenge, particularly since local radio stations and newspapers are on the decline, Spectrum TV will not provide air time for local charities (as Bright House used to do), and Florida Today caters to younger people who rely more on their iPhones to acquire news. This makes Hometown News and other senior friendly publications even more important.

With time we can reduce dependence on almost anything, but in some cases we do not have that time. While seniors are inclined to read a newspaper, if we eliminate news important to seniors why would they want to buy a paper? Somehow we have managed to get our priorities turned upside down, stunting our ability to accurately portray senior needs and develop a capability to meet those needs. It does not bode well for seniors when they are kept in the dark about decisions that directly affect them.

For instance, why doesn't a community of 550,000, half of them seniors, know that five County Commissioners have voted to eliminate funding for local nonprofits that provide senior daycare, transportation, and information? How do we hope to ever fund a county aging plan that will assist a rapidly growing number of seniors if we continue to defund necessary and affordable programs?

Right now there are 65,000 seniors on waiting lists for Medicaid managed care in Florida, and these numbers will only increase unless we take positive action. Eliminating county-based funding for nonprofits is a poor way to develop cost effective services for seniors. The same can be said about United Way closing its doors to new nonprofit organizations that provide information

about senior services and needs.

At the same time, we are increasing tax revenues for children's education and endorsing a campaign to add new Children Services dollars to an already over taxed general revenue fund. This does not make sense to this writer. Nor does the planting of new trees, pouring of new concrete mediums, and a whole plethora of new road projects, none of which serve to fix the holes. These actions try one's patience as well as common sense.

If you believe that seniors are just as important as children and roads, then contact Kay at Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770 and join the Helping Seniors Advocacy Council. We will meet the first Tuesday of every month and welcome you at our next meeting on June 5th at 10:30 AM at the Cocoa Beach Regional Chamber of Commerce, located at 400 Fortenberry Road in Merritt Island, as we advocate for seniors and nonprofit funding. Be part of the solution, not the problem.

Joe Steckler is the President of Helping Seniors of Brevard, a nonprofit 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. **ss**

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By Linda Thistle

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**DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK:** ◆◆◆

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