



Dear Friends,

Lately the title of this column has caused me trouble sleeping. Four years ago I founded Helping Seniors of Brevard to educate, inform and connect seniors and their caregivers to local resources. There are many different types of groups that collect and distribute private and public funds to serve those who need help. To my chagrin, I am finding mistrusts, misstatements and some "not so good things" at the state and local level. Reporting these are not easy. However, because so many people trust the printed and stated word, I believe we need to be more cognizant of what is accurate and what is not.

For years I have written on the poor and inconsistent ways we manage growing older. After establishing Helping Seniors, our Board of Directors believed there was a need to develop an elder advocacy group to promote development of an aging preparedness plan for Brevard. In 1996, I participated in a United Way study to "Identify the health and human service concerns judged most critical by Brevard County citizens". Eighteen areas were identified of which twelve were connected to seniors:

- Transportation
- Affordable housing
- Financial aid for emergencies
- Home health care

- Home maker/home health services
- Emergency shelters
- Information and referral
- Respite care
- Primary Health care
- Protection from abuse and self-neglect
- Crisis Intervention
- Service and activity activation

Ironically, we are receiving these same comments from our survey distributed in 2015 to provide data for a senior advocacy plan. Since a huge number of United Way, county, state and local charity dollars have been expended to this effort, we have to ask ourselves if we are spending these valuable dollars in a cost effective way aimed at reducing the problem. What progress have we made? Which dollars are unfortunately wasted?

I talked to Rob Cramp, Executive Director of Housing for Homeless, who said his organization served 40 homeless senior families in 2014. I am aware of people who have been on the wait list for affordable housing for the past eight years. We know of Brevard's transportation problem. Churches seem to be the main focus for emergency funds. And who has not heard of problems accessing primary health care? Should I keep going? I think not, for we have the same problems that existed in 1996 even though the state and county has been designated Brevard as an Elder Friendly Community.

As we age we change, including our bodies, our physical capabilities, our energy and our will to meet new trials. Still, as an aging community we must face, meet, endure and conquer the challenges of growing older. With a service organization that more effectively uses our financial resources, we can do a better job. Call 321-473-7770.

To receive a survey and get involved in helping change the way we do things in our county...I need more sleep.



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President

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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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