

Seniors and the Dark Ages

Dear Friends,

The title seems ominous, does it not? Many years ago when I was a midshipman at the U.S. Naval Academy, the time after we returned from Christmas leave was called the "Dark Ages." Nothing much was happening, there was nothing to brag about, nothing to look forward to. Some seniors may feel the same way, but don't let this terminology apply to your life!

Recently I met with a Board member of Helping Seniors of Brevard who said, "Joe, we need to do more to let people know how we help seniors." Those were golden words to me, for I have had the same thought for many years. In fact, we started the radio show in 2000, the television show in 2007, and the newspaper column in 2007 to inform, educate and connect seniors to resources. For this reason, Senior Scene Magazine, Spotlight Magazine, Hometown News, and Ebony News Today feature our columns and newsletters. We also have several television shows on channel 199 and 49, or you can go to www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org to access all of our media programs and more resources online.

Unfortunately, all of this information is worthless if it is not talked about, made known to others, and publicized by word of mouth. I recently talked to three people who had made calls to government or nonprofit organizations (agencies receiving taxpayer dollars) and not received a call back. I tried to discuss these failings with a member of the Florida Elder Helpline, but was talked to in a rude and condescending way. This is not right...it is time we all spoke up to correct these shortcomings!

In Florida we have a state-sponsored system to help



eligible people acquire Medicaid cards. There are rules about eligibility and those can be ascertained by calling the Elder Helpline at 1-800-963-5337.

Believe it or not, there is no cost to acquire this card.

However, there are many who will prey on those who need care. Financial advisors may seek up to \$8,000 to start a process, while others work the system to get a client onto the Medicaid lists. One method is to get a client into a nursing home so that he/she may then be worked into the Medicaid system and ultimately transferred to an assisted living facility.

Are these methods necessary? Absolutely not if the system worked as designed. By that I mean the initial call to the Elder Helpline that starts the process at no financial cost to you. There also is a local office located at 1600 Sarno Road, Suite 117, Melbourne, Florida...32935, phone number 321-373-0824 to assist you in this process. You meet and talk to a live person,

not a difficult-to-reach phone answerer at the Elder Helpline. Regardless of the process you elect, neither should cost you more than a little time or a phone call.

For many it is wise to start the Medicaid Card acquisition process as early as possible so that wait times are reduced or eliminated. Otherwise, you may find yourself waiting two to six months to acquire a card when you already need one. One of the reasons Helping Seniors exists is to help elders access the system. There are many different obstacles in the way of aging with dignity, but why part of the "Dark Ages?" Be informed about the many wonderful resources that can assist you. Call us at 321-473-7770 if you have a question. This, too, is a free call and will prove helpful to you. Be a member of the Enlightened Age, not the Dark Age.

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. **SS**

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