

VIEWPOINT

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A replacement for the 'Silver-Haired Legislature'

What happened to the "Silver-Haired Legislature?" This body of activists, ages 60 and older, was organized in Florida in 1979 to develop mock bills to help seniors, then lobby for them in the real House of Representatives and Senate. They enabled the passage of many new state laws and spurred an increase in senior advocacy efforts.

But where did they go? It might be a little like Greek mythology, a thing long ago in the past and certainly not germane today. But I do not think so.

Might it be that the underpinning was not strong enough to ensure it would last into the future?

These are good questions, all of which relate today to Helping Seniors of Brevard.

Our mission – to educate, inform, and connect seniors and their caregivers – echoes the advocacy theme of the Silver-Haired Legislature.

We, too, get involved with local community needs through radio, TV and newspapers.

When Helping Seniors was founded, there were many unfilled needs in Brevard, including the lack of a county aging plan.

To address this unmet need, the Board of Directors formed the Senior Advocacy Council. During the course of eight months, 41 volunteers con-



**PRESIDENT,
HELPING SENIORS
OF BREVARD**
JOE STECKLER

ducted a countywide survey of seniors. The result of this effort was combined into a recommendation to the Brevard County Commissioners to catalyze development of an aging plan.

What is the future direction of the Senior Advocacy Council? Should it go the way of the Silver-Haired Legislature or should it become a voice of the 245,000-plus senior citizens of Brevard County?

My vote would be for the unifying force of senior citizens.

We talk of government waste, but there is also the need for citizens to be educated, to be informed and to know what assets are available for their care. This is the mission of Helping Seniors.

Consider for a moment the effect of harnessing all of our elder care funding (government, nonprofit and private) under better leadership to ensure that monies are directed to the problem and not to escalating overhead. Distribution of funds under the nonprofit mantle is often clouded with actual versus intended use; for example, the workings of local nonprofit organizations, in particular, are not always well advertised.

Enter here the role of a non-governmental organization, such as Helping Seniors Advocacy Council.

This group, working with other senior advocates, city and county government and related organizations, could be a guiding force for an elder-friendly county, one with an active Commission on Aging and a county-sponsored aging plan.

Seniors and those who care for them need in-place services that are available. They at least need to know how necessary services can be accessed.

Think for a moment about a senior who needs dental services, specifically services requiring mouth surgery. You

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Future carpenter



Alex Schierholtz/staff photographer

Josilyn Kline, 4, of Melbourne builds a tool box, as Home Depot team member Josh Bailey of Melbourne helps out during 'National Night Out,' hosted by the Melbourne Police Department Tuesday, Oct. 6 at the Melbourne Civic Auditorium.

Rants & Raves

Got something to say?

Email the Hometown Rants & Raves at brevnews@hometownnewsol.com or call (321) 242-1276.

Callers are asked to refrain from making slanderous statements.

Credit to my bill

This week, I received a letter from Florida Power & Light saying it will be cutting the amount of credit to my bill by over half.

I used to save during the summer an average of \$9.50 a month. This was a big help financially for this senior lady on a low fixed income.

The gal on the phone said I could get about \$2 a month more, over the half they were going to give, if I were to shut my air-conditioning off for three hours at a time.

With the heat index reaching over 100 degrees many days, this is not possible.

Fellow FPL users, call to complain and perhaps they will reinstate the nice credit they use to give.

Maybe you don't mind having no A/C for three hours at a time, but not for me with my health problems.

Unfortunately, I don't know of another electric company to switch to, so we are all stuck.

FPL, please bring the credits back like they were.

Trust me, \$9.50 means a lot to many

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Seniors

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cannot receive such care at hospitals, urgent care clinics or most dental offices.

You can, however, call certain resources and be placed in contact

with a dentist who will examine you to determine your best course of treatment.

You might need surgery – just not to the extent you thought you might need. Dentists, good ones, will work out a payment plan so that you will get the needed help.

For many reasons, we need an aging plan. Services for seniors need to be

better identified so that care can be accessed, and that is why a senior advocacy council is needed and should be a visible and viable part of the resources needed to age with dignity.

Communications are essential, as is education on how we can access services. We need more than an inactive Silver-Haired Legislature.

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 at (321) 473-7770.

Rants

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people.

Let's talk about cats

In response to my writing about feral cats – my neighbor has at least two of them and leaves them out at night.

These cats leave their droppings on my lawn and on my grounds where I have fruit trees.

I have my own cat and dog and, by law, the dog needs to have a leash on when I walk her. The cat has her own box to do her thing, and I keep it clean.

The cat and dog have a real relationship and play together. When the dog goes to lie down, the cat snuggles next to the dog.

My feeling is that those who let their cats out should face a fine for letting them out at night.

I keep both my dog and cat in very good health and love them as if they were my children.

Other neighbors on my block have either a cat or dog, and the ones with the cat keeps them inside; and the place is always clean. The other neighbor does not keep (his) driveway clean at all. It's like (he) shows no care.

Now, when he goes to walk his dog, the dog has a leash, which is by law, and he doesn't clean up after the dog as others do here.

Many carry a bag and wear a glove so they don't get their hands full of the germs. So, this is my response to "Cats in the neighborhood."

Here is what is wrong with our country

There are 144 people in the United States who own one-half of the wealth of this country. The other 300 million of us own the other half. (Bill Moyers and Company).

This past June through July 14, people in this country made \$144 billion in profits. Now, I ask all of you, "Who do you think the politicians pay attention to? You? Me?"

It's only when an issue in the 1 percent of the top 1 percent happens to be the same as the majority of the rest of us, then Congress passes it; and we think we actually had a say in it.

We never hear the names of the thousands of lobbyists who buy our politicians on a daily basis, unless (the lobbyists) write a book, like Jack Abramoff did. How come?

Politicians will say whatever they think we want to hear to get elected. Once they're in with their buddies, lobbyists and their cliques in Washington, D.C., they could care less about who voted them into office.

"A government of the people, by the

people, and for the people..." Are you kidding me? If you believe that, you're a fool.

By the way, I am a Vietnam-era veteran, who joined after the draft was abolished, so I served to protect the Constitution and the Bill of Rights.

Politicians are supposed to serve the people, NOT the other way around. If "Obamacare" is so great, why don't the politicians have to use it, too?

Unfurl that flag. We bought it.

I am very proud of the American flag and enjoy seeing it flying in the breeze. We have many breezy days in the Melbourne area; it is too bad that the flag on Judge Fran Jamieson Way in Viera never seems to be unfurled.

Each time I drive by I wonder why it is always wrapped around the flagpole.

I also wonder how much we taxpayers paid for it, who is responsible for purchasing it, who sold the community this piece of junk and why no one seems to care in getting it fixed.

It has been there for five-plus years; what is the problem? I would like to ask the *Hometown News* to do a little research on the flag, tell us its history, when is it going to be fixed and who is going to fix it.

Dogs in the food markets

You know there ought to be a limit, boundaries and laws enforced on certain things in this state of Florida. Truly some things are just out of control.

For example: is it necessary for dogs to be allowed in food markets where humans shop for food?

There is always one person who behaves like a child and determines to break the rules, regulations and laws; and then dares anyone to stop them. These folk know exactly what they are doing and would be the first to cry wolf when someone steps to them for their offense.

Long ago, a dog, an animal, would not be allowed in a food market because it was considered unsanitary.

Well, NOTHING has changed today. In fact, it may be worse today with all the germs going around. I would not want to use a shopping cart, knowing someone put their dog in that cart.

ALL dog owners are not sanitary dog owners either. TRUTH.

The folks who purposely bring their dogs in food markets are selfish law-breakers and they are inconsiderate of others. There are folks who are ALLERGIC to dogs. There are folks who are AFRAID of dogs. There are folks who don't like YOUR dog. That is YOUR dog to enjoy, and it should be enjoyed in areas that will not be bothersome to others. That is COMMON LOGIC, FOLKS.

I thought it was such a wonderful idea

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Hometown News

PET OF THE WEEK

A 7-year-old miniature Schnauzer, 'Maggie' is the darling pet of Frank and Ann O'Brien of Melbourne. Maggie loves eating, sleeping and chasing squirrels.

Is your pet worthy of the spotlight?

Hometown News will be the judge of that.

We are asking our readers to submit photos of their beloved pets, as part of our "Pet of the Week" Contest. The winner for the week will have his or her pet displayed in our newspaper, while also being qualified to become the Hometown News "Pet of the Year!" Email a photo of your pet (one entry per owner) that is at least 1 MB in size to brevnews@hometownnewsol.com. Write "PET OF THE WEEK CONTEST" in the subject line, and in the body of the email, please include the following information:

- Name of pet
- Age
- Breed
- Three of your pet's favorite things to do
- Pet owner's full name and hometown
- Phone number (in case we have questions)

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