

Dear Friends,

In part one of our three-part series on elder friendly communities, coined we talked about information and its importance to seniors. We determined that there are many elder care programs in Brevard County, but they are not well advertised. Therefore, the first step in becoming elder friendly is telling people what is available. Now we will discuss the second step in becoming elder friendly – education.

To begin this task, we must become better informed about the pieces already in place. We can then develop any elements that are missing from the care equation. Once we put all this together, seniors can enjoy better quality of life while aging with dignity. So, what types of companies and individuals are necessary to an aging plan?

Two key ingredients are financial and estate planning. Many Floridians are in a second marriage, so tremendous assets are often involved in settling estates. Advance documents such as a Durable Power of Attorney are a tremendous help, as is the advice of professionals such as Courtney & Braswell Financial Group and William Johnson, P.A.

With the recent changes in health insurance, more seniors need help finding an affordable plan that meets their needs.

The Florida nonprofit SHINE, Serving the Health Insurance Needs of Elders, provides free counseling and information on Medicare and Medicaid. Insurance changes also have affected pharmaceuticals, causing many people to seek resources such as Canadian Meds of Melbourne for individual savings of 20-80% on prescription drugs produced in the U.S. but purchased through Canada.

As we age, we collect things. Making the decision to downsize is difficult for seniors. One company, Organized Creative Designs, can help you prioritize those prized possessions that will fit into a small living area. HandyPro of the Space Coast, owned by a former engineer in the space industry, can help modify your home so it is safe for you to age in place. Finally, Barbara McIntyre, a licensed Loan Officer with Reverse Mortgage Funding, can help leverage your existing equity so you can live more comfortably and with fewer financial constraints.

Should you need assistance in selling or buying a home, you can call on Wendy Handy of Dale Sorenson Real Estate. There are many wonderful 55+ retirement communities in Brevard, including The Waters in Melbourne Beach. If it is time for you to move into assisted living, The Fountains of Melbourne, Riverview Senior Resort, Hibiscus Court, and Zon Beachside are all wonderful assets to meet your new living needs.

Fortunately for those who need eye, ear, and dental care, there are excellent local resources available including The Eye Institute, EarCare P.A. and Dr. Lee Sheldon, a periodontist and dental implant surgeon. All these providers have informative TV shows archived on our website www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org. For major medical services, my hospital of choice has always been Wuesthoff. My doctors all have privileges there. One final stop is hospice care. VITAS hospice has a long record of friendly service in Brevard County.

These are all parts of an elder friendly community. Once we are educated about available services, we will better meet individual care needs. In part three of our series on elder friendly communities, we will address connecting with these resources and how radio, television and print media contribute to an elder friendly community. Knowledge is power. Part three next.

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