

FACING THE REALITY OF GETTING OLDER

by : **Helping Seniors of Brevard**

The activities associated with Hurricane Matthew have impacted this senior citizen and I readily admit my own frailties. Before, I was never concerned with all of the side effects of the aging process but Matthew has made me rethink some of the decisions I now face.



Over the years I have written many columns about the need to eat healthy foods, exercise, stay mentally alert and be thoughtful of others. These are all good things, but what happens when we can no longer maintain the fitness levels to which we aspire, what then should we do about life changes over which we have no control? At this point we may consider downsizing our material possessions through early gifts to family members and utilizing companies like Organized Creative Solutions to assist in the downsizing process.

Many of us are collectors. Some of the items we have acquired over the years are irreplaceable, while others may be meaningful to us but not necessarily to our family. Years ago I was at a party where I discussed these thoughts with a man who was later to be in charge of Naval Reactors, our country's nuclear power program. He and his wife had decided to downsize. He admitted that, while painful at times, it was one of the wisest things they had done. After Matthew, I can more easily see the relief they felt in de-cluttering their life.

Moving plants, patio furniture, wall hangings and other outside items into the house at 80+ years of age is no easy task. Putting up Lexan shutters is almost impossible, not to mention all the other stuff we must secure to prevent flying missiles. The storm surge was a major factor in Matthew. Some items could be moved to higher levels but this takes time and a lot of work, to say nothing about putting it all back. Although the damage was minimal, Matthew should encourage us all to rethink our plan for passing along valuables to our family.

That said, we have started the task of gathering family pictures and other items to give to the younger generation. It is always possible that we are mistaken about what they actually want. Thoughts on what is treasure and what is clutter change from family to family and generation to generation. For seniors to maintain a large home full of what we perceive to be of worth to our children can cause unnecessary expense and stress, requiring us to stay somewhere that is difficult to maintain both physically and financially.

Building a downsizing plan is similar to building an estate plan, a financial plan and a host of other plans. But the truth is we often don't want to think about downsizing, for it signals other life changes we do not want to address such as living wills and burial plans. The truth is that we are all mortal and, as such, cannot take our possessions with us to the next life. I strongly believe that what we can take with us are the good things we do as we live our lives on this earth. We have takers and givers; you might want to think about being a giver and lighten your load and stress.



*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 by calling (321) 473-7770.*

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