

Accessing assistance for Space Coast seniors

In a county that has more than 550 people, with about half meeting AARP standards to qualify as senior citizens, there is a definite need for accurate and accessible information about senior care resources and programs. What are seniors to do if such information is not available?

In 2011, Helping Seniors of Brevard County was formed to answer this question. We are a nonprofit organization engaged in making information, education and resources available to seniors and those who care for them. Ensuring that nearly 250,000 seniors are aware of assistance is not a one-time event, but rather an ongoing story that needs to be told daily.

We also advocate for seniors and essential programs like Meals on Wheels.

According to Kaiser Health News, funding for Meals on Wheels is lagging behind the increase in numbers of elderly, causing a reduction of meals in many locations. This has spurred some providers to build health and safety screenings into daily meal deliveries. By partnering with hospitals and insurers, Meals on Wheels can generate additional revenue while decreasing emergency room costs.

With the current thrust on repealing the Affordable Care Act, there could be a tendency for valuable programs such as Meals on Wheels to become endangered species. Too often, the most needy of needs are not identified in the overall rush to reduce expenses. Meals on Wheels has been in existence for 60 years and is critical to the



HELPING SENIORS OF BREVARD
JOE STECKLER

survival of many frail elderly who have no other source of nutritious food.

This is just one example of an elder care service we take for granted. Can you imagine how many people would be affected if this most necessary program was reduced? Nonprofit organizations like Helping Seniors serve a vital function by informing us of needs that are not being met.

In Florida, we have about 50,000 people on wait lists for home care services. Now is the time to ensure that all counties have identified plans that will enable their citizens to age safely and with dignity.

Brevard County does not have an approved plan for seniors to age with dignity. There is a Commission on Aging but it has not taken an active leadership role in promoting the development of an active plan to develop financial resources to assist a rapidly elderly community. Saying we are an elder friendly community requires an active effort to make it this. Government need not necessarily fund all resources, but it does have a responsibility to take a role in the development of active elder leadership.

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ADOPTABLE PET OF THE WEEK

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