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Joe Steckler



Making Use of Senior Programs

When I wrote my first column about senior issues in Florida Today eleven years ago, I was asked if there was enough material to keep such a column going and hold reader interest. It quickly became apparent that many people wanted to know more about the aging process and how to develop both a financial and medical aging plan.

Elder law attorney Bill Johnson has been an excellent resource for information about what is required to put together an effective aging plan, keeping it as simple as possible. He has been a long-time panelist on our radio and TV shows and guest columnist for our newsletter. Bill has never charged us for his services but rather has financially supported senior programs as long as I have been doing this work. He also has advised me about legal issues and shared resources such as the Newsletter of the National Association of Elder Law Attorneys.

When I first became involved with senior programs, I was not as well informed as I am today but studied and read over the years to gain knowledge. Recently I read an article in the Elder Law Journal about the Affordable Care Act and Medicaid. Individual states want to lower Medicaid costs but are hampered by possible reduction in services and loss of funding for 20 million people currently covered through the Affordable Care Act. In fact, there is not enough money in these Medicaid programs to meet current needs. At last count there were about 50,000 seniors in Florida who were on Medicaid waiting lists.

This is a real problem. We have huge numbers of people who need assistance to age with dignity. The value of a program that advocates for seniors and helps ensure the use of state and federal funds for senior services rather than overhead costs cannot be underestimated. This need has emerged over and over again through my Helping Senior work

these past five years and through surveys of seniors and those who care for seniors.

Brevard County does not have an aging plan, and I believe that we must work together and impress upon our leadership the need to promote development of services that will be needed to care for an increasing elder population. Resources allocated to the development of senior programs to address transportation, senior housing, provision of senior food programs and assistance to those who cannot provide their own care as they age can no longer be deferred.

In a county as rich as ours, it can be argued that more attention should be given to earlier and more adequate planning for aging needs. We elect five people to serve as county commissioners, yet do not hold them accountable to provide across the board leadership. This can be verified by the extremely low amount of funding directed to community nonprofit organizations.

For one week in December, I answered the phone for Helping Seniors and the calls for assistance demonstrated that needs are increasing and financial support for early care services does not exist. This year, we will strive to make our readers more aware of unmet needs while identifying ways for community resources to work together to improve senior services.

I encourage you to visit our website at www.helpingseniorsofbrevard.org and or call us at 321-473-7770 to learn more about the many wonderful services that are available and how they can be used to assist all. I wish you a joyous and prosperous 2017.

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

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February is Age-Related Macular Degeneration Awareness Month



Age-related Macular Degeneration (AMD) is the leading cause of blindness among seniors. Fortunately, new treatments have dramatically changed the course of this disease over the last 10 years, making AMD more manageable than ever before.

During the month of February, Riverside Eye Center would like to remind the community that while recent advances can help preserve your vision, early detection is the most critical step! Call today for to schedule your comprehensive eye exam to detect any issues before they affect your vision.




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