



Why Senior Leadership is Needed



By Joe Steckler

Dear Friends,
Try as we might, there is always more we can do to promote the wide array

of elder care services available in Brevard County.

Five years ago, Helping Seniors was founded to inform, educate, and connect seniors and those who care for them to the many helpful resources in our community. Having so many programs to serve those in need is wonderful, but it is equally important to tell everyone about the unmet needs that still exist in our county.

Many of us mistakenly believe that all have access



to health care and can afford the cost of daily living. I wish that were true. Or we assume that if there are needs, programs like Meals on Wheels can fix them. However, the Kaiser Foundation and Meals on Wheels indicate that funds are shrinking and costs are rising. Two weeks ago the Florida Medicaid Managed Care program had a waiting list of 50,000; now it is 62,000. What is significant is that the number of people needing services is increasing, while the funds to provide help are decreasing.

We all want lower taxes, but few will admit

that the provision of necessary services may require more taxes. In a recent article in Florida Today, John Byron proposed a tax increase to help pay for road improvements. This recommendation was made in part to avoid a reduction in Community Based Organization (CBO) funds, which are given annually to assist non profits in providing services. What the article did not reveal is how current CBO funding for such services is already inadequate - \$500,000 out of a budget of over \$1,000,000,000.

What is rarely discussed is the amount of

funds in the county's one billion dollar budget that are already designated for spending and can be used for no other purpose. Of the one billion, only about \$220,000 is available to meet general needs. County salaries, some parts of healthcare, and roads are in that \$220,000. I attended the recent town hall meeting sponsored by Commissioners Tobia and Isnardi. It was a well run meeting. Questions were answered, and both Commissioners stated the need to prioritize spending in the budget.

I fully support the need to prioritize, but based on the mandatory spending requirements, the available money may fall short of the needs of our citizens,

especially the elderly, disabled, and those who need some type of assistance such as Meals on Wheels. In developing a budget, I believe that any prioritization must be based on established needs. When one considers that 50% of Brevard County is classified as senior according to AARP, then it follows that seniors should be involved in prioritizing spending. For that to happen, we need better senior leadership to accurately determine senior needs.

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

3 Ways Seniors Can Get More from their Smartphones

By StatePoint

With the rapid pace of new developments in smartphone technology, it can be hard to keep up with all the changes, especially if you grew up in an era when phones were attached

to a cord.

Phones these days aren't what they used to be -- but that's for the best, as smartphone technology can actually improve your life. Here are three easy ways that seniors can get more from smartphones:

1. "Read" audiobooks.

Whether your hands are tied up gardening or cooking, or you simply want to give your eyes a rest, consider listening to books on your smartphone. You can purchase audiobooks a la carte or opt for a subscription plan, which offers deals, such as unlimited selections for a flat monthly fee.

Features like bookmarks and back buttons make it easy to "flip through" a digital audiobook.

2. Use health apps to manage conditions.

Well-designed health apps can help patients manage their conditions. For example, ArthritisPower, a free app for patients with arthritis, allows users to track symptoms and treatment outcomes, and share the information with their doctors.

Created by CreakyJoints, a go-to resource for arthritis patients and their families, in collaboration with the University of Alabama at Birmingham, the app is also a data-gathering tool for researchers. Via informed consent, user data is helping researchers better understand

how different treatments work for different people.

"One out of every five U.S. adults of all ages lives with doctor-diagnosed arthritis and it's important that patients actively engage in managing their own treatment plan," says Seth Ginsberg, President and Co-Founder of CreakyJoints and Principal Investigator of ArthritisPower.

To download the free app or learn more, visit arthritispower.org.

3. Video chat with loved ones.

Talk and see grandkids and other far-flung friends and loved ones between visits with video chatting. It's the perfect way to ensure you don't miss important milestones.

Many such video communications services are free, even internationally, and can present affordable alternatives to placing long-distance calls on a landline.

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I have Life Alert.

One press of a button **sends help fast, 24/7,** even when you can't reach a phone.

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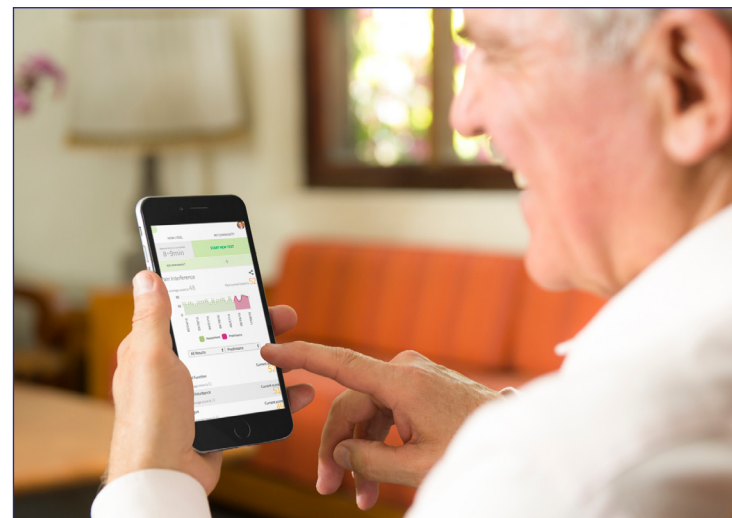


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