

VIEWPOINT

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Why local senior leadership is needed

For Hometown News

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Try as we might, there is always a need to do more about promoting the many beneficial services for seniors in Brevard County.

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

A recent discussion with friends brought home to me the fact that many of us incorrectly assume that everyone has access to healthcare, ability to purchase what they need to live and other needs we encounter each day. I wish that were true.

When someone comments that Meals on Wheels is available for those who are in need, in most instances, it is true. However, recent studies by the Kaiser Foundation and releases by the national Meals on Wheels program indicate a future shortage of funds and a long waiting list for hungry seniors. The president's budget has also removed some of the funding. 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 numbers needing these services are increasing while the amount of funds available to provide them is decreasing.

We all want taxes to decrease, but few want to admit that; in order to provide the services, many will require an increase in taxes.

In a recent article in Florida Today, John Byron proposed a tax increase to assist in paying for road improvements. This recommendation was being made in part so that County Based Operation funds, which are given annually to assist nonprofits in providing services, did not experience a reduction.

What was not stated in the article was that the amount of CBO funding for such services was already inadequate. I use the term "inadequate" based on the fact that we are talking about \$500,000



HELPING SENIORS
OF BREVARD
JOE STECKLER

out of a budget more than \$1 billion.

What is rarely discussed is the amount of funds in the \$1 billion budget that are already designated for spending and which can be used for no other purpose.

Of the \$1 billion, only about \$220,000 is available to meet general needs. County salaries, some parts of healthcare and roads are in that about \$220,000.

I recently attended the town hall meeting sponsored by Brevard County Commissioners John Tobia and Kristine Isnardi. It was a well-run meeting; questions were answered and both commissioners stated their need to prioritize the spending in the budget.

I fully support the need to prioritize but, based on the mandatory spending requirements, the money available to prioritize may fall short of the needs of the citizens of Brevard, especially when considering the needs of the elderly, frail elderly, disabled and those who need some type of assistance, such as Meals on Wheels, which come under the Community Based Operation fund program.

In developing a budget, I do believe that any prioritization plan must be based on established plans and needs.

When one considers that Brevard is one of the oldest counties in terms of those older than 65, and that 50 percent of the county is classified as seniors according to AARP, then it logically can be stated that seniors need to be involved in the development of any base for prioritization of needs. It then follows that we need better senior leadership in establishing senior needs. Establishing this leadership is just one objective of the Helping Seniors Advocacy Council.

Joe Steckler is the president of Helping Seniors of Brevard, a nonprofit organization designed to advocate, educate and fundraise on behalf of Brevard's senior citizens. Feel free to contact us at info@helpingseniorsofbrevard.org or (321) 473-7770.

Some bunny loves us!



Alex Schierholtz/staff photographer

Michael Pedicini, 6, Christina Pedicini, and Julianna, 8, all of Melbourne, smile with the Easter Bunny Saturday, April 9 at Melbourne Square Mall.

Rants & Raves

Got something to say?

Email the Hometown Rants & Raves at

brevnews@hometownnewsol.com
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Contributors are asked to refrain from making slanderous or libelous statements.

Disgusted with the Social Security, welfare systems here

I am a real estate broker in this county and have some interesting happenings that are not only criminal, but also just not acceptable.

I have seen the corrupt side of the Social Security system. There are more than 8,000 children in Brevard County alone, receiving Social Security for what the doctors and their parents have diagnosed with learning disabilities.

The circle of their lives goes this way: The mother has a child. (Then, when

the child is age) 4 or 5, (he or she) goes to the doctor, who prescribes the medicine, then tells Mom where to go to get the lawyer who will fight the refusal of benefits, and they get 30 percent of the total that Mom gets after two years.

Well, then Mom has another child and so on, at the rate of \$733 per child per month. After three or four children, Mom does not have to work because she qualifies for Section 8, gets \$500-plus in food stamps and \$733 per child as income; and Dad pays nothing, Mom does not work and we, the people, pay

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