

# VIEWPOINT

FRIDAY, JULY 28, 2017 • THE BEACHES • WWW.HOMETOWNNEWSBREVARD.COM • PAGE 6

## My comments on the senior movement

### Population demographics for Brevard County

There are about 545,000 people in Brevard County. Nearly half qualify for senior citizen status according to AARP, with 23 percent of them over age 65. Brevard is the eighth-oldest county in the nation; in fact we have more people over 65 than under 18.

### Need for elder care planning

Despite our rapidly aging county, we do not have an identified network to plan for the needs of seniors. It is significant to note the following in light of our elder population:

1. Brevard County has no Aging Plan.
2. Senior advocacy is minimal. There is no active government leadership, and nonprofit leadership is limited. There is a Commission on Aging, but it is not funded by the county and is ineffective in its current form.
3. Out of a county budget of \$1.1 billion, about \$200,000 is directed to senior causes. However, this funding has been targeted to phase out in four years.
4. Public funding is disproportionately allocated to children: A recent sales tax was passed for youth education, while Brevard Schools are working to fund a Children's Service Council through a tax referendum.

### History of the senior movement

In 1993, I became the director of the local Alzheimer's Association chapter. Recognizing the shortage of programs to assist seniors, we developed one of two Americorps Project Elderserve programs, created one of the first statewide respite program and built three dementia care centers in Micco, Melbourne and Titusville, all on land donated by the county. A major accomplishment was getting the Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation designated as a managed care operation, which allowed access to major state funding until the program was discontinued in 2014.

I also served on the Brevard Commission on Aging, including three years as chairman, but was never able to develop an aging plan or funding to support a rapidly aging population. During this time, Health First developed an Aging



**HELPING SENIORS OF BREVARD**  
**JOE STECKLER**

Institute and Parrish a Senior Consultation Center, but Wuesthoff did not venture into the elder arena. Knowing more needed to be done, we incorporated Helping Seniors of Brevard in 2011 to inform, educate and connect seniors and caregivers to available resources. The intent was to complete the care equation, not compete with any other organization.

### Current outlook

Since 2011, Helping Seniors has developed financial stability through in-kind support, media sponsors, annual fundraisers, individual donations and grant revenue from foundations, including Publix Super Markets Charities, Employees Community Fund of Boeing and the Heineman Foundation. Our free services include the following:

### Education

Television – Each year we produce 50 educational TV shows for seniors that air three times daily on SCGTV and around-the-clock on Helping Seniors YouTube channel.

Radio – Our weekly 1-hour radio show featuring a revolving panel of elder care experts has run for the past 16 years, still airing on AM 1510 WMEL, three FM frequencies, streaming live at 1510WMEL.com and archived on our SoundCloud Channel, YouTube Channel, and website.

Print – We have monthly columns in Senior Scene magazine, Hometown News, Spotlight Magazine, Ebony News Today, Al Dia Today, Space Coast Daily, and the Barefoot Tattler, plus a monthly 8-page newsletter in Senior Scene magazine. An additional 1,124 subscribers receive our newsletter via email.

Digital – An ongoing presence on our website and social media, including Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram and Google +, helps us reach the younger  
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## Flying dodge ball



Alex Schierholtz/staff photographer

Trey Pitten, 17, of Indialantic, plays ultimate dodge ball during Sky Zone Space Coast's one-year anniversary celebration on July 19 in Rockledge.

## Rants & Raves

### Got something to say?

Email the Hometown Rants & Raves at

[brevnews@hometownnewsol.com](mailto:brevnews@hometownnewsol.com)

or call (321) 242-1276.

Contributors are asked to refrain from making libelous statements.

### Raising the stormwater fee

I see the Palm Bay City Council more than tripled the stormwater fee.

Does this mean instead of taking two-to-three months to replace a drainage pipe under a two-lane road, which for the life of me I can't understand why it would take that long, maybe they can now take four-to-five months? We will see.

I would like to give two raves in this letter

First, to *Hometown News* in publishing an outstanding newspaper that provides the community with local news, events and stories. Amazingly, the cost and delivery of the paper is free. Keep up the great work.

My second rave is to Jim Corbin and Sons auto repair, for outstanding professionalism and service.

Having moved to Florida five years ago, it took me four years to find a really honest auto repair shop.

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# Movement

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generation caring for aging parents.

**Expos & Senior Shows** – We participate in several trade shows a month with an average audience of 500 persons per event, reaching 24,000 people every year.

## Information Network

**Helpline** – Callers can request assistance from our information specialist, who listens to problems, researches solutions, and provides follow-up and data tracking to uncover trending senior problems in Brevard. More than 800 cases are served annually.

## Advocacy

**Seniors Advocacy Council** – a volunteer group meets quarterly to target unmet community issues and spearhead development of a county aging plan.

**Research & Collaboration** – We conduct an annual Senior Needs Assessment and are actively involved with the Brevard County Commission on Aging, AARP

local chapter meeting, and the Golden Providers Directory for Senior Services.

**Summary** – The foregoing are all active programs. What is needed to develop future programs is local financial support. For several years United Way has operated with closed doors to new applicants. At the same time, efforts are underway to limit already scarce government funds for senior programs on the national, state, and county levels. If that happens, it is doubtful that local funding will be able to sustain many valuable programs such as Meals on Wheels. An aging plan would address such losses and plan for alternate funding, such as an elder care endowment managed by an organization that would earn the trust of all who contribute. It is never too late to start a planning effort, but to continue to delay could be catastrophic.

*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 by calling (321) 473-7770.*

problem. At the other auto repair shops, when I took my car in for oil changes or recalls every time I was called to the desk and informed I had one or two problems with the car (battery, wipers, tires, brakes, AC, etc.) I usually had the problem resolved at a cost.

Two years ago, I was given an estimate recommending work on my Cadillac's AC for around \$1,800. I still have the estimate, and the AC is still working great. Two months ago, I thought I had a radiator problem with my car. I took it, of course, to Jim Corbin and Sons. They had the car all day, checking everything out and found no problems. My bill was zero. Isn't that unbelievable today?

If you have gone through problems similar to mine, I recommend you try Jim Corbin and Sons.

Nice. Way to go guys. I'm touched. Your efforts are exceeded only by your generosity.

And this is a celebration of what, exactly?

A celebration of the rundown neighborhood in this area that is now highlighted by your overdone - and no doubt overpriced - ornate streetlamps that follow one of the worst neighborhoods of Palm Bay?

Historic Palm Bay? Really??

Is it a celebration of an ugly parking lot that stands abandoned and baking in the sun because you are unable to draw any investors into a neighborhood where you won't invest in the citizens of your community?

Or is it a celebration of the lower-income residents of the neighborhood that surrounds this "square"?

Is this your way of mocking them by demonstrating, "Here. Take this meager offering and shut up. Get drunk, and leave us alone; and we'll put up some stupid streetlights to make it all better?"

Oh, and in the meantime, the cops can make some arrests to help fill the tax coffers so that the city politicians can plan their next vacation or home improvement project.

Hey, Palm Bay, how about a real "Celebration Square?" How about making an honest effort instead of some mocking, half-assed attempt at keeping the working class drunk and oblivious? How about something decent?

Oops, I forgot ... you blew all of your money, didn't you? You stupid, selfish fools.

## So much for 'Celebration Square'

Every time I pass by the city of Palm Bay's so called "Celebration Square," it infuriates me.

It's nothing but an empty sunbaked and seedy parking lot, left over from a demolished shopping plaza at the junction of U.S. 1 and Port Malabar Boulevard.

In the city's efforts to control the crowds that must surely flood the free concerts once a month, they have installed some lovely bright orange construction netting and also stenciled "Celebration Square" on some painted concrete k-rail barriers around the site.

# Rants

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A year ago, complaining to my neighbor's father, I believe, on getting ripped off at numerous dealerships and a five location family auto repair, he suggested Jim Corbin and Sons because of the great

service he has received for more than 10 years.

When my Cadillac started idling roughly and dying at stop lights, I took my car to Corbin and Sons. At no cost to me, they looked at my car with their equipment and then showed me the problem - a manifold leak. They also gave me a reasonable cost to repair. What really impressed me is that they showed me the

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