



Do We Want Nonprofits?

Joe Steckler, President

In light of all that is happening in Brevard County regarding nonprofit funding, now might be a good time step back and review the entire process. To the title of today's column I could add, "Do we need nonprofits?" Based on the way funding is derived from private and government sources, I believe that is a most pertinent question.

Generally speaking, most nonprofits are funded through federal, state, and local government; private donors; program fees; United Way; and foundations, which make up about 7% of the total raised. So you see that nonprofits are quite dependent on varying sources for their livelihood. Since most funds are developed at the local level, it is important that all donors understand where their dollars are going.

Answering the "want/need" question is difficult. If this were a perfect world, I might opt out of wanting nonprofits. However, in a not-so-perfect world, it would be difficult for government to fill the void left by nonprofits. Look at the way nonprofits stepped up to assist those damaged by Irma. That is why I became concerned when the County Commissioners voted to eliminate \$510,000 in nonprofit funding from the County budget. Considering that 150,000 citizens in Brevard are elderly, does this diversion of funding from senior programs to road repair reflect true needs?

Just as the use of taxpayer money by local government is decided by our Commissioners, the use of donated monies to a nonprofit is dictated by its governing Board of Directors, not by the people who need assistance. For instance, if you donate to the United Way and their Board of Directors believes that children are the number one priority, then your contribution will probably go to children's programs, unless

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portrayed what happens. So hopefully we can distribute the film to caregivers – not just of Alzheimer's patients, but to families dealing with any debilitating disease."

This is another reason Valerie Harper can identify with the film.

"My husband has been my wonderful caregiver for 5 years now, although I was only given 3-6 months," she said, referring to her rare brain cancer diagnosis. "My thing is called leptomenigeal carcinomatosis and it affects the meninges (membranes surrounding the brain). It's been difficult, but I've found the best way to get over your own tragedies is to focus on helping and supporting others."

Already a multi-award winner at film festivals across the U.S. and overseas, "My Mom and the Girl" is still on the festival circuit (see www.mymomandthegirl.com).

"Awards are nice," says Harper. "But any light we can shine on Alzheimer's – or any other devastating disease – is a win for us."

Nick Thomas teaches at Auburn University at Montgomery, Ala, and has written features, columns, and interviews for over 650 newspapers and magazines.

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you specify otherwise.

Helping Seniors has approached United Way for four years and been told repeatedly that seniors are not a priority. If that is true, then I would recommend all senior donors become designated donors. By stipulating where your dollars are spent, you will help those who are most likely to help you.

I think most donors would be quite surprised if they did a search of the IRS 990 statements that all funding sources are required to post. Having said the above, I cannot fathom why any Board of Directors that collects money from the public would not entertain giving some of that back to seniors and the frail elderly.

The other part of the giving and collecting equation regards overhead expenses of nonprofits that serve the public. If I review an organization's 990 and see that about 40% of its revenue is directed to salaries, benefits, and operational costs, I would be most cautious about donating. This is not unusual and is a practice in which major charities engage. They just will not have me engaged with them.

As we approach the giving season, do some research on where you want your dollars spent. If you are a United Way donor, you can designate where your dollars go; I am quite certain many nonprofits who serve seniors could use your support. So to answer my own questions, "Yes, we do need nonprofits." Moreover, we want organizations like United Way to review its giving priorities and consider doing more to support seniors and the frail elderly.

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. **SS**



UPCOMING EVENTS

The Singing Christmas Tree - Saturday, December 9th - \$87 - From its beginning over three decades ago, The Trees have become one of Central Florida's most loved and spectacular traditions. Featuring a huge choir, full orchestra, worshipful dance, powerful drama and a beautiful display of 250,000 lights, The Singing Christmas Trees is an exciting presentation of Christmas classics and the pageantry of our two 40-foot-tall Christmas Trees.

Mission Inn Luncheon and Winery Tour - RESCHEDULED FOR WEDNESDAY JANUARY 17TH - \$62 - enjoy a fabulous lunch at the Hacienda Restaurant at the Mission Inn, Howey in the Hills before going on tour of the Lakeridge Winery. Sign up by December 15th, minimum of 35 needed for this trip.

Waitress - March 24, 2018 - \$92 - inspired by Adrienne Shelly's beloved film, Waitress tells the story of Jenna, a waitress and expert pie maker. Jenna dreams of a way out of her small town and loveless marriage. A baking contest in a nearby county and the town's new doctor may offer her a chance for a fresh start, while her fellow waitresses offer their own recipes for happiness. Jenna must summon the strength and courage to rebuild her own life. These are upper balcony tickets at this time, if Broadway Across America opens lower level tickets then we will have first dibs for them and we will reprice. final payment due by February 1st

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