



# The Importance of Nonprofits

by Joe Steckler, President Helping Seniors of Brevard County, Inc.

I have talked a little about nonprofit organizations and what they do in our community, but the story is a never ending one. It needs to be told continuously so that people in need know how to get help. Just a little guidance can make all the difference to seniors who are hurting and confused. I get calls that you would find difficult to believe, but the problems are very real and need resolution. Many crises can be averted if early preventative actions are taken.

My work with nonprofits started in Melbourne in 1993 with a great organization that served people with dementia. The word Alzheimer's is very familiar, which made it easier to get funding. We therefore could maintain an information network to publicize all the senior services available in Brevard. This started to change in 2010, and unfortunately no other nonprofits were stepping up to educate the public and help connect consumers to services.

For that reason, we founded Helping Seniors in 2011 to educate, inform, and connect seniors and their caregivers to the services they needed. We do that through a mix of articles, radio, and television outreach, as well as a senior helpline. The task now is to improve on the work started by Helping Seniors.

For instance, we receive a huge number of calls regarding transportation and affordable housing, yet little action has been taken to assess the needs of the elderly for service. What are we doing to reduce the number of homeless in the area? Currently, the County is unable to serve seniors, except in select situations that receive minimal funding. And the recent action of the County commissioners to eliminate Community Based Funding will soon have an adverse im-

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We cannot leave our caregivers behind. More can and should be done in our communities. In a nutshell, support, care and understanding are often falling short of their needs, and that is why we are committed to helping through programs like the National Family Caregiver Support Program, our Home Care for the Elderly Program, and the Alzheimer's Disease Initiative, the Dementia Care and Cure Initiative, to name a few.

I thank Governor DeSantis, Lieutenant Governor Nunez and the legislature for their support and funding for essential care programs like respite and adult day care that provide relief for care partners in order for them to stay well and hope to continue that funding as demands rise.

Our vision is for Florida communities to be places where residents feel comfortable to live through all stages of life. We are proud of our efforts but recognize we still have a long way to go. Until every family caregiver can say that they feel supported and that they have access to the help or services they need, our work is not done. **SS**

pact on many nonprofit organizations. So what recourse do seniors have?

Advocating for seniors has taken on new meaning for me as I answer our helpline and listen to seniors who are misinformed about many situations. If the County is going to tax seniors for county needs, why can't some of these financial resources be allocated to organizations serving seniors? We serve children at the beginning of the life cycle. Why are we so determined to take away all services for seniors at the end of the life cycle when they are, in many cases, desperately needed to sustain life?

For now, nonprofit organizations serving seniors will have to develop new financial resources to underwrite the cost of operations. Helping Seniors has done that through a comprehensive financial plan based on media sponsors and our annual car raffle, which can be seen at [www.Helpingseniorscaraffle.com](http://www.Helpingseniorscaraffle.com).

We have over 600,000 people in Brevard and about 50% are seniors. What if half our seniors, or 150,000 people, donated \$50 to the Helping Seniors Elder Care Endowment? The fund would be managed without government involvement and a percentage would be used annually to assist seniors in need. If you are willing to support such a movement, please send a short note to Helping Seniors, P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937 or call 321-473-7770. I am serious about this, as we seniors need to manage our own destiny. **SS**

## SUDOKU By Linda Thistle

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**DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK:** ♦♦

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