



An Effective Senior Advocacy Program

By Joe Steckler, *President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County*

We have long neglected developing a plan to build affordable housing for current and future residents of Brevard County. No one is really certain of the number that are homeless or the number that need affordable housing. One of the earliest documented needs for affordable housing occurred 2,000 years ago when a young couple used a manger to bring a child into the world. Fast forward to today--we do not have stables and straw available or we might have more housing for those with limited or no funds.

Single people and families are often priced out of the market because they cannot afford \$1,500 a month or more for housing where they can raise a family. When I was young I lived in what was referred to in my town as a Housing Project. The homes were built out of cinder block in the early forties and still exist today. Back then they were not considered a choice place to live, but I was able to walk to school with my brothers and had a small but great home in which to live and celebrate the holidays. It was crowded, but we were happy.

I would imagine that many, including that young couple of 2,000 years ago, would like to have a similar place to live today, but I am not aware of such in Brevard County. I would further imagine that local government was somehow involved in the construction and management of the housing in which I lived as a child. The same could be accomplished today if we had County leadership involved, but that will only occur if we have a strong advocacy program.

The Senior Resource Center, located in the new Zon Beachside Assisted Living facility, has seven programs that can assist seniors. Helping Seniors, one of the organizations located there, is a small nonprofit dedicated to linking seniors to the many wonderful resources available in Brevard to help them. In 2020, Helping Seniors will be committed to developing an effective senior advocacy program.

Five years ago Helping Seniors started the first senior advocacy program in Brevard, conducted a lengthy survey to identify senior needs, and submitted the results to the County Commissioners with recommendations for developing a county aging plan. In our first effort to alert the commissioners to a need that is now unmanageable, no answer was forthcoming. However, we will continue the work started by that advocacy group, augmented

by those who care about correcting a neglected need in a county of almost 700,000 people.

This is not a new message. Hopefully some of you reading this will be as concerned as I and will commit to being a member of the new advocacy group. It is unconscionable to condone people living in the woods, knowing that homelessness continues to increase because families do not make enough to pay the rising cost of housing. We can and should do better. I honestly believe the place to start is a good look at the County budget. Let's see what can be eliminated or reduced, then partner with private money to make housing available for the homeless and those who can pay reasonable prices for a place to live. It can be done with the backing of a true advocacy program. Have we come far enough in 2,000 years?

Contact Helping Seniors at 321-473-7770, at www.HelpingSeniorsofBrevard.org, or at P.O. Box 372936, Satellite Beach, FL 32937. ☎

UPCOMING EVENTS

<p>Scenic Boat Tour and Morse Museum - Wednesday, March 11th, 2020 - \$75 - includes morning scenic boat tour through the Winter Park Chain of Lakes, lunch, and then to the Morse Museum for a Do-cent led tour including the Tiffany Collection. Sign up by February 1st, minimum of 35 passengers needed.</p>	<p>Miss Saigon - Saturday, April 4th, 2020 - \$114 - Experience the acclaimed new production of the legendary musical Miss Saigon, from the creators of Les Misérables. Trip includes lunch, upper balcony seats and roundtrip motorcoach. Non-refundable deposit of \$25 per person. Minimum of 35 needed for this trip.</p>
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