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The Veterans Services of Barefoot Bay

DOD Update

VA Releases Updated DOD List Identifying Agent Orange Sites Outside of Vietnam

The Barefoot Bay Veterans Service Office recently received this notice. The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) released in January an updated Department of Defense (DOD) list of locations outside of Vietnam where tactical herbicides were used, transported, tested or stored by the United States military. In addition to the Blue Waters Act, veterans no longer have to have been "in-country" to be eligible for Agent Orange benefits.

DOD conducted a thorough review of research, reports and government publications in response to a November 2018 Government Accountability Office report found online at <https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/695490.pdf>.

Veterans who were exposed to Agent

Orange or other herbicides during service may be eligible for a variety of VA benefits, including an Agent Orange Registry health exam, health care and disability compensation for diseases associated with exposure. Their dependents and survivors also may be eligible for benefits.

The Barefoot Bay Veterans Service Office is open Monday through Friday, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Our location is next to the CVO on the backside of the Convenience Center. The phone number is 321-215-7966.

Note that the Veterans Gathering Center has recently opened and is now operating Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. It's located next to the Barefoot Bay Water and Sewer District Office. All veterans are invited to come out for fellowship, games and big screen TV. If nothing else, check out the awesome flagpole!



**Joe
Steckler**



Senior Advocacy

After months of anticipation, it is now official – Helping Seniors will sponsor a new Senior Advocacy Group at Zon assisted living facility, located at 1894 South Patrick Drive in Indian Harbor Beach. Join us the first Tuesday of each month from 10 a.m. until noon. The first meeting will be March 3rd. To make your reservation, please call Kim at 321-473-7770.

It is imperative that seniors unite to determine their own future. We have seen state and local elected officials vote to eliminate or transfer funds intended to help seniors. For the past decade Florida legislators have been raiding the Sadowski Fund, moving \$1 billion in funds meant to build affordable housing over to the general revenue portion of the state budget. Will we continue to let those we elect make decisions that adversely affect seniors?

Speaking of the state budget, I call your attention to the recent State of the State address by our Governor. If there was a mention of seniors anywhere in his talk, I failed to hear it. I have to admit that I am hard of hearing, but for that talk I had my hearing aids in and the TV turned up to hear any mention of seniors – which I did not.

You have read my comments about our County Commissioners defunding local nonprofits. Nonprofit funding in Brevard was once \$1 million annually, but times change and so do Commissioners. Although seniors are a rapidly growing segment of our population, programs and funding to assist seniors are not in place.

I do not think that our state or county is working to address problems caused by a rapid growth of seniors, problems that will only intensify as the population increases. Would it surprise you to know that we have more than 50,000 people on Medicaid waiting lists in Florida? Neither national nor state resources can resolve the issue without local support.

In 2015, Helping Seniors joined forces with community volunteers to survey thousands of seniors in Brevard County. Based on the results of that survey, we compiled a paper and presented it to the County Commissioners for action. Nothing was heard from that effort, but now we intend to pick up where we left off. Our goal is to spearhead work with the County Commissioners to develop a senior plan for Brevard County.

Sixty years ago I never envisioned writing columns like this. I was young, and what happened to seniors was not a concern to me. Now I can see that thinking about seniors is critical in places like Brevard where seniors make up almost half the population. We can and should do better for those who need affordable housing, assistance with prescription drugs, ramps, and other things affecting an older population.

Call 321-473-7770 and reserve your spot for the first meeting of the Senior Advocacy Group.

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

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