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Joe Steckler



While it was disappointing to cancel the first meeting of the new Senior Advocacy Council, it was equally heartening to see that 50 people signed up for the event. For 30 years I have been advocating for seniors in Brevard and believe that seniors and caregivers are starting to realize that issues important to them will only be resolved by a unified effort to make positive things happen. The coronavirus threat is a real concern, but hopefully we will be past it soon. With that in mind, we have tentatively rescheduled the Senior Advocacy Council meeting to April 23rd, but will again change the date if the coronavirus threat remains.

The Senior Advocacy Council is vital to ensuring Brevard's ability to be a leader in programs benefiting the elderly. On a recent radio show, we featured the AARP Back to Work 50+ Program. I knew little of the program, but after 30 minutes was convinced that we should work together. At Helping Seniors, we get numerous calls from seniors who need part-time work but have trouble finding jobs or are not prepared for the application process. By training seniors to compete for jobs with confidence, Back to Work 50+ simplifies a problem that to many may seem insurmountable. I made certain these ladies knew about our next Council meeting.

When I asked the AARP representatives what their number one problem in getting seniors to apply for the program was, they said it was lack of awareness. I replied that a major objective of Helping Seniors is to inform and educate people in Brevard about the many wonderful resources available. Certainly, a program that is in tune with today's changes in the job market needs to be promoted within the community, especially a program designed like the AARP Back to Work 50+ Program. This is only one example of a program that can be identified and

used to advocate for seniors.

In starting a movement to unify seniors, we must identify real life concerns to the Brevard County Commissioners, Florida legislators, Governor, and other key decision makers. Advocacy takes time but if never started nothing will be accomplished. What might have happened had the public known that our Governor and Legislature was raiding the Sadowski Fund—money established to build affordable housing—of about \$2.3 billion over the past 20 years? If that money had been used as intended, think how much affordable housing could have been constructed and available to serve those we call homeless today.

I do not advocate for free money for all, but do believe that in a state with a \$93 billion budget, we can do better than have 50,000 people on a wait list for Medicaid services. Had we more wisely managed our ability to meet developing needs over the years, we might not have such enormous lists of people needing services and affordable housing.

Development of an effective Advocacy Council is a step in the right direction, so call 321-473-7770 and reserve a seat for the April 23rd meeting at Zon Beachside Assisted Living. Be part of a movement to cause leadership to listen and plan for meeting the needs of an expanding number of seniors.

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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4/5 Palm Sunday - Cantata
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