

Help the Hometown News Media Group



1) Which section/feature of the newspaper do you read first?

- Crime Report ☐ Community Calendar ☐
 Rants & Raves ☐ Front page stories ☐
 Dining & Entertainment ☐ Other _____

2) What would you like to see more of?

- Sports ☐ Dining Reviews ☐
 Business Features ☐ Profiles ☐ Hometown Heroes ☐
 Photos ☐ Other _____

3) What is your favorite Special Section?

- Outlook ☐ Celebrate Spring ☐
 Hurricane Guide ☐ Reader's Choice ☐
 In Season ☐ Holiday Guide ☐

4) Do you have a favorite columnist?

- Golf – Stammer ☐ Cooking – Costa ☐
 Weekend Wanderer – Rodrigue ☐ Senior - Steckler/One Senior ☐
 Garden – Zelenak ☐ Other _____

5) How do you read the Hometown News?

- Print ☐ Digital/Online ☐ Both ☐

6) Which Hometown News product do you read?

- Palm Bay ☐ Melbourne ☐
 Suntree/Viera ☐ The Beaches ☐
 North Brevard ☐

Complete the reader survey and return the form or fill it out on our website by March 31, 2022, and be placed into a drawing for three winners of a \$200 gift card, a \$100 gift card, or a \$50 gift card. **Winners will be notified by email.**

You can mail your completed survey to:

Survey
Hometown News Media Group
380 Wickham Rd N, Suite F
Melbourne, FL 32935

or can be completed on our website
www.hometownnewsBrevard.com

Name _____

E-mail address _____

Affordable Housing Part II

We are all aware of the need for affordable housing, not only for seniors living on a fixed income, but also for those whose wages simply can not pay for rentals that are averaging about \$1,200 a month. Non profit and other government programs can not support individuals who require permanent assistance.

The fact that there is a tremendous lack of affordable housing today is caused by two reasons. The first is that we have failed miserably in the past to develop and fund a plan to build this housing and second, as a current state Democratic senator recently said, "we continue to kick the problem down the road". Money was set aside years ago by former Florida Governor Chiles in the Sadowski Fund to build this type housing, but duly elected legislators repeatedly raided these funds to fund other parts of the state budget.

It is not surprising this has happened. What legislator would want to take on such a burdensome task as introducing a bill that would require state and county governments to participate in such a plan? Moreover, how would enough citizens (whom the legislators call constituents) band together to say, we pay taxes and we fully believe that there are funds within both state and county budgets to develop a plan, fund, and build affordable housing?

We have 67 counties in Florida and, though it is possible that some counties need affordable housing more than others, I expect the need is close to equal across the state. The reason, folks, that we lack affordable housing is that we do not advocate strongly enough for it. Years ago I was appointed by the County Commissioners to a committee of three, and we held three meetings. I advocated for a plan to do the



**HELPING SENIORS
OF BREVARD**
JOE STECKLER

job, but the other two said we did not have the funding. I replied that we would never have the funding until we showed why it was needed. The committee disbanded.

Consider for a moment the disbursement of billions of dollars of CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act) money across our country. Over a \$100 million came to Brevard: \$25 million went to the five County Commissioners to be used as they saw fit. What if, and I say, what if all the money had been allocated to building affordable housing on county owned land? What if a provision had been put in the raided Sadowski fund that county developed money would be matched up to a certain amount? And, how was that \$100 million spent? You see, folks, we do get a lot of money, we just do not have a say in how it is spent.

I will admit that there is a little satire in my column today, but we have to ask ourselves a tough question. When will we say, enough is enough, and get enough leaders and power brokers in the same room to solve the problem of building affordable housing? If you want to be a strong advocate and can contribute some meaningful help and perhaps a road to a funding source, call me at 321-473-7770 or email info@helpingseniorsofbrevard.org.

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

Puppies

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increase the chances of being returned to shelters. As a shelter that has allowed the adoption of pets as gifts for the past several years, we have not seen an increase in those pets being returned to the shelter."

Ms. Veach said the HSTC had softened its position on this about five years ago, and that led to "great success and an increase in adoptions. We typically don't see an increase of animals being brought in after the holidays that were given as gifts."

Regarding returns of animals adopted during the COVID pandemic, Ms. Veach cited proactive steps the shelter took.

"We increased our resources to try and keep pets in the homes in anticipation of animals being surrendered as things begin to normalize," Ms. Veach said. "The biggest concern was that people would no longer have the time to care for their pets when they returned to the office but by providing education, obedience, and other resources I think that we have seen a positive response from the community and more animals remain in their homes."

A few hours west in Gulfport, Florida Giant Dog Rescue said "right now we are going through an unprecedented period of owner surrenders." That organization blamed the economy, saying "we can't do anything about the soaring cost of rent, gro-



Staff photo by Mike Winikoff

The author's dog Nala was adopted from the Humane Society of Vero Beach and Indian River County.

ceries, etc."

North of Tampa, the Humane Society of the Nature Coast supports the idea of giving pets as gifts but recommends that such gift-givers consider whether the person receiving the pet as a gift has expressed a sustained interest in having one. In addition, they say to consider if the person receiving the pet as a gift is physically and financially prepared to care for him/her responsibly, and that the animal to be gifted was obtained from an animal shelter or rescue organization, rather than being purchased.

All of the shelters we spoke with suggested, as a safe gift-giving alternative, that rather than choosing an animal for someone else, people pay the adoption fee at a shelter, and then present the recipient with a note inviting them to use the gift certificate for a shelter adoption when they are ready to do so.