



# Renting Rooms Helps Homeowners and Seniors

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

For months, years in fact, we have discussed ways to provide affordable housing. Many articles, including mine, look at the big picture – housing projects, low cost homes, older homes, and the need for subsidized housing for low income people. Currently there is no Section 8 housing available in Brevard County and very limited Section 202 housing with 2-3 year waiting lists.

However, some cases require a different resolution. Remember the old saying, "different strokes for different folks"? At Helping Seniors, we receive many calls for assistance regarding housing of a different type. In this situation, an older man or woman who is still physically independent needs to rent a private room with either shared or included bath facilities. It would be ideal if the arrangement would include cooking privileges or use of a microwave.

One case we are currently working involves an 87-year-old veteran who rented for ten years in Palm Bay and paid his bills on time, but was forced out of the house when it was sold. He has a steady monthly social security income and is debt free but can not find a simple, private room with bath and cooking privileges where he can live.

Instead this man has lived in his car for over 30 days while we have tried to help him find housing.

It is ironic when we have also received calls for roommates to share the cost of living because a single renter can not afford the cost. If our elderly caller could team up with a person of similar needs, they could share the cost of the rental. Instead, in a county of about 750,000 people, this gentleman and others like him live in a car or in the woods for there is no other place for them to go. We have no shelters except on cold weather nights or for women with children or those with substance abuse problems.

This is a situation that needs resolution. Helping Seniors has just been given space by OMNI Health Care to start a senior resource center, and one office will be dedicated to identifying affordable housing.

There is a growing number of seniors searching for a home in Brevard they can afford. There are also many homeowners struggling to pay their utilities, homeowner's insurance, property taxes, and home upkeep. Consider a great solution for all – a homeowner willing to rent

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