

Keeping the 'homeless' discussion open

It might appear that too many articles are being written on this subject. However, if we address the topic in an honest, open way, more progress might be made. We believe that discussions of the homeless must fall within parameters such as how many homeless are in certain areas and how those numbers affect the state or federal dollars we receive to assist the homeless.

What is truly sad is that the amount of dollars received to help care for the homeless is miniscule when compared to the number of homeless needing assistance. I first came to Brevard in 1988. Since then, it seems that the number of homeless has only increased whereas the amount of money received to assist in their care has remained at the same low number—about \$1.3 million for Brevard County.



HELPING SENIORS OF BREVARD
JOE STECKLER

A group of volunteers recently went out to all parts of Brevard to conduct a point in time count of homeless people in our community, but they barely touched the tip of the iceberg, mainly those that wanted to be identified. My question is this: what do we do with this information besides qualify for federal and state funding? Do we have a plan to reduce the number of those identified? It seems no one knows what to do with what has been collected or learned.

While difficult to believe, the majority of

those identified in the survey do not appear to want long-term assistance. If those identified wanted to be helped, what could we do to help them? Where would we shelter them long enough to transform them from homeless person to productive citizen? Where would we collect them daily to take them to jobs if they wanted employment?

Treatment of the homeless is not a nonprofit problem. Nonprofits do not have the assets to treat the many causes of homelessness. I believe we need two types of plans to address the homelessness problem: one plan for those that need and will accept help, the other plan for those who are addicts, long-term users of the system, and those for whom long-term help would be effective.

Ending homelessness requires leadership. It is a complex problem that also requires understanding, more than can be achieved through one short article. However, a short article can generate development of long-term solutions. Twenty years ago, the County Manager, a County Commissioner, and I worked on a plan for Brevard to do something similar to what we are discussing today. However, the problem was unsolvable for one reason—lack of funding. Here we are, 20 years later, still needing funding. But, with leadership the problem is still solvable. More about affordable housing later.

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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