



Why We Need a Senior Resource Center

By Joe Steckler, President, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

As you read my column today, think about the title. Why do we need a Senior Resource Center? For years, every news source has commented about our lack of affordable housing, transportation, and financial assistance for rent payments, moving costs, and other needs identified in a United Way workshop in 1992. These needs still exist.

■ **Affordable housing.** I recently read about a huge (affordable??) housing project in Rockledge. Current plans call for the construction of 148 one-bedroom/one-bath apartments averaging 800 sq. ft., 120 two-bedroom/two-bath apartments averaging 1,360 sq. ft., and 24 three-bedroom/two-bath apartments averaging 1,460 sq. ft. Monthly rental costs will range from \$1,800 for the one-bedroom to \$2,400 a month for the three-bedroom model. I see these as models for incoming traffic and not models of the type needed for affordable housing.

■ **Transportation.** For as long as I have lived in Brevard, we have needed a better transportation system. We do have some service, but it is not elder friendly, often taking long waits to reach a destination.

■ **Financial assistance.** There will always be a need for charitable assistance for the poor. And, like it or not,

there will always be a need to assist people despite all the excellent planning tools we have available. Some people, even though they may want to save for retirement, do not have the money necessary to live and plan for retirement at the same time. Imagine a family of four trying to live in a 1,350 sq. ft. apartment paying \$2,000 a month when they earn a minimum wage. It cannot be done.

Somehow we must honestly develop affordable housing, a usable transportation system, and a way to act as brokers for those who need monthly financial assistance to live. I personally do not want to be unfairly taxed to solve these problems, but I am in favor of using the funds available to meet some of these needs.

In our new Senior Resource Center, there will be space to develop a volunteer transportation system to get people to medical and other important destinations. Offices will be devoted to teaching computer skills to those not familiar with working the Internet. There will be a committee to develop affordable housing, a way to provide information on financial assistance, and a Brevard County Aging Plan. Homelessness will also be an ongoing topic for discussion,

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