

A Time to be Thankful

By Joe Steckler, President Emeritus, Helping Seniors of Brevard County

I am thankful that 35 of my 90 years have been spent in Brevard County. I traveled all over the world during my 38 years of military service before Terry and I retired here. I worked with seniors in my last Navy assignment as commander of the Naval Retirement Home in Gulfport, Mississippi. It was one of my most enjoyable tours and persuaded me to work with the elderly in my retirement. However, it was not until I became Director of the Alzheimer's Association Chapter in Melbourne that I knew this was one of the best decisions I had made in my life.

During my time with the Alzheimer's Association Chapter, which became the Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation, I was privileged to work with caregivers, Alzheimer's patients,

and many wonderful senior care providers in Brevard. These were fun years, though I saw where there were many unmet needs. Fortunately, there were County Commissioners, local businesses, hospitals, United Way, and others who believed we could put better care systems and programs in place to care for our senior population.



Working with the County, we obtained land to build three state-of-the-art dementia and adult day care centers, developed one of Florida's largest elder respite programs, acquired three Faith in Action programs, and were awarded one of the first two Americorps Project Elderserve programs in the state. Much of our work was copied in Iowa, Louisiana, New York, and Pennsylvania, demonstrating that local programs could be built that were effective and capable of serving others at an affordable price.

In 2011 we saw a need to better educate and inform seniors and connect them to care services. Excellent programs exist in Brevard, but if people do not know about them, they remain a well-kept secret. To make these many services known to the community, Helping Seniors was founded. We reprogrammed a long-standing weekly radio show, produced new television shows, expanded our print outreach, and instituted a senior helpline in order to meet our mission.

The program is working, but I would be thankful if more of the population were aware of senior needs. Many seniors, just as children, reach a point in their lives that they need care. With extended life expectancy, new needs are emerging for affordable senior care programs. Care programs cost money, an item

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	3-Night	7-Night	10-Night
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