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Friday, March 7, 2025



Helping Seniors of Brevard/For Hometown News
Joe Steckler and John Harper doing a radio spot at
WMEL.

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NEXT LAUNCH



March 12: 7:48 PM.
A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket will launch
three astronauts and a cosmonaut to the
International Space Station.

Community Calendar

FRIDAY, MARCH 7

IMPACT AWARDS/BOARD INSTALLATION – Melbourne Regional Chamber of Commerce will have its 2025 Impact Awards & Board Installation at Hilton Melbourne, 200 Rialto Place, Melbourne on Friday, March 7 at 5:30 p.m. Tickets: \$150, chamber partner; \$190, future partner; after Feb. 21, \$175, partner; \$215, future partner. Email: megan@melbourneregionalchamber.com

SSWD MEETING – The Single, Separated, Widowed and Divorced (SSWD) group will meet for lunch at Florida's Seafood Restaurant, 480 W. Cocoa Beach Causeway, Cocoa Beach on Friday, March 7 at noon. Lunch is on your own. Info: 502-299-8949.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

CHUCK WAGON 5K – The Chuck Wagon 5K will be at 2300 Truman Scarborough Way, Titusville on Saturday, March 8, from 8 to 10 a.m. Cost: \$35. Register: runsignup.com/Race/FL/Titusville/WagonsRunWalkRoll5K

SURF/SKATEBOARD SHOW & SWAP – The annual Vintage Surf and Skateboard Show and Swap will be at Satellite Beach Sports Park, 750 Jamaica Blvd., Satellite Beach, on Saturday, March 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: Free. Go to www.facebook.com/events/1114972893131414.

PALM BAY MAKER FAIRE – The Palm Bay Maker Faire exhibiting hobbies, experiments and other projects will be at Palm Bay Regional Park, 1951 Malabar Rd., Palm Bay on Saturday, March 8, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: Free. Call 321-951-9998.

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Brevard mourns the loss of senior advocate Joe Steckler

From founding Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation to Helping Seniors of Brevard, Steckler had a passion for improving senior lives

By **Brittany Ó Ruacháinn**
For Hometown News

BREVARD COUNTY — There's no shortage of people doing good work in our community, but without a doubt, we lost a truly good man — someone who dedicated his life to service: service to his country, his faith, and to seniors.

On January 29, Helping Seniors of Brevard (HSOB) founder Joe Steckler passed away at the age of 91. While he worked tirelessly to advocate for seniors through his nonprofit up until the day he died, those who knew him are committed to ensuring his legacy won't be forgotten.

"Joe had a way to get us to see the importance of what we're doing and how it was making a difference," said Kerry Fink, executive director of HSOB. "He was never about himself. He was always about doing more to help other people. Joe was driven and at the same time he was the most caring and compassionate individual that you would ever want to know."

When asked to describe Steckler, those who knew him well called him a man of God, a leader, mentor, father figure, and someone who got things done.

Nancy Deardorff, HSOB director of development, described Steckler as a dedicated husband who loved his wife, Terry, intensely, and together, they prayed the rosary every night.

"Joe was like a second father to me, he was my best friend," Deardorff said. "From the start of HSOB to the day he died, he never took a penny. He even put his own money in when he needed to make things happen. If he saw something that wasn't right, he spoke up, and he never gave up. It was very hard to say no to him."

A United States Naval Academy graduate and retired Navy Captain, Steckler found a new passion that let him use his skills as a leader to make a difference.

Upon recognizing that Brevard County had a growing senior population, Steckler turned his attention to supporting this group of individuals. In 1995, he founded the Brevard Alzheimer's Foundation (BAF), a nonprofit that offers guidance through every step of the care process — from early detection to care after detection, for clients and caregivers alike.

Once that organization got going, it grew to provide even more services like Joe's Club, an

adult day care center; Project R.E.L.I.E.F., no-cost in-home respite for family members; food assistance, transportation, and emergency home energy assistance, among many other programs.

"I met Joe back in 1999 I think, and I met him because my father had dementia and attended Joe's Club," Deardorff said. "Joe was a guest speaker for a networking meeting, and I approached him to thank him for the existence of the BAF, and to let him know my father was attending Joe's Club. We got to be friends, and then I did some volunteer work at the BAF before I joined as a board member for Helping Seniors when that got started."

As Steckler expanded his efforts to support seniors by founding HSOB in 2011, his passion inspired others to get involved — including John Harper, a broadcaster with WMEL radio who first met Steckler through their shared community work. It didn't take much persuading for Harper to soon join the volunteer ranks at HSOB, eventually becoming its president.

See STECKLER, page 2

Steckler

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“Joe was always interested in wanting to do the best for the community,” Harper said. “I think there’s probably nobody else you could find on the Space Coast or anywhere who wanted to help people like Joe did, and that’s how Helping Seniors came about. He felt that there was a big need to support and guide seniors when they got into situations where they didn’t know where to turn.”

These services include the Helping Seniors Information Line and Joe’s Resource Center, which provides educational opportunities for seniors through fun events and seminars.

The senior helpline, 321-473-7770, is a free resource for anyone in Brevard, and thanks to HSOB, seniors facing issues from housing, veteran needs, health, finances, meals, you name it, can call for help.

While not every call can be resolved right away, HSOB offers follow-up calls to make sure seniors get the help they need and that connections to resources are made.

HSOB has even added a new service, as of January, that connects volunteers with seniors who may feel isolated and lonely. These volunteers will reach out and offer friendly conversation once a week, as long as the senior is up for it. All they have to do to sign up is call the senior helpline.

One of Steckler’s goals before he passed was to build up a Helping Seniors Foundation. His family’s wishes upon Steckler’s passing were that anyone who’d like to remember and honor Joe would do so by making a donation to HSOB, specifically for the foundation fund.

Fink added, “We have a separate account that we don’t touch so that over the next 10 years, we’ll be able to do what Joe originally



Helping Seniors of Brevard/For Hometown News

Joe Steckler (center) was the founder of Helping Seniors of Brevard. His legacy to improve the lives of seniors lives on in the volunteers who are just as passionate.

envisioned, which was build up a multi-million dollar endowment for Helping Seniors so that we can guarantee that we’re there to be able to help on a whole different level than we’re able to do now.”

Keeping the nonprofit strong — and ensuring it could continue to serve for generations to come — was something Steckler spoke about often, especially in his final days.

“The last conversation I had with Joe, it was really important to him that we keep this thing going,” Fink said. “Hopefully we’ve studied well under his command, but we’re going to give this everything we’ve got — everybody is as 100% committed to this as the day he launched this.”

Editor’s note: Our hearts are with Joe Steckler’s family and many friends. Joe wrote many columns about helping seniors for the Hometown News. He will be missed. To read some of his work, please visit <https://www.hometownnewsbrevard.com/columns/seniors/>

Calendar

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COMMUNITY BABY SHOWER – A Community Baby Shower for single expecting mothers will be at Discover Life Church, 3550 Eau Gallie Blvd., Melbourne on Saturday, March 8, from 10:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Admission: Free. Register: www.dl.church/BABYshower.

“HEALING ENERGY” DISCUSSION – Dr. Mary Jane Ward will discuss “Healing Energy, The Mind Body Link: A Spirit Filled Journey” at Cocoa Beach Public Library, 550 N. Brevard Ave., Cocoa Beach on Saturday, March 8, from noon to 1:30 p.m. Cost: \$5. Info: 321-868-1104.

8TH ST. PRACTICE DAY PUB CRAWL – The 8th St. Patrice Day Pub Crawl will be at Drew Brews & Grille, 2101 Henley Court, Melbourne on Saturday, March 8, from 5 to 10 p.m. Tickets: \$20, in advance; \$30 at the door. Go to www.madhatterpromotions.com/2025-st-practice-pub-crawl.php

SPIRIT OF BREVARD TRIVIA CHAMPIONSHIP – Spirit of Brevard Trivia Championship will be at Plantation Manor – The Great Outdoors, 145 Plantation Drive, Titusville on Saturday, March 8, from 5 to 9 p.m. Benefits Children’s Hunger Project & Jess Parrish Medical Foundation: Women’s and Children’s Health and Education. Tickets: \$60. Call 321-298-5839.

DADDY DAUGHTER DANCE – A Daddy Daughter Dance by Coastal Community School will be at Lansing Island Clubhouse Lansing Island Drive, Indian Harbour Beach on Saturday, March 8, from 6 to 9 p.m. Tickets: \$50, adults; \$30, children. Go to www.eventbrite.com and search for “Daddy Daughter Dance.”

SATURDAY, MARCH 8 n& SUNDAY, MARCH 9

INDIAFEST – Indiafest will be at Wickham Park, 2500 Parkway Drive, Melbourne on Saturday, March 8, from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and

Sunday, March 9, from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. Tickets: \$8, adults; \$4, children, 5 to 12; free, children under 5. Info: Indiafestbrevard.org.

SPRING HOME SHOW – Melbourne Spring Home Show will be at Melbourne Square Mall, 1700 W. New Haven Ave., Melbourne on Saturday, March 8 & Sunday, March 9, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission: Free. Info: 321-727-2000.

FRIDAY, MARCH 14

DOVE BIBLE CLUB GALA – Dove Bible Club Fundraising Gala will be at The Grand Manor, 1450 Sarno Rd., Melbourne on Friday, March 14 at 6:30 p.m. Tickets: \$70, includes dinner. Go to www.dovebibleclub.org

SATURDAY, MARCH 15

OPEN COCKPIT DAY – Open Cockpit Day will be at Valiant Air Command Inc., Space Coast Regional Airport, 6600 Tico Rd., Titusville on Saturday, March 15, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Admission: Free. Info: www.valiantaircommand.com/

WALK-N-WAG -- The 3rd Annual Walk-n-Wag Scavenger Hunt/Pet Festival will be in downtown Cocoa Beach on Saturday, March 15, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. Tickets: \$25-\$35. Go to cocoabeachmainstreet.org/upcoming-cbms-events.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

SPACE FEST -- Cocoa Beach Library, 550 N. Brevard Ave., Cocoa Beach will host Space Fest on Sunday, March 16, from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission: Free. Go to www.cityofcocoabeach.com/CivicSend/ViewMessage/message/225768.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

SSWD POTLUCK LUNCH – The Single, Separated, Widowed and Divorced (SSWD) group will have a potluck lunch at the Church of Our Saviour Angel Room, 5301 N. Atlantic Ave., Cocoa Beach on Thursday, March 20 at noon. Admission: Free, bring a dish to share.

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