Issues That Matter

By Linda B. Carter
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Not Quite Paradise for Many Broward Seniors

Mary was fiercely independent. She worked, traveled the world and raised a family. She never asked anyone for anything. In fact, she was the one who was always there to lend a helping hand. When her husband died, things began to change.

At 80 years old, simple tasks that once came easily were now more difficult. Her kids couldn't assist because they lived elsewhere. She was financially secure, but had no clue where to turn for the support she so desperately needed. Once a vibrant woman who could light up a room, Mary felt isolated and depressed. She didn't recognize the woman she'd become – which is not how she'd planned to spend her golden years.

Mary's story is, unfortunately, far too common in Broward. Thousands of older residents experience similar issues every day. The Community Foundation of Broward thinks they deserve better, which is why we are taking our focus on Dignity in Aging to an exciting new level.

> We can create a brighter future for our elders, but we have to **THINK BIGGER, BE INNOVATIVE,** and **ACT NOW.**

Looks Can Be Deceiving

Broward has the fastest growing 80+ population in Florida, and is widely considered a paradise for retirees. Many, however, need help with everyday activities like driving, cooking, finances, and personal care. Without a caregiver, strong social network, or mobility, the years following retirement are anything but stress-free.

Services for seniors are hard to find, and those lucky enough to get support often experience poor quality or are taken advantage of. Public dollars are also scarce – with less than 5% of Broward County's total budget supporting programs for seniors.

There's a bright spot though! The problems of today don't have to become the problems of tomorrow. We can create a brighter future for our elders, but we have to think bigger, we have to be innovative, and we must act now!

Bold Leadership and Collaboration

The Community Foundation of Broward, the Jewish Federation of Broward County, and the United Way of Broward County have been committed to helping older residents live their lives to the fullest. Each organization has been doing all it can to make a difference, but change isn't happening fast enough. Although we are strong individually, we recognize that by working together we can create a seismic shift that will change the lives of Broward's seniors.

In 2017, the three organizations proudly commissioned a research study unlike any other that's been done in Broward. The comprehensive study of Broward's older population included input from more than 500 seniors, caregivers, nonprofit organizations, government agencies, and corporations. The study took a deep dive into the data and assessed the current safety-net for seniors.

The study provided the information needed to create research-based solutions for this complex issue. The recommendations and best practices included in the report set the stage for the Community Foundation, the Jewish Federation, and the United Way to work together in new ways to produce a bigger and bolder impact that will last for generations. While each organization has a long history of supporting programs for older residents, the real work has just begun.

The results of the study will be publicly released on June 22, 2018 at the second annual Caregiver Symposium hosted by The South Florida Institute on Aging and the Caregiver Coalition of South Florida, taking place at Nova Southeastern University.

Learn how we can help you create the change you want to see in our community.

Contact the Foundation's Vice President of Philanthropic Services, Nancy Thies at **954-761-9503** or **nthies@cfbroward.org**.

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