



LEAVE A LEGACY®

Why Give

In life, most people require some kind of assistance, whether it's physical, financial or spiritual. Perhaps a local church congregation or food bank supplied meals during a tough time. Maybe you were given a scholarship that made the dream of college possible. You or a loved one may have been shown especially compassionate care in the hospital during an illness or injury.

And during life's struggles, we are often reminded that more must be done to continue positive, humane acts of kindness, and to sustain programs for personal enrichment. We wish more funding were available for medical research, for domestic abuse shelters, or a treasured arts or music program.



Charitable organizations need financial assistance from people like you to continue their work. More than 80 percent of Americans contribute to the nonprofit groups of their choice throughout their lifetimes. But according to research conducted in 2000, only around eight percent of people chose to continue this support through a charitable bequest.

By making bequests and other "planned gifts," you can continue to help organizations that are making an important difference in your community.

What better way to thank the people or organizations that have had an impact on your life, than to make a contribution from your estate through a bequest?

Gifts large and small are important. Charitable giving is not only for the wealthy!

I have children and relatives. Shouldn't I leave my entire estate to them?

This is perhaps the number one cause for reluctance when making a bequest. The truth is that, depending on the current tax laws, leaving a gift to charity in your will may reduce the estate tax burden on your heirs significantly. You should consult with a financial advisor or attorney to learn how giving may actually benefit your family after you're gone.

Charitable Statistics: An Untapped Well of Good

- There are more than 260 million Americans, of whom approximately two million die each year.
- In 1996, 79,346 estate tax forms were filed with the federal government. (At the time, these forms were required for estates in excess of \$600,000.) Eighteen percent of the forms listed a charitable gift.
- In other words, 82 percent of the nation's wealthiest individuals left nothing to charity.
- In addition, the IRS tells us that charity is getting a decreasing share of the money in these wealthy estates, from 21.8 percent in 1976 to 6.3 percent in 1992.
- According to a 2004 Associated Press news story, only 42 percent of adults have wills, a five percent drop since 2000.

If only 20 percent of Americans left a charitable bequest, the current number of charitable bequests would more than double. Imagine what the impact to charitable organizations would be if the 80 percent of Americans who give during their lifetimes also made a charitable gift through their estate plans!



LEAVE A LEGACY®

How to Give

Charitable Bequests

A charitable bequest is simply a distribution from your estate to a charitable organization through your last will and testament. There are different kinds of bequests. For each, you must use very specific language to indicate the precise direction of your assets, and to successfully carry out your final wishes. In any charitable bequest, be sure to name the recipient accurately. A bequest to The Cancer Society might go to national headquarters, when you meant it to go to the affiliate in your community.



Do you have an estate?

Your estate is the sum of your assets, including property you own, insurance policies, retirement accounts, cash on hand, etc. Wealthy people may have very large estates, but even people who aren't wealthy often have the resources to make a charitable bequest. If every adult in America made a will and included a bequest of just \$100, billions of dollars would flow to charitable causes every year.

Below, we have listed some of the more common kinds of bequests, and some bequest language. We always recommend that you carefully review the terms of your will with a professional trained in handling trusts and estates.

General Bequests are legacies left to certain people or causes that come from the general value of the estate, and are made by designating a specific dollar amount, a particular asset or a fixed percentage of your estate to the cause of your choice.

General bequest language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to NAME OF CHARITY/LOCATION, the sum of \$ _____ (or a description of the specific asset), for the benefit of NAME OF CHARITY and its general purposes."

Specific Bequests are made when a particular item or property is bequeathed for a designated purpose. (i.e., instruments bequeathed to the local school district for use in music education; dollar funds to be used in the operation of a school or church.)

Specific bequest language:

"I give, devise, and bequeath to NAME OF CHARITY/LOCATION, the sum of \$ _____ (or a description of a specific asset), for the benefit of NAME OF CHARITY to be used for the following purpose: (state the purpose). If at any time in the judgment of the trustees of NAME OF CHARITY it is impossible or impracticable to carry out exactly the designated purpose, they shall determine an alternative purpose closest to the designated purpose."

Residuary Bequests are made when you intend to leave the residue portion of your assets after other terms of the will have been satisfied.

Residuary bequest language:

"All the rest, residue, and remainder of my estate, both real and personal, I give to NAME OF CHARITY/LOCATION, for its general purposes."

Contingency Bequests allow you to leave a portion of your estate to a particular charity if your named beneficiary does not survive you.

Contingency bequest language:

"I devise and bequeath the residue of the property, real and personal and wherever situated, owned by me at my death, to (name of beneficiary), if (she/he) survives me. If (name of beneficiary) does not survive me, I devise and bequeath my residuary estate to NAME OF CHARITY/LOCATION, for its general purposes."

Without a will, there is no mechanism in place to make a bequest, so here are the steps you should take to make sure your wishes are granted.

- Make a list of organizations or causes that you would like to support.
- Make a detailed list of your assets (financial, real estate, vehicles, jewelry, collectibles, musical instruments, etc.)
- Set up an appointment with your financial analyst or attorney, or planned giving officer at the organization you intend to support. These professionals will help sensitively guide you through the process.

The planned giving councils that are members of the National Association of Charitable Gift Planners can help you locate professional resources as you prepare to write your will. [Click here](#) to find help near you.