

FIELD NOTES



THE ACCIDENTAL ENDOWMENT PROGRAM

Maybe this has happened to you: an attorney calls to notify you that your organization was receiving a distribution from a donor's estate. Many non-profits have been fondly remembered by someone they may not have known and it created the start of an "accidental" endowment fund.

Are you ready to go beyond the "accidental" bequests and become more deliberate about your endowment development program?

Are you willing to invest a little time and resources to open the door for significant gifts to your organization?

WHAT DO RESEARCHERS SAY?

Universities and hospitals get it. They have full-time departments raising huge gifts from sound practices to fund large endowments. So many other non-profits have a compelling case as well as donors, alumni, volunteers, members who deserve the opportunity to be part of the legacy of the organization they love.

Did you know?

- 89% of all planned gifts are bequests.
- 73% of donors leaving a bequest do not inform the charity.

- Just 5.3% of Americans over 50 have made charitable bequest commitments, yet 33% are willing to consider a charitable bequest. So much untapped potential!
- The average age of someone who makes their first charitable bequest commitment is between 40-50. Stewardship is critical during the gap between when the commitment is made and when the gift is realized to remain in the donor's will and possibly grow the gift over time.

(Sources: Partnership for Philanthropic Planning (NGPG), Center on Wealth and Philanthropy, Giving USA and Michael J. Rosen's *Donor-Centered Planned Gift Marketing*)

**"The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now."
– Chinese Proverb**

PASSIVE VS ACTIVE PROGRAMS

If you do nothing else, create a passive program. Let donors, alumni and volunteers know that your organization can be named the beneficiary in the course of your normal communications to them.

It costs you little time to create a message in your existing literature and on your website – and grab the attention of donors.

But if you really want to provide security and stability to your organization for generations to come, consider a more active program, which includes personal visits and cultivation.

Consider:

- Visiting one prospect a month and learning more about them. What is their story/connection to your organization?
- Recognizing donors who have made a commitment to your endowment. Have a volunteer or staff host a wine and cheese event at their home as a simple gesture of appreciation.
- Spending a few minutes, 3 times a year talking to your volunteers and staff about the endowment. These gifts generally take time to cultivate. Your staff and volunteers could be advocating for you in ways large and small, helping you to secure gifts years from now.

For information on how Donor by Design can help you start or reignite your Endowment/Planned Giving program, e-mail info@donorbydesign.com

