

How You Can Make Dreams Come True

By Kevin Johnson, Retriever Development Counsel

If you could pick a dream to fulfill what would it be? Would it be for you, family, or community? Dreams are powerful and can change the world we live in but too often we think they are not the stuff of every day life. Would you be surprised to know you have the power to make dreams come true?

Here's how one woman started thinking about her about dreams for the future. She got a newsletter in the mail from a charity she supported. She read "If you are reading this newsletter, I know a little about one of your dreams: to give the gift of reading. Here's how you might give the gift of reading to more children than you ever imagined possible. Many readers of this newsletter have worked hard to build, preserve and conserve wealth. This wealth may enable you to make extraordinary contributions through wise estate planning – literally to leave a legacy through planning a bequest in your will or living trust." She was able to plan for a bequest that will help hundreds of children in the years to come. You should have seen the smile on her face and sparkle in her eyes after she made her decision.

Perhaps you have thought or even said out loud to friends something like this:

- "I want to give something back to the community."
- "I want to do something in memory of . . ."
- "I have more money than I want to leave my children."
- "I never dreamed I would have this much money."
- "I don't know who to leave it to!"
- "I would like to diversify my investments but I can't afford to sell this one."

Since a will is also a last communication to family and community, what statement will it make about things that are important to you? How do you wish to be remembered? Where better to leave a gift for charities that represent your lifetime values? Answering such questions may not be easy but if you don't begin thinking about them you'll never discover the answers that are right for you.

It is not soon for anyone to take the first steps (this includes everyone reading this):

1. Think about your personal financial planning and the importance of creating a will or estate plan. Even a modest estate should be carefully planned to assure your wishes are accomplished.

2. Consider a nonprofit group or cause that is important to you. Perhaps you or someone else close to you benefited from an organization's services ... or you've been a volunteer... a supporter... a believer in the mission of a certain group. You may also wish to leave a gift to accomplish a specific purpose or in memory of a loved one.
3. Contact the organization of your choice to learn more about available opportunities for giving and exactly how your gift will help them accomplish their mission and insure their continued services.
4. Seek professional advice from a financial or legal advisor. They can help assure that you receive the maximum tax and legal advantages allowed for leaving your legacy.

There is no better time than today to begin thinking about estate plans. Tax law is always changing and should never be an excuse to postpone sound planning. (For those who have made plans, many have not reviewed it recently and key provisions are likely out of date.)

So what dream do you want to make come true?

Kevin Johnson, Retriever Development Counsel, LLC, believes there is undiscovered power in partnerships among nonprofits, business, the public sector and passionate community supporters. He is the author of *The Power of Legacy and Planned Gifts: How Nonprofits and Donors Work Together to Change the World* published by Jossey-Bass/Wiley.

web: www.RetrieverDevelopment.com;

LinkedIn: <http://lnkd.in/CeDj-3>; **TWITTER:** @ForSocialProfit

© 2004 Kevin Johnson