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Heirless Donors: Building a Legacy Through Charitable Funds



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Heirless Donors: Building a Legacy Through Charitable Funds

By Steve Gamer, Vice President, Advancement, Jewish Community Foundation of Los Angeles

In my career, I've learned that every donor journey is different. Some people chose not to have children, others have children who suffer from illness or addiction, or they have disabilities which preclude them from succeeding their parents as the administrator of a charitable fund or trust.

To address these challenges, many of our donors have elected to support their favorite causes through Donor Advised Funds, Endowment Funds, and other means of giving, both during their lifetime and as part of their estate plan. I've met with donors who are interested in a wide range of social causes, including education, healthcare, Jewish life, Israel, and human services. In each of those cases, The Foundation was able to provide a charitable giving plan that helped ensure that the donor left an indelible legacy.

When you become a Foundation donor, we become your partner in philanthropy, and we help you build your legacy in three steps:

1. **Identify causes you care about most.** We help you identify which causes resonate with you and share specific, carefully vetted organizations that address those causes. We provide research and strategic opportunities that meet your needs, and we facilitate discussions with the organizations that interest you.
2. **Explore your means of giving.** Determining how best to have an impact can be a tricky undertaking. We can help you evaluate your goals and navigate various giving options, such as the benefits of a lump sum gift versus ongoing support from an Endowment Fund.
3. **Fund maintenance and management.** As your partner in philanthropy, we are invested in your philanthropic success. We have deep experience managing individual funds and assessing fund health and longevity. If you have a Donor Advised Fund, we provide annual fund updates, reminders, and online access to your fund. We also offer several investment options to help grow the fund's assets.

Perhaps the primary task of those without heirs is to choose the path that offers the best opportunity to make a difference in an area that matters most to them, and that is where we can help.

Donor Profile: Judy, a cancer survivor

One heirless donor whom we worked with, who wished to remain anonymous (we'll call her Judy), considered several types of charitable funds. She ultimately decided to establish an Endowment Fund at The Foundation to support cancer causes. This particular cause resonated with her because her mother died of cancer, and Judy herself is a cancer survivor. She also wanted to support causes that had been important to her mother, whose estate Judy inherited, including supportive housing for the homeless. Judy is currently in good health, so she wanted to take the time now to learn about new opportunities, explore the best way to support those organizations she already knows about, volunteer in the community, connect with like-minded donors, and learn more about impactful giving.

Our team at The Foundation introduced her to new funding opportunities, invited her to events to network with other donors, and provided referrals for specialists, including an estate planning attorney with whom she is now working. As a result, she decided to create an Endowment Fund as the ideal vehicle to support her chosen organizations in perpetuity, ensuring a lasting legacy for her and honoring her late mother.