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#### Finding Legacies for Charity

First, Win Hearts of the Donors

The power of a charitable bequest is found in the heart of the donor. As an estate planning attorney, I am often able to facilitate such gifts through wills, trusts and beneficiary designation changes. Although tax deductions can be gained by the client for making gifts which, for the most part, take effect at death, the motivation usually starts with the charity. That which seems to prompt the desire to make a contribution to one's favorite charity through their estate is the mission of the entity.

It is therefore incumbent upon charitable organizations to bring their mission to the hearts of those in the communities they serve. If the power of the gift is to be harnessed, there must be a communion of the spirit of the charity with the spirit of the one who would be its benefactor.

Do I mean to suggest "marketing" the charity? Perhaps. Most nonprofits have programs, large and small, designed to raise gifts just to meet annual budget goals for income. But what would motivate a person to prepare a new will, or amend the existing one, to add a post-mortem gift to the charity she supports during life? Leave A Legacy® Hampton Roads, Inc. found one way – give her a free will (the kind the lawyer draws up but doesn't bill for). We recently completed a Write a Will Week, during which local attorneys volunteered their time to prepare wills for local citizens at no cost, so long as the will contained a gift for a charitable organization. The total amount of charitable gifts made was over \$500,000! Great project, but not a permanent solution (ask the lawyers).

The mission of Leave A Legacy® is to educate people from all walks of life about the benefits of charitable giving and to encourage them to include local nonprofit organizations of their choice in their wills or trusts. And we in the legal community must do our part to raise the issue with every estate planning client, for we have the power to focus their goodwill and forge their generosity into a lasting legacy. But first, the nonprofits must take the necessary steps to become the "choice" of prospective donors, to win their hearts and harness the power of the gift.

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