

Think Giving

Before summer months arrive, outdoor enthusiasts will sometimes end their correspondence with “Think Sun”, or perhaps, “Visualize the Sun”. Sometimes they even sport bumper stickers with the same message. And then, during the fall months, eager skiers may admonish us to “Think Snow”. They are passionate about their favorite sport and can hardly wait to get on the slopes.

The idea in these admonitions is to focus positive thinking on something so completely that it might somehow bring it to pass. While things may not actually happen this way in terms of cause and effect, the practice does put people into a mood of expectation and they begin to plan for the future accordingly.

As you think about your future, “Think Giving”. What does this mean? Many of us understand that financial success encompasses more than having enough income and assets to be free of financial worry. Financial security goes beyond a growing investment portfolio, a nice house and a good job. True “financial wellness” recognizes that each of us is made up of more than just material wealth.

Our heritage, our community, our family and friends shape our life. Our relationships, our experiences and our hopes bring meaning to money.

Here are some questions for you to consider:

- What have been the most meaningful experiences in your life?
- What has presented the greatest challenge?
- What people and incidents have most shaped your views and ideals?
- What are your most important values; education, culture, physical, recreational, spiritual, material?

- How important is it to you that you inspire your children and grandchildren?
- Do you understand how easy it is to leave a legacy?
- Do you want to make a difference?

As you “Think Giving”, you will open yourself to new ideas and new possibilities. Money is no longer just a means, it becomes a tool to give meaning to what matters.

From a truly pragmatic perspective, the tax rules we follow are designed to do just two things: raise revenue and accomplish a social purpose. The good news is that many times you can choose which “tax road” to follow.

Knowing you have a choice then leads to a discussion about how this is done. Perhaps this is as simple bequest in your will, or a planned gift that allows for a tax deduction now and a guaranteed income for the rest of your life. Maybe you have real estate that you would like preserved in order to protect its character. A conservation easement or a gift to a land trust might help.

You have highly appreciated stock and now you would like to sell it and create income. You establish a Charitable Trust and donate the stock. The Trust sells it tax-free and the proceeds are used to provide you income for life or a term of years. The remaining value at the end is given to the charity, church or other non profit(s) of your choosing.

You are concerned about financial market volatility. You learn about Charitable Gift Annuities which can provide relatively high guaranteed income.

You want to accumulate money for retirement. You hear that a type of planned gift allows you to make tax-deductible contributions now, and take income later when you need it. You can even turn the income “faucet” on and off as circumstances warrant.

All of these strategies and more are possible depending on what you wish to accomplish. You should discuss specifics with competent advisory professionals who can explain the “how to” in more detail.

Winston Churchill said, “We make a living by what we get; we make a life by what we give.”

“Think Giving”.

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