

Many Ways to Send Your Message When Leaving Legacy Gifts Behind

By Gestin Suttle - Leave A Legacy® of Western Washington

To Mindi Lee, the children she shuttles to and from school for the Bellevue School District are more than just young passengers she encounters while doing her job.

Rather, Lee sees a world of promise within each student.

"These kids are our future," Lee said recently after one of her driving shifts. "I watch these kids grow up and rejoice in what they can do."

So it is fitting that Lee, a Bellevue School District bus driver since 1972, who grew up in these public schools, has decided to invest in that future by leaving most of her estate to the Bellevue Schools Foundation.

Like the millions of other individual donors who name charities in their wills, Lee is leaving a legacy. She's not doing it herself, but for the youth served by the charity, and for the community where the charity operates.

"By including the Bellevue Schools Foundation in her will, Lee has set a vivid example for others to do the same and is proof that you need not be as wealthy as Bill Gates to do so," said Sherry Ladd, executive director for the Bellevue Schools Foundation.

"Everyone has the opportunity to continue to make a difference beyond their lifetime, no matter the size of their estate," Ladd said. "We are especially honored and humbled by Mindi Lee's plans to continue supporting the students she has transported all these years as a school bus driver."

While non-profits continue to rely on the generous annual gifts they receive, they're also trying to encourage donors to remember them in their wills, to give the organization a reliable future.

It is not difficult to do. Yet few people do it. Only 40 percent of adults even have wills. And of those who do, only six percent name a charity in their wills.

Leaving a gift to charities via a trust or in a will sends a message about the donors' values. In addition, donors may receive considerable tax benefits when they name a charity in their will or set up a trust that gives the nonprofit organization a portion of their assets when they die.

see MINDI LEE, page 21

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