

Opinion



A Kansas Viewpoint

Do you need a will

By Danielle Freeman

I have found that people interested in being philanthropic believe they don't have enough wealth that constitutes the need for a will. A will is not about the amount of money you make or your financial status. It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor; you still need a will to protect and preserve whatever assets you have. In addition, a will does not have to have any charitable intent or purpose. Yet, a will is a great tool in which to leave a legacy via a charitable bequest.

Answer the following questions to determine if preparing a will makes sense for you:

Do you have children or a spouse?

Do you want to leave property to anyone?

Do you want to continue giving to charities and the community you care about?

If you answered "yes" to any of these questions, you need to consider a will.

These days, most of us spend a lifetime acquiring resources beyond what our parents had, building nest eggs for ourselves and our children. Yet, roughly 80 percent of the population does not go the extra mile to protect what they have with a will. Perhaps if more of us would begin to think of a will as a way of expressing concern for our families, friends, and favorite charities, this staggering statistic would be much lower.

About a will

A will is a legal document that determines distribution of property and other assets owned by you. A will allows you to nominate the persons(s) who will manage your estate and, if you have minors, determines who will take care of your children. Although peace of mind cannot be measured in dollars, when your estate is in order, an emotional load is lifted.

Leave a legacy

According to Giving USA, Americans gave an estimated \$241 billion to charity in 2002. The lion's share came from living, individual donors, but many donors remembered charities in their wills. In the same year, more than \$18 billion was given to charity through bequests.

Through a will, you may give jewelry, real estate, heirlooms, furniture, or cash to specific persons or charities to create a lasting legacy. A will is one means of taking care of those charities and causes you've cared about and supported most of your life. If you have been tithing to your church and/or giving an annual gift to your favorite charity, a will provides you a way to make provisions to continue that support after death. Wouldn't you like to know that your contributions will carry on in some way?

If you haven't already, I would strongly encourage you to consider the preparation of a will. A will allows you and/or your family members to control what happens to your property and children. If you want to minimize problems or make a donation to your favorite charity, religious institutions, or alma mater, you need a will to put your money and other assets where your heart is.

Danielle Freeman is the executive director of the Thomas County Community Foundation. For questions or information about the foundation, call 460-9152.

Comments to any opinions expressed on this page are encouraged. Mail them to the Colby Free Press, 155 W. 5th St., Colby, Kan., 67701. Or e-mail jvannostrand@nwkansas.com or pdecker@nwkansas.com.



A sad day for northwest Kansas

February 15 was a sad day in northwest Kansas for many people. I was one of them. I was deeply saddened by the announcement by Topeka-based Kelley Detention and Youth Services closing Sappa Valley Youth Ranch at Oberlin.

For the past seven years I've watched the ranch operate and Wednesday's announcement came as a blow to city leaders, staff and youth and members of Hoxie's Living Word Fellowship.

Once a run down unoccupied church camp, Kelley Services and Oberlin's joint venture to operate the ranch as a residential treatment program facility began in 1998. The city renovated the buildings and Kelley committed itself to provide homes for troubled teen boys age 11 to 18.

I spoke with Terry Campbell, vice president and chief operations officer with Kelley Services, and he said if there had been any way to keep the ranch open he would have. Campbell said the Oberlin area's limited workforce having credentials to offer counseling to the boys is one reason for the closure. He also said the fact more aggressive youth were being placed at the ranch was another factor.

According to Campbell, Kelley Services has provided an annual payroll of more than \$600,000, supported local businesses and paid taxes in Decatur County. But, all that aside continued losses, including last year's \$23,000 loss, means all the youth and staff will be gone and buildings will be closed in two months.

That's the business aspect of the issue. But there's a heartfelt part of it too. The hearts of members of Living Word Fellowship will mourn an end to their opportunity to make a difference in the boys' lives.

For the past three years, members of Living



Jan Katz Ackerman

• From Where I stand

Word have undertaken a unique ministry at Sappa Valley. What started out as a monthly visit by church members grew to a bi-monthly program.

Every other Friday, various members of the church would travel to Sappa Valley to minister to and have fellowship with as many as 24 youth and 42 staff members. Sharing not only candy bars and pop, the church members shared the word of God and His love.

Although I'm not a member, on more than one occasion I attended and witnessed first hand the loneliness of the boys being detained at Sappa Valley. All the boys have been adjudicated by Kansas courts for crimes which had they adults would predominately be felonies. It isn't their crime which captures one's attention, it's their outward expression of sadness and desperation. Most of the teens are hungry for a connection to something positive and they openly accepted the opportunity to learn about God.

Sure, some of the boys sat in the background denying their needs, even taunting others on occasion, but those who stepped forward with a willingness to change their lives took a chance.

The church members were some of the teens'

only connection to a brighter future. I'll never forget the day I went with a group from Living Word to assist one of the boys in conducting a funeral service for his dad.

The boy's dad died in prison and he had no clue where his mom was so the man's cremated ashes were sent to him at Sappa Valley. There, on a blustery Kansas day, a handful of us gathered in prayer and then watched the teen scatter his dad's ashes into the Kansas wind. Tears filled our eyes as we hugged the boy and wished him well. It's moments like that which brings to mind the reason we humans have been placed on this great big ball called planet Earth.

We aren't here to get rich or famous; we are here to share God's love with each and every person with whom we come in contact. There's nothing more important. Nothing more important than helping the down trodden. Nothing more important than setting an example for our youth. Nothing more important than holding each other accountable to make the world a better place to live.

History's page for northwestern Kansas will be marked by Sappa Valley's closure. My heart cries out for the staff and their families. But it also cries for the youth who are being bounced from one youth facility to another.

Yes, you can make the argument the boys got themselves into the situation they are in, but each of us needs to ask ourselves where we as society failed them. What has society failed to provide parents whose sons ended up at Sappa Valley?

Please keep the staff and boys of Sappa Valley in your thoughts and prayers.

Your turn

Thanks for all the help

Warren Hixson Colby

Because of my move to Hutchinson, I resign as mayor of the city of Colby.

My thanks to all the members of the council that I have served with over the last almost 11 years. Together we have made Colby a better place to live.

My thanks to the city department heads and

the employees of the city. Because of their hard word and dedication to the citizens of Colby, they have made my life as mayor easy.

A special thanks to Carolyn. She and I have had a great working relationship. She could always find me funding for my projects and keeping the mill levy level. She has an outstanding reputation as city manager and we are lucky to have her head our city.

Finally, my thanks to the citizens of the city of Colby.

They have always been supportive and had a desire for our city to continue to move forward. They truly expect and demand that we continue to be the best place to live in north-west Kansas.

My congratulations and best wishes to Mayor Ken Bieber.

About those letters . . .

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Mallard Fillmore

• Bruce Tinsley



Doonesbury

• Gary Trudeau

