

Future

Fall 2010

A Financial and Charitable Planning Guide for Friends of Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region

GIVING BACK

BY LISA MUSE

It has been two years since my husband, Tom, passed away at Levine & Dickson Hospice House. It has been two years and 85 days since he was diagnosed with stage-4 lung cancer. Not a day goes by that I do not think about him and miss him, and not a day goes by that I do not feel eternally grateful for Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region (HPCCR) and Levine & Dickson Hospice House (LDHH).

After a courageous two-month battle of chemotherapy and radiation during the summer of 2008, Tom and I realized the inevitable. With the help of a compassionate HPCCR doctor and nurse, we made the decision to go to Levine & Dickson Hospice House. My only wish is that we had decided to turn to hospice sooner for Tom's care.

Hospice provided what no one else could—comfort, support and peace. With compassion and grace, the staff at LDHH took great care to fulfill Tom's every need. They ensured that my family had everything we needed to endure this difficult time without fear and, more importantly, with love and support. After Tom's

passing, HPCCR continued their caring work with me through bereavement support and guidance.

Having had this profound experience has changed me forever. I began volunteering with HPCCR a year ago because I am compelled to give back to the organization and to the people who gave me hope and strength to carry on. As I begin to rebuild my life without my love beside me, I look at things differently and appreciate the many gifts that have come my way.

My hope is that other families can benefit from compassionate hospice care and also the services provided at Levine & Dickson Hospice House. That is why I made the decision to



Tom and Lisa Muse. Lisa is a Legacy Society Member and Hospice Volunteer.

include HPCCR in my estate plans. What a wonderful way to ensure Tom's and my legacy will continue on into the future through this financial gift. It gives me great joy to think that my contribution will allow others to be supported and cared for by this incredible organization.

To learn how you can make a difference like Lisa has, contact Penelope Wilson at 704.335.4325.

Light the Way

Among the benefits of a bequest are ensuring that your generosity will continue beyond your lifetime, providing your estate with charitable deductions and inspiring others to follow your example.

END-OF-YEAR PLANNING CHECKLIST

DON'T LET DEC. 31 SNEAK UP ON YOU

With this year's challenges and accomplishments still fresh in your mind, now is a good time to review and update your estate plans. To help you in this process, we have constructed the following checklist of estate planning actions for you to go over as the end of the year rolls closer.

Review your current will and trusts. Be sure to check with your attorney and have your estate plan brought up-to-date to reflect significant changes made to the federal estate tax structure. Estate taxes are repealed in 2010 but revived in 2011 with a top rate of 55 percent for estates worth more than \$1 million. Also, make sure your executor and trustee designations are accurate.

Review and update beneficiaries of your life insurance policies and retirement plan assets. Also review contingent designations and settlement provisions. If you have a taxable estate, consider shifting ownership of your life insurance to an irrevocable trust or to your heirs.

Name designated heirs to receive bank account proceeds at your death. Naming heirs as "joint owners" is generally too risky and may create gift tax issues. Instead, consider using a "payable on death" (POD) designation to redirect an account without unnecessary probate problems. Although less complicated, this method is advisable only in cases where estates are worth less than the amount exempt from federal estate taxes.

Make sure your durable power of attorney for health care and living will are current. Are these medical documents updated and on file with family members and health care providers? Have decisions on anatomical

gifts been discussed with your family and other close loved ones?

Be careful with annual exclusion gifts to your heirs. Remember, gifts of appreciated assets made during your lifetime retain your cost basis in the hands of the recipient, so there may be capital gains taxes due if the asset is eventually sold by your heirs. The \$13,000 annual exclusion, however, is a tool that can help reduce the value of an appreciating estate.

Offset your capital gains with losses. As volatile as the market can be, many portfolios may have gains and losses. If you plan to make gifts of stock to Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, it is best to make those gifts with appreciated stocks. If the stock price has declined in value and is worth less than what you paid for it, it may make more sense for you to sell the stock and donate the cash proceeds.

Finish charitable contributions by Dec. 31. As you think about special holiday gifts for family and friends, remember that making year-end charitable gifts can be a heartwarming experience that also offers you tax benefits.

We Can Help

If you're still in the planning stages, ask Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region for help. We can confidentially address your financial and personal goals with regard to your giving interests.



THE BENEFITS OF CONTRIBUTING TODAY

When you make a donation to Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region today, known as an outright contribution, we both benefit. Your generosity enables us to meet our most urgent needs and you receive tax benefits as well as the satisfaction of supporting our mission.

Other benefits to you include:

- The ability to choose how your gift is used.
- The opportunity to see the results of your generosity.
- An immediate charitable deduction on your income taxes when you itemize.

Breaking Down the Tax Benefits

The federal income tax deduction encourages the support of

nonprofit institutions by reducing the out-of-pocket cost of your philanthropy. See the chart below to determine what your deduction would be for each gift.

GIFT TYPE	DEDUCTION
Cash gifts	Gift amount up to 50 percent of your adjusted gross income
Securities and real estate owned for more than one year and worth more than what you paid for them	Fair market value up to 30 percent of your adjusted gross income

If your gift exceeds the ceiling, the excess deduction can be carried over and deducted for up to five years.



We'd be happy to further discuss with you the advantages of outright gifts. Please contact us at 704.335.4325 for additional gift ideas and related benefits.

VISIT US ON THE WEB AT
WWW.HPCCR.ORG



YOU CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE TODAY

Looking for smart ways to give this year? In our **FREE** guide, *Top 5 Year-End Gift Ideas*, you will learn:

- Why year-end is a great time to provide support.
- Ways to give and the tax benefits each brings.
- How to time your gift.

Simply return the enclosed reply card to receive your copy today!



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Q&A: DOCUMENTING YOUR CONTRIBUTIONS

Q. How do I document my gifts to ensure that I receive the tax benefits owed to me?

A. For any cash contributions, get a written acknowledgement of your contribution from the charitable organization. It must include the amount of cash contributed, whether you received any goods or services in exchange for the gift, and a description and good faith estimate of the value of any goods or services received.

For gifts by check of less than \$250, a copy of the check is sufficient. For a larger gift, you should obtain a receipt.

For noncash contributions, the records you keep or the additional documents the IRS requires depend

on whether your deduction is one of the following:

- Less than \$250
- \$250–\$500
- \$501–\$5,000
- More than \$5,000

At a minimum, you must obtain a receipt from the charity indicating a description of the property. Keep records of the date, location and description of the gift; its value; and the amount claimed for a deduction. Appraisals are required when your gift of property is greater than \$5,000.

If you have questions about how to document your contributions to



Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region, please feel free to contact us.



ACTION LIST What You Can Do Today

Thank you for your support! Your gift, large or small, helps us carry out our charitable mission.

- 1** Return the reply card to receive **Top 5 Year-End Gift Ideas** to learn how you can get the most out of your gift.
- 2** Contact Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region to hear about areas that need your urgent support and the many ways you can help.
- 3** Complete your charitable gifts before Dec. 31 to make sure you receive a charitable income tax deduction this year.

Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - Uptown
Hospice & Palliative Care Charlotte Region - South
Hospice & Palliative Care Lake Norman
Hospice & Palliative Care Lincoln County
Levine & Dickson Hospice House



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