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Why having your will drafted now matters

COMMENT



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MOST people don't have wills because they believe this crucial document is only important if you have a lot of money or property, and there's a belief that they are long, complicated and an expensive process.

Statistics obtained in 2022 from the Master of the High Court show that fewer than 15% of South Africans have a will when they die, causing significant delays in settling the estate and family turmoil in the months and, oftentimes, years after one's death.

Having a well-considered will makes practical sense for honouring your wishes after you die, as well as helping your family through that difficult time and allowing you to leave a legacy that will live on through the lives of others.

Leaving a legacy gift in your will to a charity or public-benefit organisation is seldom considered in the South African context. However, it is a popular and growing trend overseas.

A legacy gift allows you to leave a specified amount to your chosen charity, which helps them continue or expand their good work in honour

of your memory. You don't need to rewrite your entire will to add a legacy gift. A simple codicil will work.

A codicil is legal modification or amendment to an existing will, and it is best to consult with a qualified attorney when adding one.

For the charities that receive legacy gifts, the funds can be an unexpected source of income that allows them to further their reach and help more beneficiaries in significant and tangible ways.

U-turn Homeless Ministries is one such non-profit that has been equipping people with skills to overcome homelessness for more than 25 years.

Through charitable bequests left for U-turn, the organisation's impact is enhanced and enabled through legacy gifts from generous and caring supporters. Legacy gifts make a huge difference and ensure your values and contribution to others live on, even after your death.

Wills Week takes place between the 11th and 15th of September in South Africa, and it is a great opportunity for you to write or update your will and think about what legacy you would like to leave behind for your family and community.

Promoted by the Law Society of South Africa, Wills Week means that participating attorneys offer to draw up a basic will for free, giving generously of their skills and time to help

South Africans properly prepare their estate for their deaths.

To address the 85% of South Africans who die without a will, companies and business leaders should be proactive in running awareness campaigns, especially to debunk myths on the drafting of wills.

Recently, we saw the Somerset West Municipal Court running a campaign in which they offered free legal services to the residents of the Helderberg and surrounding areas.

These included the drafting of wills, compliance and many other legal-related services.

Meanwhile, in the private sector, we see organisations like 360t.co.za championing employee assistance programmes, where employees are guided on effective ways of protecting and creating a legacy through the prioritisation of wills.

Whether for social groups, corporates or individuals, Wills Week is a great opportunity to write or amend your will and plan how a legacy gift will make a lasting and tangible difference in the lives of others.

If you would like to consider U-turn for your legacy gift, then you can learn more about the community work they are doing helping people overcome homelessness by visiting their website.

Underwood is a communication officer at U-turn