
Life Stories

Estate Planning

YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE 100 TO LEAVE A LEGACY!

Peter de Graaf wanted to live to be 100 years old, hoping he could personally support the charities he cared about for many years. Although he passed away at age 85, the Lord used Peter's charitable intentions to not only bless untold numbers of people, but also to inspire us today with important lessons from his experience.



Peter's story began 1929 when he emigrated from the Netherlands to southern California at the age of 23. By 1936, he owned and operated his own dairy farm. Later Peter entered the real estate business, developing a knack for spotting bargains and becoming a savvy investor through the California real estate boom.

Serving the community was a priority for Peter. He was a charter member of the San Diego Christian Reformed Church and helped start the Otay Mesa Christian Reformed Church. He also served on the boards of several service organizations, including the Salvation Army, Boys and Girls Clubs, and Kiwanis.

His community recognized his leadership abilities and elected him to serve on the Chula Vista city council, and then later as mayor. Additionally, Peter and his wife Alice enjoyed providing warm hospitality for World War II servicemen who needed a "home away from home".

Peter was both a successful businessman and a generous supporter of numerous organizations. However, it wasn't until the final years of his earthly life that Peter agreed to meet with Barnabas Foundation to explore gift planning options. This meeting resulted in Peter gifting a parcel of real estate, providing significant additional resources for the Lord's work.

We all have the opportunity to leave a legacy that brings glory to God and eternal joy.

Five years later, Peter suffered a major disabling stroke which took his life shortly thereafter. A month before he passed away, Peter met with Barnabas Foundation again to revise his estate plan. As a result of that meeting, he set up the Peter de Graaf Charitable Fund to provide ongoing support to nearly 20 organizations dear to his heart.

Today the fund continues to advance a wide range of kingdom causes - including overseas missions, Bible placement, Christian education, and much more. In fact, in 2008 the fund distributed more than \$500,000 - the highest support level in its 16-year history.

Peter's story highlights important lessons for everyone who wants to honor God with the time and money He has entrusted to them. First, don't wait to plan; second, gift planning is wise stewardship; and finally, if we live and give with eternity in mind, it doesn't matter whether God gives us 10 years or 100 years on earth - we all have the opportunity to leave a legacy that brings glory to God and eternal joy.