

Thank You for Your Support

Where there's a will, there's a way

By Mila Vujovich-La Barre, Vice-Chair, Santa Lucia Chapter

“Our new Constitution is now established, everything seems to promise it will be durable; but, in this world, nothing is certain except death and taxes.”

- Benjamin Franklin

Although estate planning can be an uncomfortable topic, it is an important one. The statistics that I have read indicate that anywhere from 50-60% of Americans do not have a will. Although the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the number of people who have created a will or estate plan, most Americans remain without.

From my experience, if you love the people you are leaving behind, one of the kindest acts you can complete while here on Earth is to write a will. It is important to let people know what you want to be done with your physical body and belongings. Colloquially speaking, a will is about “what should be done with your ass and your assets!”

If you only create one document, create a Last Will and Testament through which you can designate where your personal property and monies go. You may also name a guardian for your minor children and/or your pets.

If you are an individual with assets like real estate, investment funds, retirement funds, art, autos, intellectual property, and jewelry, legal and financial advisors will tell you that a trust is also necessary. A document with digital access codes and passwords should also be created and stored in a safe location.

The creation of a Living Will establishes instructions on the types of medical care you want to receive if you can no longer communicate your wishes. A Health Care Directive and a Power of Attorney are additional documents that will save you and your loved ones stress and grief in the event of serious injury or unexpected death.

Once your will is complete, you can easily modify your estate planning documents regularly. This is especially important as you undergo major life changes -- births, adoptions, deaths, marriages, divorces, and property acquisitions.

It is also wise for older individuals to consider posting a Physician Orders for Life-Sustaining Treatment (POLST) form on the refrigerator of their home. This form, which should be printed on pink paper, alerts first responders to whether the person in peril wants to be resuscitated.

If a will is not found, the estate enters a process known as probate. The probate process is a long and arduous one for the person who is named administrator of the estate, and frustrating for any potential heirs. Instead of being left with terrific memories and perhaps an inheritance, loved ones are left with a cloud of uncertainty. Most often they will also need to hire a probate attorney for assistance. The shocking realization is that people who are unrelated by blood can

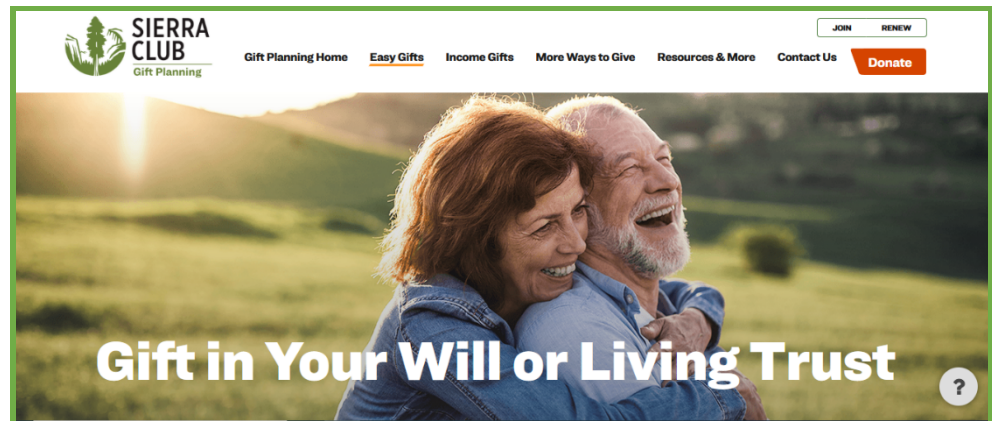
legally make a claim for a portion of the assets of the deceased individual. The probate process can sometimes go on for years!

So be smart. Be kind. Have this conversation today with the ones you love and complete your will and estate plan in 2022!

How to support the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club - Now and Later

Thank you for keeping the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club strong! The chapter is dependent upon members and donations to be a vibrant group on the Central Coast.

Here's how you can help:



1. [Become a member of the Sierra Club](#)
2. [Give a gift membership](#)
3. [Become a life member](#) - and never have to deal with annual dues for membership renewal
4. [Donate to the Sierra Club - Santa Lucia Chapter](#) - Donations to the Sierra Club are not tax-deductible, which means there is more flexibility in how the donations are spent.
5. Click on the button to make your donation monthly - join our 58 other monthly donors!
6. Remember the Santa Lucia Chapter of the Sierra Club while executing your [will and estate plan](#). Any donation large or small will be used to further the protection of our local environment, combat climate change, and advance environmental justice. Call (800) 932-4270 or e-mail gift.planning@sierraclub.org.
7. Donate to the Sierra Club Foundation - Santa Lucia Chapter. Donations to the Sierra Club Foundation are tax-deductible, which means they can be used only for certain charitable or educational purposes. To make a tax-deductible donation, send a check payable to "Sierra Club Foundation - Santa Lucia Chapter" to Sierra Club Foundation, 2101 Webster Street, Suite 1250, Oakland, CA 94612. (Alternatively, the check can be payable to "Sierra Club Foundation" with "To benefit the Santa Lucia Chapter" in the memo line.)
8. Name the Sierra Club Foundation - Santa Lucia Chapter in your will or trust or as a beneficiary of your IRA or other retirement plan. For more information on all of these giving options, go to [Gift Planning](#).
9. Make an [IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution](#) to the Santa Lucia Chapter. Have your IRA Administrator make the check payable to "Sierra Club Foundation - Santa Lucia Chapter," OR "Sierra Club Foundation" with "To benefit the Santa Lucia Chapter" in the memo line.

The decade ahead will be challenging for Mother Nature. Let's help her out!

Mila Vujovich-La Barre is currently the Administrator of an estate going through the probate process.