JULY 2026

Roots & Branches

HONORING TRADITION, NURTURING TOMORROW

You Already Did the Hard Part

Now Let Your Donor Advised Fund Do What You Always Hoped It Would

You worked hard for what you have. You saved carefully, gave generously along the way, and at some point you opened a donor advised fund because something in you said: I want some of this to matter beyond my own lifetime. That instinct was exactly right.

But here is something worth sitting with. More than $230 billion is currently held in donor advised funds across the country. A great deal of that money moves slowly, given in modest increments, never fully assembled into the kind of impact the person who funded it actually imagined.[1] Not because those donors do not care deeply. But because nobody ever helped them translate caring into a real plan.

If you have a DAF, this article is for you. Not to ask you for anything. To ask you a question instead: What did you hope this would become?

> **What did you hope this would become?**
> **That is the question worth sitting with.**
> **And it changes everything that comes after it.**

Your DAF Is More Than a Tax Strategy

Your financial advisor probably described your donor advised fund in terms of tax efficiency: contribute appreciated assets, take the deduction now, grant later. All of that is true and all of it matters. But a DAF is something more than a tax vehicle. It is a formal declaration that you intend to do something meaningful with a portion of what you have built.

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You Already Did the Hard Part *continued from page 1*

When you fund it, you are not simply moving money. You are making a promise to yourself about the kind of person you are and the kind of difference you want to make. The question worth asking now is whether your current grant pattern actually reflects that promise, or whether it has drifted into something more routine.

Fidelity Charitable, Schwab Charitable, and Vanguard Charitable alone distributed more than $45 billion in grants in a single year.[2] That generosity is real and it matters. But the donors who experience the deepest satisfaction from their giving are not the ones who give the most. They are the ones whose giving is most intentional, most connected to what they genuinely believe, and most aligned with a legacy they have thought carefully about.[3]

The Question About What Happens After You Are Gone

Here is something most financial planners do not tell their clients. When a DAF holder passes away without naming a successor adviser or a charitable beneficiary, the assets in that fund do not pass to the estate. They stay in the DAF. And the sponsoring institution decides where they go.[4]

That may or may not reflect what you intended. In many cases it does not. The causes you spent a lifetime caring about, the organizations that shaped your community, the mission you believed in most deeply, none of that is guaranteed to benefit unless you say so in writing, in advance.

Naming a charitable beneficiary for your DAF is one of the most powerful and most overlooked steps in estate and legacy planning. It takes very little time. Most sponsoring institutions make it straightforward. And it ensures that the fund you spent years building does exactly what you hoped when you can no longer direct it yourself.

> **Naming a charitable beneficiary for your DAF is one of the most powerful and most overlooked steps in legacy planning. Most donors simply do not know they need to do it.**

Bringing Your Family Into the Conversation

If you have children or grandchildren who may one day inherit advisory responsibility over your fund, the greatest gift you can give them is not the money. It is the meaning behind it.

Over the next two decades, an estimated $84 trillion will pass between generations in the United States.[5] Much of that transfer will include philanthropic assets, including DAF accounts, held by families who have never had an honest conversation about what those assets are supposed to accomplish.

Think about what it would mean for your children or grandchildren to step into the role of designator knowing your story. Knowing which causes moved you and why. Knowing what you hoped the fund would do in the world. That kind of inheritance cannot be written in a will. It has to be spoken, shared, and passed along while there is still time.

You do not need a formal family meeting or a professional facilitator to begin. You need a conversation over dinner. You need to tell your heirs what you cared about, what you gave to, and what you hope they will carry forward. That conversation, simple as it sounds, is the foundation of a philanthropic legacy that actually lasts.

Three Things Worth Doing This Month

You do not need to overhaul anything. You just need to take three deliberate steps.

- Log in to your DAF account and check whether you have named a successor adviser or a charitable beneficiary. You can even make Mozaic Senior Life a charitable beneficiary. If you have not, contact your sponsoring institution this week and ask how to do it. It is almost always a simple form.

- Write down, even in a paragraph or two, what you were hoping your DAF would accomplish. What causes matter most to you? What does meaningful impact look like to you personally? This document does not need to be formal. It just needs to exist.

- Have one conversation with the people who may one day manage this fund. Tell them the story behind it. Tell them what you stand for. Give them something more valuable than an account balance. Give them a sense of purpose to go with it.

You already did the hard part. You built something. You set it aside. You declared, in a very real sense, that some of what you have accumulated belongs to the world and not just to you.

Now finish the thought. Make the plan. Have the conversation. The causes you love and the people you trust are waiting for exactly that.

Mark Dobosz
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ENDNOTES

1 National Philanthropic Trust. Donor Advised Fund Report, 2023. DAF charitable assets exceeded $229.65 billion as of 2022. https://www.nptrust.org/reports/daf-report/

2 Fidelity Charitable. 2024 Giving Report. Combined grant totals for Fidelity Charitable, Schwab Charitable, and Vanguard Charitable drawn from each institution's published annual reporting. https://www.fidelitycharitable.org/about-us/news/2024-giving-report.html

3 Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. "The Science of Philanthropy." Research consistently documents that intentionality and values alignment, not gift size, are the strongest predictors of donor satisfaction. https://philanthropy.iupui.edu

4 Council on Foundations. "Donor Advised Funds: Succession Planning and Beneficiary Designations." Guidance on what occurs when a DAF holder dies without a named successor or charitable beneficiary on file. https://www.cof.org/content/donor-advised-funds

5 Cerulli Associates. "U.S. High-Net-Worth and Ultra-High-Net-Worth Markets 2021." The $84 trillion intergenerational wealth transfer projection is widely cited across estate planning, philanthropy, and financial services literature. https://www.cerulli.com

MOZAIC Senior Life
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SERVING SENIORS SINCE 1973

4200 Park Avenue, Bridgeport, CT 06604

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Charitable Gift Annuity

A Charitable Gift Annuity is a secure way to increase your income while supporting Mozaic Senior Life at the same time. When considering planned giving donations, a gift annuity can be a valuable and safe investment tool. In this stock market environment, you can take advantage and lock in guaranteed rates.

For more information on including Mozaic Senior Life in your estate plans, charitable remainder trusts, and/or gift annuities, please call Mark Dobosz at **203-365-6406** or **email mdobosz@mozaicsl.org**.

Age	Interest
65	5.7%
70	6.3%
75	7.0%
80	8.1%
85	9.1%

Sample ACGA singe rates, as of 6/25. Two-life rates are slightly higher.

Mozaic Senior Life is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization.