purposeful philanthropy

Honoring a family legacy through *purposeful giving*

THE CHALLENGE

Not long after the passing of a beloved father, a couple approached us with a heartfelt goal: to transform grief into a meaningful tribute rooted in education, opportunity, and values.

The story began decades earlier. The client's father had been one of the first in his family to attend college, choosing education over immediate work despite skepticism from his own parents. That decision changed not just his life, but the path of his entire family. To honor his journey, the family envisioned establishing a scholarship at his alma mater that could support an aspiring engineering student from a similar background. The intention was not only to give back, but to preserve a legacy built on courage and perseverance.

But questions remained. How could they structure the scholarship to create real impact? And how could they fund it in a way that aligned with their broader financial and tax planning goals?

THE PROCESS

We started by exploring the options offered by the university. The first path was an endowed scholarship, which would provide a modest annual award in perpetuity. While appealing in theory, this structure didn't align with the couple's desire for deeper, more immediate impact.

A second option, a spend-down scholarship, offered a better fit. Instead of lasting forever, it would fully fund a student's education over four to five years. The idea of walking alongside one student through their academic journey resonated deeply, even if it meant the gift wasn't permanent.

Fortunately, thoughtful planning had already laid the groundwork. Years earlier, they had contributed appreciated securities to their donor-advised fund, creating tax benefits at the time and providing a flexible, efficient vehicle for future giving.

We coordinated with the university, structured a multi-year pledge, and set up recurring distributions from the donor advised fund to fund the scholarship, seamlessly integrating their philanthropic vision into their long-term financial plan.

THE OUTCOME

Within a year, the scholarship was fully established and already making a difference. A student recipient wrote a heartfelt letter of thanks, expressing the impact the scholarship had on their life and education.

That letter, shared with us during the holidays, became one of the most meaningful moments of the year. What began as a desire to honor a father's story became a life-changing opportunity for a young student. And the couple's broader financial goals remained fully intact.

The legacy of education and resilience that once shaped a family's past now lives on in shaping someone else's future.

REFLECTION & TAKEAWAY

Financial planning isn't just about numbers—it's about purpose. The most powerful plans are those that reflect personal stories, values, and the desire to make a lasting difference. Whether it's a scholarship, a foundation, or a simple gift, aligning charitable giving with what matters most can be one of the most fulfilling outcomes of thoughtful planning.

ABOUT JOHNSON INVESTMENT COUNSEL

As one of the nation's largest independent wealth management firms with over 60 years of experience serving individuals, families, business owners, and nonprofit organizations, we have the deep expertise to provide a customized solution for your situation.

Our highly credentialed advisors work with clients in all 50 states. Learn more about our approach at JOHNSONINV.COM.