

A difference that *inspires*



Mary Brooks, a Raymond James financial advisor, understands the value of using donor advised funds (DAFs) to help clients and charities alike fulfill their philanthropic aspirations.

Mary has made DAFs an integral component of her client relationships since joining Raymond James in 2009, allowing her to cultivate close ties with Raymond James Charitable.

“I have many clients who are very charitably inclined, and because I am as well, I reached out to Raymond James Charitable to learn more about DAFs when I joined the firm,” says Mary. “Now I use them with almost all of my clients who are interested in charitable giving.”

An advisor since 1983 and a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ professional, Mary heads an office called Invera Wealth Advisors of Raymond James in Walnut Creek, California. Her team includes her daughter Jessica Higgins, AAMS® CFP®, with whom she collaborates to provide clients with services that align with their values. “My team specializes in environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing, formerly known as values-based investing,” says Mary.

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Recognizing the importance of charitable giving within a client’s financial picture, Mary discusses it with clients from the start. “We have a discovery questionnaire that we give to clients in our very first meeting, asking them if there are certain charities or causes they want to support,” she says. “Plus, since charitable giving extends into other essential areas of a client’s financial life, from tax and legacy planning to cash flow management, discussing it allows me to better understand their unique needs.”

Mary encourages other advisors to bring up DAFs in their own conversations with clients. “You cannot wait for a client to bring it up – they don’t know about it.

“Maybe in the past, they’ve just written a check instead of taking advantage of the tax benefit that comes with giving stock. A lot of clients don’t know that they can give to a DAF at any time without choosing a specific charity when making that donation,” she says. “In fact, some clients even think DAFs are too good to be true. They’re surprised that they can get the tax break right away and contribute to any 501(c)(3) organization later.”

While learning about DAFs can take time, Mary considers it a highly beneficial endeavor. For instance, aside from serving as a strategic way to support worthy causes, DAFs can also be an opportunity for advisors to collaborate with clients’ CPAs, forming an expert team working to benefit the client.

In cases where DAFs haven’t come up between an advisor and their client, Mary suggests integrating them into conversations about taxes and realized gains. “One of the best times to discuss DAFs is when reviewing gains for the year because you can easily calculate how certain contributions to a DAF can help offset those gains,” she says.

Another benefit of DAFs? “They provide a link to the next generation,” says Mary. “I have a number of high-earning clients who are within five years of retirement, so they’re using their DAFs to make higher contributions while they’re still earning a high income. This enables us to have conversations with their children and grandchildren about how a DAF functions, the charities they’re giving to and where those assets are going.”

As for her experience with Raymond James Charitable, Mary says it couldn’t be better. “They make the administration of DAFs so easy, and they’re always very communicative, which helps simplify the process for both my clients and me.”

In addition to helping clients achieve their own philanthropic aspirations, Mary devotes herself to working with organizations near and dear to her heart. “It’s important that nonprofits learn about DAFs,” she says. “By viewing DAFs as an effective way to gather funds for their causes, charities can make an even more profound difference.”



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4 Utilizing an ESG investment strategy may result in investment returns that may be lower or higher than if decisions were based solely on investment considerations.

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