SUMMER 2025

The Epley – Wolbeck Group

U P D A T E

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Leaving a Legacy

Many of us want to do our part to leave the world a better place. Fortunately, there are many ways you can ensure you'll have a meaningful impact on the world and leave a legacy that lasts long after you're gone, including the work you do or how you raise your family. Of course, you can also leave a financial legacy, using the wealth you've accumulated in your lifetime to do good in the world. Below are six different ways you can leave a financial legacy.

1. Give gifts in your lifetime. If you have the financial freedom to do so, making financial gifts while you are still alive is a great way to leave a legacy. Money you donate to qualified charitable organizations can be deducted from your taxes, saving you money while also helping you support a good cause. If you want to leave a family legacy, consider giving gifts to loved ones while you are living, like helping pay for your grandchild's college education. Just make sure you're aware of annual limits on what you can give to individuals without triggering gift tax ($19,000 per person in 2025).

2. Make a bequest in a will. Many people use their will to make philanthropic bequests, leaving funds to their favorite charity, alma mater, or church. For people who have money to give, recognizing an organization in their will is a relatively easy way to leave a legacy. Bequests in a will don't require any additional planning and are exempt from estate tax, provided the recipient is a qualified charitable organi-

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News and Announcements

Welcome to the summer edition of our team newsletter. I can't believe it's May already! The months seem to move faster and faster every year. And the kids are growing like weeds! Juliana (12) is officially the same height as me now. In addition to school volleyball, she made the local club volleyball team this year, was elected as Student Council 7th grade Class Representative, participated in scholastic bowl, and was in the school play again this year. Charlie (8) is also active with chess club and travel baseball. It's so fun to watch them do all the things they love. We're looking forward to swim and golf again this summer.

In team news, I'm excited to announce we now have TWO Forbes recognized Best-In-State Wealth Advisors for 2025. Daren Epley received the recognition for the 8th year in a row (2017-2025). This year, PJ Wolbeck was also recognized! I'm so thankful to have two of the best as my partners and mentors.

As I'm sure you've noticed, the markets have been noticeably volatile so far this year. We all became a little spoiled with double digit positive returns two years in a row. According to Birinyi Associates, this is only the third instance since 1950 of consecutive years of gains more than 20%. However, this is not typical. As most long-term investors know, volatility is an expected and acceptable part of long-term investing. I probably sound like a broken record by now, but it's more important than ever to stay calm and carry on. Reach out to Daren, PJ, Shayne, or myself if you have any questions or concerns.

Best,

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2025 Forbes Best-In- State Wealth Advisors
Source: Forbes.com (2025). Forbes Best-In- State Wealth Advisors ranking awarded in 2025. Each ranking was based on an evaluation process conducted by SHOOK Research LLC (the research company) in partnership with Forbes (the publisher).
This evaluation process concluded in June of the previous year the award was issued having commenced in June of the year before that. Neither Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC nor its Financial Advisors or Private Wealth Advisors paid a fee to SHOOK Research LLC to obtain or use the ranking. This ranking is based on in-person and telephone due diligence meetings to evaluate each advisor qualitatively, a major component of a ranking algorithm that includes client retention, industry experience, review of compliance records, firm nominations, and quantitative criteria, including assets under management and revenue generated for their firms. Investment performance is not a criterion. Rankings are based on the opinions of SHOOK Research LLC and this ranking may not be representative of any one client's experience. These rankings are not indicative of the Financial Advisor's future performance. Morgan Stanley Smith Barney LLC is not affiliated with SHOOK Research LLC or Forbes. For more information, see www.SHOOKresearch.com.

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zation. However, if you plan to make a substantial bequest to a charity, you may want to inform them of your plans in advance. This is particularly important if you plan to donate physical property, like real estate or artwork, as not all charities will want or be able to accept such donations, or if you plan to place restrictions on how the gift is used.

3. Create a charitable remainder trust. If you would like to make a substantial gift to a charity but also want to provide for your heirs or continue to receive income during your lifetime, a charitable remainder trust (CRT) may be an option. Here's how it works: You transfer property to the trust (and get a tax deduction at the time of the transfer), and you or your heirs receive income from the trust for a specified period of time. Then, when that period ends, the remaining assets go to the charity of your choice. A word of caution: CRTs are irrevocable, which means once you've made this decision, you can't reverse it.

4. Set up a donor-advised fund. Know you want to leave money to a charity but not ready to hand it over just yet? Consider setting up a donor-advised fund. A donor-advised fund allows you to make contributions to a fund that is earmarked for charity and claim the associated tax deduction in the year you contribute the funds. You continue to make more contributions to the fund, which are invested and grow free of tax. Then, when you are ready, you can choose a charity to receive all or some of the accumulated assets. It's a great way to earmark funds for charity now while also accumulating a more substantial amount of money to leave as a legacy.

5. Fund a scholarship. Endowing a scholarship is a great way to make a difference in the life of a talented student. Here's how it typically works: You give a certain amount of money to the school of your choice, which earmarks it to fund scholarships, often for certain types of students (e.g., female math majors, former foster children, or people suffering from a certain disease). Other scholarships are established through community foundations. A seed gift of $25,000 or $50,000 may be enough to get started. Be aware, however, that while you may be able to have a say in selection criteria for the scholarship, there's a good chance you won't be able to select the recipient yourself. If you want to do that, you'll need to distribute the money in another way, perhaps by setting up your own nonprofit organization.

6. Start a foundation. Starting a family foundation is appealing to many, especially those who like the idea of having greater control over how their money is used as well as the prestige that comes with running a foundation. Well-managed private foundations can also endure for many generations after you're gone. But you'll need substantial assets to make setting up a foundation worth it. Plus, foundations are complicated and expensive to set up and administer. But, if you are committed to the idea of giving back and especially if you want to keep the entire family involved in giving (a concern for many wealthy families), a private foundation could be the way to go.

Curious about steps you can take to leave a meaningful legacy? Please call to discuss this topic in more detail. ✔✔✔

Part-Time Retirees

People are starting to redefine retirement from a time of total leisure to a time for more leisure, when work still occupies part of their time. Some continue working out of financial necessity. Others work to keep busy or because they enjoy working. If you're retired and are considering going back to work, answer these questions first:

✔ **Will you earn enough to make working financially worthwhile?** Calculate how much you'll earn after paying taxes and work-related expenses.

✔ **Will your earnings affect your Social Security benefits?** If you are full retirement age or older (currently age 67), you can earn any amount of income without reducing your Social Security benefits. However, individuals between the ages of 62 and full retirement age lose $1 of benefits for every $2 of earnings over $23,400 in 2025. Additional income could make a portion of your Social Security benefits taxable.

✔ **Are you approaching age 73?** If so, going back to work may prevent you from having to take minimum distributions from your 401(k) plan or other employer plan. You will, however, have to start taking distributions from traditional individual retirement accounts.

✔ **Are you thinking about starting a business?** Many retirees choose to turn a hobby or work experience into a business venture. If you do, be careful not to deplete your retirement savings.

✔ **Do you know why you are going back to work?** Be realistic about what you can expect from your new job. If it's just a part-time job to keep you busy, you probably won't have as much responsibility as you did at prior jobs. ✔✔✔

10 Common Investor Mistakes

The reason non-professional investors often err was well-known even before the new science of investment psychology was born: We're only human, and something happens when we're handling our own money that doesn't happen when we're handling someone else's. When it's our own, it's the vehicle for realizing our dreams, and every decision we could make looms larger than life.

Here, then, are 10 of the most common mistakes that individual investors make:

✔ **Falling in love with a stock.** There are a host of reasons for this, among them that we or a relative worked for the company, we inherited it, we like being associated with the company's prestige, or simply that it's been a steady performer for as long as we've owned it. The problem is, however, that the stock won't fall in love with us and won't think twice about losing half or more of its value. This is a case where love makes us blind to deep flaws in the company that may never be repaired.

✔ **Catching a falling knife.** When a high-flying stock goes bad, it drops fast and hard. But when it does, there are thousands of investors who think it's a steal and buy shares when they see it bounce. What they often learn is that they caught the stock in mid-fall and, like a knife passing right through the palms of their hands, the stock price has a lot farther to fall before finally coming to rest.

✔ **Investing on tips.** The problem with tips is that the average investor hears them after just about everyone else already has. As a result, we buy the stock at its highest price, and there's nobody else who wants to buy it to make it go any higher.

✔ **Chasing performance**. For many people, stocks only get attractive after they've gone so high and so long that they've reached the end of their run. This is also called rear-view mirror investing, meaning you're more concerned with where the stock has been than where it's going.

✔ **Failing to diversify**. The best way to get rich in the stock market is to put all your money into one stock. But it only works if the stock goes to the moon. If it goes in the opposite direction, this is also the best way to lose your wealth. It's smartest to spread out your risk as well as your chances of success, not only among more than one stock, but in more than one industry, sector, country, and asset class. The more diversified you are, the less risk you bear.

✔ **Thinking only short term.** This is actually the opposite of investing. It's speculating. There are few part-timers who succeed at this game. The danger is that, just like changing lanes too many times in a traffic jam, you're just as likely to fall behind where you might have been had you just stayed where you were.

✔ **Playing penny stocks.** Inflation hit true penny stocks years ago. The strict definition is stocks priced less than $5 a share that have daily trading volume of less than 100,000 shares. Usually, the companies have net tangible assets of only a few million dollars and a short operating history. The odds of hitting it big with these are about the same as winning the lottery, if not worse. Owned mostly by individual investors and the founders of the company, penny stocks are notoriously volatile and risky.

✔ **Waiting to break even.** It's been said that more money has been lost by investors waiting to recoup their initial investment than for any other reason. Successful investors know when it's time to cut their losses for a better opportunity.

✔ **Being too conservative.** This syndrome is the opposite of most of the previous mistakes. In this case, investors are so afraid of losing money that they fail to put enough money in growth vehicles to stay ahead of inflation. As a result, the buying power of their portfolio declines year by year, courting the risk they'll have a lower standard of living the older they get.

✔ **Investing without a plan.** This is another way of saying all of the above. Sound financial plans match your income, resources, and risk tolerance with an investment strategy that provides the discipline to take emotions out of the equation. Please call if you'd like help developing an investment strategy. ✔✔✔

Staggered Retirements

Often, spouses don't retire at the same time. Frequently, one spouse may retire before the other due to health problems or a layoff, not necessarily because the spouse chooses to retire early. No matter the reason, keep these points in mind:

✔ **Try to minimize withdrawals from retirement accounts.** Although you will only have one salary instead of two, it's best to minimize withdrawals while one spouse is working.

✔ **Utilize all available benefits from the working spouse's employer.** One of the most significant retirement expenses, especially if you don't qualify for Medicare, is health insurance. So, before one spouse retires, find out if that spouse is eligible for health insurance benefits through the working spouse's employer.

✔ **Delay Social Security benefits.** For a significant number of married couples, the man is older, has higher earnings, and will not live as long as the woman. Because the surviving spouse can elect to receive 100% of the other spouse's benefit, it typically makes sense for the man to wait until age 70 to claim Social Security benefits.

✔ **Consider all defined-benefit plan payment options.** If you are lucky enough to be covered by a traditional pension plan at work, make sure to consider all the payment options carefully before selecting one. Typically, you will have numerous options, but your choice will be irrevocable. ✔✔✔

Market Data

	Month End			% Change	
Stocks:	Apr 25	Mar 25	Feb 25	YTD	12-Mon.
Dow Jones Ind.	40669.36	42001.76	43840.91	-4.4%	7.5%
S&P 500	5569.06	5611.85	5954.50	-5.3	10.6
Nasdaq Comp.	17446.34	17299.29	18847.28	-9.7	11.4
Total Stock Market	54949.64	55374.92	58939.00	-5.9	9.8
Precious Metals:					
Gold	3302.05	3115.10	2834.55	26.2	43.1
Silver	32.72	33.83	31.07	11.1	23.8
Interest Rates:	Apr 25	Mar 25	Feb 25	Dec 24	Apr 24
Prime rate	7.50	7.50	7.50	7.50	8.50
Money market rate	0.45	0.45	0.41	0.42	0.48
3-month T-bill rate	4.20	4.21	4.20	4.23	5.25
20-year T-bond rate	4.68	4.62	4.55	4.86	4.90
Dow Jones Corp.	5.38	5.37	5.24	5.45	5.84
Bond Buyer Muni	4.93	4.62	4.38	4.46	4.48

Sources: Barron's, Wall Street Journal. An investor may not invest directly in an index.

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