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Memorializing with a Donation

"Etiquette of Contributions After Someone's Death"

By: Debby Mayne "The Spruce"

Have you ever noticed that some people request donations "in lieu of flowers" after a loved one passes? The idea behind it is that the flowers will fade, but a donation will help someone who is living.

The tradition of sending a funeral wreath or floral arrangement is fading somewhat, although not altogether gone. Sometimes a trust is established to help surviving family members after the person passes.

This can be stated in the obituary, public death notice, or even over the telephone to family members, friends, and business associates.

Listed below is additional information on this topic.

MAKE A DONATION IN MEMORY OF SICKNESS

When people have a terminal disease that causes death, either they state their wishes before their final breath or a family member makes the request that all money that would otherwise be spent on flowers should go to an association or foundation that is closely related. Money is often spent on research or providing care for others who suffer from the same illness.

You may choose to honor the family's wishes by sending money and a note to the association and sending a card to the survivors. If you choose to also send flowers, that is fine, but it isn't necessary. Just make sure that your contribution is at least as much as you would pay for flowers. More is always appreciated. Remember that most charitable contributions are tax deductible.

Some people ask for you to make a contribution to the charity of your choice. You should follow the same procedure as you would for a requested charity. Some

charities give you an option of donating and filling out the forms online, but if that isn't an option, almost all organizations will accept a check sent via snail mail.

Here's what to write to the association or charitable organization:

- The name of the deceased
- The address of the deceased
- The name of a close living family member
- The address of the living family member
- Your name

Your card to the survivors should express sympathy, a comment about a positive memory of the deceased, and a message that you contributed to the requested charity. You might want to consider adding a tree or other living thing that the surviving family members can plant in honor of their loved one.

EXAMPLE OF A NOTE TO THE FAMILY

Dear Smith Family,

I'm terribly sorry about your loss. Bill was such a wonderful family man who delighted in telling stories about time spent with his grandchildren. I will always have fond memories of my time with him.

In honor of such a wonderful family man whose life was cut short before his time, we have sent a contribution to the American Heart Association. You should hear from them soon.

We are also having your local garden center plant a tree in your honor.

They have a nice selection of easy-to-care-for seedlings for you to choose from.

Take care and know that we are praying for you and your family.

Many blessings,
Ed and Sally Johnson

HELP THOSE IN NEED

Sometimes the death of a family member puts the survivors in a financial bind. Perhaps the disease or illness drained the family's bank account, or maybe the person was the primary breadwinner, and now that income is gone. If you have the financial resources or have a group of friends who would like to assist, consider setting up a trust that can help the family members through the most difficult times.

Remember that it isn't easy for many people to accept help, so do it in a tactful manner. You never want to embarrass the survivors regarding financial matters. Set up the trust or another type of account you wish to offer, contact the recipient, and let him or her know when and how the money will be available. Make the purpose clear without coming across insensitive and then follow up with a letter making everything clear.

FINANCIAL HELP YOU CAN OFFER

- Education for the children or spouse of the deceased
- Monthly income for the family for a specific amount of time
- Money for transportation or living expenses for a designated amount of time
- Childcare expenses for a designated amount of time

Tibbs Funeral Home & Cremation is available to help you. Please Contact Us if we can be of assistance.