

# How FreeWill Helps Nonprofits Steward Anonymous Legacy Donors

## The Challenge

Planned giving donors play a vital role in sustaining a nonprofit's mission for generations to come. While nearly 70% of FreeWill legacy donors choose to share their information with the nonprofit, making it possible for organizations to thank and build relationships with them, many others prefer to keep their plans private. In fact, previous research shows that only 36% of bequest donors alert nonprofits of their gift intentions, meaning most legacy commitments remain a mystery until the gift is realized.

These anonymous donors have chosen to leave transformative legacy gifts, but their anonymity can limit an organization's ability to steward and thank them directly, risking missed opportunities to build trust and deepen relationships.

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It's mostly about our organization being able to express our appreciation to the donors and for them to know there is a real person on the other end to help with anything they need.

Amy  
Director of Gift Planning at North  
Shore Animal League America  
(NSALA)

## The Solution

To help bridge this gap, FreeWill recently introduced the **Automated Anonymous Donor Stewardship feature** in the Planned Giving Suite. This tool enables nonprofits to have an automated message of gratitude sent to anonymous donors, allowing organizations to express gratitude while fully respecting donor privacy.

Each of our Partners provides a custom message for this email through a short blurb with key organizational information and a thank you message. FreeWill then delivers these communications directly on their behalf, ensuring donors feel appreciated and supported right away without compromising their desire for anonymity.

Early Partner feedback shows excitement about the ability to connect with this critical donor group. One theme that emerged was **building trust and reassurance**. Amy, Director of Gift Planning at **North Shore Animal League America (NSALA)**, emphasized the value of reaching this important group, “Since they are not anonymous to FreeWill, it’s terrific to have the ability to reach them... It gives me peace of mind that I can share my contact information in case they want to reach out directly.”

She also noted that the feature is less about expecting a response and more about making sure donors feel appreciated, “It’s mostly about our organization being able to express our appreciation to the donors and for them to know there is a real person on the other end to help with anything they need.”

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## The Solution (CONTINUED)

The release also allowed nonprofits to show gratitude and strengthen connections with their anonymous donors. Chelsy, Planned Giving Manager at the **American Diabetes Association (ADA)** shared that the opportunity to thank donors is invaluable: “Any opportunity to better understand and connect with our donors is wonderful. Even if donors choose to stay anonymous, a thank you builds trust and a deeper connection.”

Some Partners have already seen meaningful responses from their anonymous donors. Len, Senior Philanthropy Advisor from the **Northwest Maritime Center** noted the powerful impact of simply being able to say thank you: “One of the anonymous donors self-identified within minutes after receiving the message. For the others, I can only hope they see that we’re demonstrating gratitude while still respecting their privacy.”

While still a new feature, Automated Anonymous Donor Stewardship is already helping nonprofits express appreciation to a group of supporters who might otherwise remain under the radar. From sparking donor self-identification to strengthening trust, the feature ensures that even anonymous donors know their legacy gifts matter deeply.

As organizations continue to adopt and refine their stewardship messages, the feature has the potential to foster stronger donor relationships, inspire deeper loyalty, and unlock more impact stories over time.

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**Len**

Senior Philanthropy Advisor from  
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