

Reaching new heights with planned giving:

# Academy of Model Aeronautics Foundation's success with FreeWill



## THE OPPORTUNITY

The Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) is the largest model aeronautics organization in the country, bringing together enthusiasts to celebrate model aviation since 1936. AMA is a mission-based organization spanning over 2,500 local clubs across the United States. In 2023, the AMA Foundation began to focus on growing its endowment and was encouraged by its Board to establish a robust planned giving program.

Before launching its partnership with FreeWill in the spring of 2023, the AMA Foundation's planned giving efforts were based on building personal relationships without a formalized process.

## THE SOLUTION

Since partnering with FreeWill, the AMA Foundation team feels more confident talking about planned giving with their members and donors. Through Partner-exclusive resources



Since working with FreeWill, it's given us a place to send our members asking about legacy giving, because we didn't know where to start. I've been fundraising for quite a few years now, but our team had never managed planned giving and was unsure about how it should run. FreeWill helped us figure that out.

**Austin Perlee**  
Digital Engagement &  
Development Specialist

## THE SOLUTION (continued)

like strategy memos, Partner trainings, and FreeWill webinars, the AMA Foundation team's comfort level with planned giving best practices has risen, along with their gift commitment numbers.

As a FreeWill partner, the AMA Foundation team works closely with a Partner Success strategist to create customized appeal content and an outreach strategy to reach donors with the Planned Giving Suite. This empowers the AMA Foundation team to focus on sustaining the future of model aviation.

The AMA's member base leans older in age, with many folks aged 60-70 years old. With efforts to cultivate gifts from a nation-wide member base, the AMA Foundation team is grateful for the ability to send donors to a unified and intuitive platform that walks them through the estate planning and legacy giving process step-by-step. When conducting a phone call, sending an appeal letter, or having a conversation with a known donor, the AMA Foundation team is now equipped to build on that engagement by sending them to FreeWill's platform.

Many bequest commitments made to the AMA Foundation through FreeWill have been from surprise first-time donors, unlocking a new donor segment to steward. They've also seen great success using FreeWill's Gift Intent form, which guides donors to report a bequest they've already made in an estate plan outside of FreeWill's platform. Of all bequest gift intentions recorded from donors who've already named the AMA Foundation in their estate plans, two-thirds of those gifts have been committed as a direct result of FreeWill outreach.

The AMA Foundation's success with FreeWill's Gift Intent form highlights the importance of making the legacy ask in all fundraising outreach, and having a self-guided way for donors to share their gift intent. By integrating this form throughout their outreach, the AMA Foundation has recorded over \$2M in bequest commitments made prior to their FreeWill partnership.



Internally, FreeWill got everybody on board with planned giving. Everybody was super excited — all of our board members were talking about it. Every meeting that we have, they're like, "how can we keep pushing this? What do we have going on with FreeWill?" It's gotten everybody excited, not just us on the Foundation staff, but everybody across the organization: our board members, all the executive council members. It's boosted morale between everybody.

**Rachelle Haughn**  
Director & Programs Specialist

## RESULTS

**\$6M**

in total legacy gift commitments from 34 legacy gifts

**23**

primary bequest commitments