Giving Back - Silver Linings

Sometimes life's most difficult circumstances can have unexpected silver linings. When Julie Price's father died in 2013, she had never dealt with the emotional and practical impact of losing a parent.

"That's when I realized how important it was to get my own house in order," she said.

As the mother of a young woman with cerebral palsy, Julie wanted to make sure her daughter, Raven, would have her needs met after her death. Julie had learned about special needs trusts as a way to protect medical benefits for a loved one with chronic health issues and turned to her local attorney for help preparing the trust. He asked Julie a question she had never considered: What were her plans for the family assets after her daughter passed? Julie learned that in order for Raven to receive the benefits of a



special needs trust, Raven's decision-making must be legally restricted, preventing her from making this decision on her own. It was shortly thereafter when Julie and Raven came to the Community Foundation to discuss their vision.

As a woman in her early 30s, Raven had not spent much time thinking about the logistics of what would happen after she died. But a brainstorming session between mother and daughter resulted in a beautiful plan. They would create a fund to support the kinds of programs and services that could have benefited them years earlier.

At age 18, Raven was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. She spent much of the next several years in behavioral health hospitals, feeling deeply depressed and alone. "Recovery from mental illness is an individual journey. That journey can become a lot easier with the right support...that's what I needed," she said.

Several years later, Raven resiliently turned her painful experiences into a meaningful vocation. She entered the mental health field as a peer support counselor, outreach coordinator and suicide prevention coordinator, working at Manzanita Services in Ukiah. Meanwhile, through the local chapter of the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) Julie had become a mental health advocate, supporting and educating families. Raven and Julie were provided with an insider's view into the struggles and needs of people living with mental health issues in their community.

The Community Foundation worked with Julie and Raven to develop their vision into a "field-of-interest" fund to support local mental health care. Specifically, the Raven Price Wellness and Recovery Fund will exist to make grants to Mendocino County organizations that support wellness and recovery for those living with mental illness and their families. The intent of the fund is to support (1) programs or services for the underserved with mental health issues, including dual diagnosis; (2) programs to keep people from "falling through the cracks"; (3) programs that model innovative mental health wellness and recovery services; and (4) community education efforts to reduce stigma and increase compassionate and respectful treatment of people living with and/or recovering from mental illness.

The fund will become effective once the threshold sum of \$10,000 is reached, which will occur upon Raven's death, unless funds are provided sooner. Once the fund is active, a grant will be awarded every year in accordance with Raven and Julie's wishes.

Initially Julie didn't consider herself in a financial position to fund an endowment. "I own a small home and when my father died, I was able to put a down payment on a home for Raven. After we're gone, those assets will create a fund that will provide support for people who really need it. I had no idea we could do such a thing."

Her father's passing helped Julie realize the importance of preparing for life's inevitable end in accordance with the values her family holds most dear. While she misses her father, Julie sees the silver lining of his passing as the motivation she and Raven needed to create a legacy to help others.

If you'd like to discuss creating a legacy fund at the Community Foundation or have questions about legacy giving, please contact Megan Barber Allende at 707-468-9882 or megan@communityfound.org.

