

Don't be caught dead without a will or trust

By Dan Marsh, Attorney at Law

No one plans to die today, but no one is guaranteed that we won't. In fact, there are only two guarantees in life: death and taxes. If you don't have a properly written will or trust in place, your state legislature has written one for you. Protect your loved ones and your assets from being taken advantage of in the event of your death. It's the greatest gift you will ever leave behind.

It's a common misconception that only wealthy people or married couples need a will or trust. If you answer "no" to any of the following questions, you should have a will or trust prepared.

- Do you want a probate judge to divide up your assets?
- Do you want a CPS social worker or court to determine who gets to raise your minor children?
- Do you want the IRS to get a bigger-than-necessary check from your estate?
- Do you want animal control to get your pets?
- Do you want your stepchildren or children from a previous marriage passed over?
- Do you want your adult children to battle your spouse in court?
- Do you want an absentee parent to

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be awarded custody of your minor children?

- Do you want relatives fighting over any of your family heirlooms?
- Do you want the court determining the sale or disposition of your home, your car and other personal property?
- Do you want your loved ones to grieve your death in a courtroom?
- Do you want someone you don't know making decisions on behalf of your estate?
- Do you want an estranged sibling or relative to petition the court against your wishes?

Vancouver attorney Dan Marsh's practice emphasizes estate planning, probate, guardianships and family law. For information, call 360-450-0993.