

THE SAVAGE TRUTH

Trustee can attend to health care, financial affairs

What happens when you're older and alone — with no one you trust to be there in your time of need? If you never had children, or are estranged from them, this is a huge issue. Your friends are aging along with you. Your only relative, a niece, lives thousands

of miles away. Your "estate" isn't large enough to attract the attention of a bank.

Reality sets in. You can't make an estate plan, a financial plan, or a care plan without someone you trust to step in to handle

all those details at the uncertain time in the future when you may be most in need.

That's where Colleen Ceh Becvar steps in. She is a trusted trustee — a service that is offered by a select few bonded and professional companies. Ceh Becvar started her company, Trinity Advocacy Group, 10 years ago, inspired by the need for care she saw in her own family when she was young. She spent years working for a law firm that did estate planning, and she noticed how many people reached old age needing help paying their bills and dealing with medical issues — they needed a trustee, even though they had a will.



TERRY SAVAGE

Ceh Becvar's firm serves as a surrogate family — working for the client, and only on behalf of the client. She works on an hourly basis and charges fees only when the firm is actually working for the client. And the hourly fee — ranging from \$135 to \$185 — doesn't start until the need for help arises.

The first step in engaging Trinity's service is a free 30-minute consultation. Many of these calls start with referrals from elder law attorneys. The discussion revolves around what the service covers, the fee schedule, and an understanding of how and when the need might arise. A contract requiring a small deposit then confirms the relationship.

The client's attorney will then include Trinity in the estate planning documents, naming Ceh Becvar as executor for a will, trustee for a living trust, or power of attorney for health care or business.

This is truly planning in advance. There may not be a need for action for many years — until the client is in need of assistance for anything from paying their bills to choosing assisted living or even managing medical care.

Getting started

The process of getting prepared for future needs is intensive. There are three stages of this



ADOBE STOCK

fiduciary engagement, starting when Trinity is notified of client need:

- Securing the assets. Whether it's locks on a house, collecting the mail, or making sure a pet has care, Trinity will make sure the client is secure. While the client is alive, Trinity exercises power of attorney. At death, those estate planning documents specifically empower Ceh Becvar to act.

- Paying expenses. Whether it's monthly bill payments or larger items like income or property taxes that occur annually, Trinity will make sure that everything is current. And the firm will handle payment of valid debts, making sure no fraudulent expenses are charged by a family member or neighbor.

- Making distributions. Eventually, after death, Trinity will handle distributions of the estate to the appropriate people and

charities — and fight off claims from anyone not clearly designated as a beneficiary.

Managing health care

An even more critical function of this relationship is the care management side of the arrangement.

That often starts with a crisis. Says Ceh Becvar: "It may not happen for years after becoming a client, but a health event usually triggers our participation." So, it's important that Trinity be listed as the "person" to call in case of this kind of emergency.

Then, Trinity staff rushes to the bedside, either at the hospital or at home, to verify the client's condition. Since the health care power of attorney has been signed, Trinity is in a position to make sure the client's wishes are followed, and will advocate with hospitals and physicians.

Trinity will create and super-

vised a plan of care, pay for it, and make sure the client gets the appropriate treatment. As Ceh Becvar describes the services Trinity offers, it sounds just like what you'd hope to have from a trusted adult son or daughter.

Finding trusted trustees

You want your trustee to be professional, bonded and highly recommended. And nearby — so they can perform all of those tasks. Trinity Advocacy Group is headquartered in Chicago's suburbs, and you can schedule an initial call on their website: TrinityAdvocacyGroup.com.

But if you are reading this column in another part of the country, you can locate a trust professional with a simple zip code search at any one of these reputable organizations:

- Aging Life Care Association: aginglifecare.org/

- National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys: naela.org/

- Association of Daily Money Managers: secure.aadmm.com/

Yes, money can buy attention and loyalty, but most of all — peace of mind. And that's The Savage Truth.

Terry Savage is a registered investment adviser and the author of four best-selling books, including "The Savage Truth on Money." Terry responds to questions on her blog at TerrySavage.com.

COMMERCIAL REAL ESTATE LISTINGS

LEASES

Commonwealth Commercial Part-

Rinker Design Associates, LLC leased 12,497 square feet of office space at 100

office space at Highland I, 7231 Forest Ave. in Henrico

SALES

Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer re-

of Cushman & Wakefield | Thalhimer handled the sale negotiations on behalf of