

INSIDER ACTION: DANIEL LEE

Foundation, faith help steer others' benevolence

Jim Cotterill built his career following his business instincts.

And now he is following his faith.

The Indianapolis resident is co-founder and president of the Hoosier Christian Foundation (hoosierchristian.com), a new nonprofit in Carmel.

The foundation -- working with its parent organization, the Georgia-based National Christian Foundation -- acts as an investment adviser for its clients' charitable giving.

Believers are called to be good stewards of all that God has given to them, Cotterill said.

"There are some people who have sold companies and come into some wealth, and they just feel they've been blessed and want to take care of some people," said Cotterill, 58, former president of Hamilton's Health Aid Services, which provides equipment for those with disabilities.

A new client must provide at least \$10,000 to open a foundation account. The client can take the tax write-off that year for the entire sum, but dole out the funds over whatever time frame he or she chooses. The idea is to have the national foundation's financial advisers increase the value of the money already set aside for charity.

Cotterill said the Christian Foundation also accepts complex assets such as real estate and stakes in closely held businesses. The foundation's annual fees run from 0.35 percent to 1 percent of a fund's value.

Gifts are made to charities selected by the client. Donations don't have to go to Christian charities, but the activities of those nonprofit groups can't go against Christian principles, Cotterill said. He cited gifts to abortion clinics or a medical school that supports embryonic stem-cell research as prohibited.

Since August, 15 individuals or families have contributed \$6.1 million -- an average of \$406,700 each to the Hoosier Christian Foundation. The national foundation said it and its affiliates have helped donors give more than \$1.2 billion to 15,000 charities since 1982.

Religion is a powerful motivator. People who are religious, Christians and from other faiths, tend to give away more of their incomes, said Gene Tempel, executive director of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University.

Cotterill, a member of St. Luke United Methodist Church, said he has been a Christian since he was a child. But in 2001, a freak cycling accident -- which for a time left him paralyzed from the neck down -- provided a new perspective.

Although he suffered permanent nerve damage, Cotterill now walks without a limp. He said having countless people care and pray for him deepened his faith.

"Jesus meant more to me, because he was a servant."