

Attorney launches practice in Sisters

By Lisa May
Correspondent

Planning for one's own death is not an activity that most of us look forward to. Yet if you have spent a lifetime saving, investing, building a business, purchasing life insurance or otherwise providing for the future, do you want the State of Oregon to decide how to distribute your assets to your heirs? Or would you prefer to make those decisions yourself? In addition, you may desire to make the administration of your estate as easy as possible for your loved ones during a time of grief.

These are some reasons to enlist a professional estate planner.

Patricia Nelson started Two Spruce Law in Bend in late 2016 after being a part of other law offices in Central Oregon for 25 years. Her firm focuses on estate planning (including both wills and trusts), probate and trust administration. As John Myers was finishing up law school at Willamette University in Salem in 2019, he and his wife, Melissa, were taking a long look at Sisters as a desirable place to live. John had participated in a unique clinical program for estate planning before leaving school. Not only did he excel in the program, but John found that he had a passion for the specialty. The career services office at Willamette pointed Myers to Nelson as a resource and by October 2019, he had settled in working at Two Spruce Law in Bend.

The community of Sisters is a great fit for the Myers because they both grew up in small towns. They purchased a home in Sisters this March and in April, John opened the Sisters office of Two Spruce Law, specializing in estate planning. As he said, one goal is to "open up the opportunity to not have to drive to Bend for estate planning" for those who live in Sisters.

With a proper estate plan, one can avoid the State making decisions for you and minimize the impact of taxes on the estate. Nelson and Myers agree that not everyone needs a will because in the simplest situations Oregon statutes do fill the gaps through the probate process. Even having a will does not avoid the expensive months-long probate process, during which the records of assets and beneficiaries are public. Creating and funding a trust manages the transfer of assets without the waiting period or public records of probate. In addition, if your total assets — including your home, business, investments, and life insurance benefits — add up to over \$1 million,

you could be facing a unnecessary tax burden without an estate plan.

Myers' very recent training combines with Nelson's 25 years of experience to give clients a strong package.

"We really care about people and their families and we want the plans to work out," Myers explained.

The attorneys at Two Spruce have learned to ask the probing questions that are necessary to uncover how

best to consider everyone involved in the administration of a plan. For example, just because a child is your oldest, is he/she the best personality or position in the family dynamics to take on a legal role in the midst of grieving the loss of a family member? Myers has experience in helping to run his family's wine business and he has a good grasp of family dynamics in a business situation. The goal is to help families come out with stronger bonds after the estate has been administered. Myers said they are "looking for opportunities to build those relationships" throughout the process.

Outside of the office, Myers loves the trails in Sisters and he hopes to get involved with Sisters Trails Alliance, as well as some

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PHOTO BY LISA MAY

John Myers, with Patricia Nelson, has opened an estate-planning practice in Sisters.

involvement with the Sisters City Council. He said, "we enjoy the small-town feel and the opportunities it affords to make a big difference."

You might meet Myers on the trail, but you can also visit www.twosprucelaw.com to see how he can help you plan for your family's future.

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