



TIPS FOR Giving to Charities

All charities soliciting within the state of Florida, excluding religious, educational and governmental entities, are required to register and file financial information with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. To check whether a charitable organization is properly registered and to find out how that organization has spent the donations it has received in the past, contact the assistance center at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) from within Florida, call 850-410-3800 from outside of Florida or visit the online Gift Givers' Guide at www.800helpfla.com.

Consumers are often asked to donate to charities – whether it's by telephone, email, regular mail, or at a grocery store. Donating hard earned money to a worthy cause can be very fulfilling. Be sure to keep these helpful hints in mind when donating to a charity:

- Don't judge a charity solely on an impressive sounding name. Many organizations have names similar to well-known charities and organizations. Know who is asking you for money.
- Ask the charity or organization why it is asking for donations. What purpose will be served? Ask questions and do not donate until you get satisfactory answers.
- Some solicitors use pressure tactics and may even offer to send a "runner" to pick up your money. Reputable charities and organizations are just as happy to receive your gift tomorrow as today.
- NEVER GIVE CASH! Contribute by check and make it out to the organization.



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- Florida law gives the prospective donor the right to request and receive a copy of a charity's financial report before donating. **ASK FOR IT!**
- Be cautious of charities that spring up overnight, especially those that involve current events like natural disasters or those that claim to be for police officers, veterans or firefighters. They probably don't have the resources to get your donations to the affected area or people.
- Not all organizations soliciting in the name of benevolence are true charities eligible to receive tax-deductible contributions. If this is important to you, ask about the organization's federal and state eligibility for receiving tax deductible donations. Typically, such donations fall under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3).
- Be conscious of groups or individuals who solicit by telephone, mail and door-to-door. Also, be wary of groups who solicit on street corners. While they ask for charitable contributions, little is known about their charity or charitable purpose.
- Often times the elderly are taken advantage of because of their vulnerability. Elderly consumers are encouraged to discuss charitable giving with a trusted family member or friend.
- Be aware that many telephone appeals for funds are made by paid solicitors, not volunteers. The solicitors often work for a for-profit firm hired by the organization. Telemarketing is expensive and may entail substantial fundraising costs.
- Charities must spend money to raise money and they must pay a fair salary to their employees. Most cannot function on volunteer help alone. Every organization will have some administrative and fundraising costs.
- Ultimately, it is your money and your contribution. **MAKE IT COUNT!**

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