



brought to you by
the **Division of Consumer Services**

- Be conscious of groups or individuals who solicit by telephone, mail and door-to-door. Other groups to be wary of are ones who solicit on street corners. While they ask for charitable contributions, little is known about their charity or charitable purpose.
 - 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.
 - Some organizations have 900 phone numbers. When you call the number, the cost of the call is automatically billed to your phone. Before dialing, make sure you wish to donate the price of the call (it may be expensive) to that particular cause.
 - Charities must spend money to raise money and they must pay fair salary to their employees. Most cannot function on volunteer help alone. Every organization will have some administrative and fundraising costs.
- 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.
 - Visit our online Gift Giver's Guide at www.800helpfla.com. From there you can search for specific charities financial and registration information. You can also call our consumer hotline at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) from within Florida, 850-488-2221 calling from outside of Florida, and a consumer specialist will be happy to assist you.
 - Ultimately, it is your money and your contribution. **MAKE IT COUNT!**

Remember...
consumer education is the best defense against fraud and deception.

For more consumer information, visit us online at www.800helpfla.com.



TIPS ON giving

Florida Department of Agriculture
and Consumer Services
Charles H. Bronson, Commissioner

1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352)

en Español **1-800-FL-AYUDA (352-9832)**

visit us online at **www.800helpfla.com**

TIPS ON giving to charity

All charities soliciting within the State of Florida, excluding religious, educational and governmental entities, are required to register and file financial information with the Department. To check whether or not a charitable organization is properly registered and to find out how that organization spends your donation, contact our consumer hotline at 1-800-HELP-FLA (435-7352) from within Florida, 850-488-2221 calling from outside of Florida, or you can visit our online Gift Givers' Guide at www.800helpfla.com.

Consumers are often asked to donate to charities – whether it's at a grocery store, on the phone or by mail. 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:

- Charities and organizations know they must ask for money to receive money. Choose which ones you wish to support and contribute as often and generously as you can afford.

- 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.
- Be wary of emotional appeals, and be suspicious of organizations with only vague plans for dispensing the funds.
- 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.
- 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!**
- **NEVER GIVE CASH!** Contribute by check and make it out to the organization.

- Remember, you are not required to contribute to enter a sweepstakes. Donating money does not enhance your chance of winning.
- 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).
- Some "sweepstakes" are done in the name of charity. If you enter a "charity sweepstakes," read the rules carefully or your entry may be disqualified. Check the odds. "Guaranteed winners" often receive prizes worth less than the price of a postage stamp.
- Gifts to donors may be an incentive, but they add to fundraising costs. You can donate directly to an organization and forego the gifts. The organization will then have a larger percentage of the contribution to use for its programs.