

10 TIPS FOR MAKING SMART DONATIONS

The Charitable Trust Division of the New Hampshire Attorney General's Office has compiled a list of tips to assist the public in making wise donations. By carefully scrutinizing paid solicitation campaigns, contributors can help discourage fraud and encourage charities to make efficient use of limited contributions. The following suggestions should enhance a contributor's ability to make effective contributions:

1. ALWAYS ASK THE SOLICITOR FOR SOME IDENTIFICATION BEFORE GIVING OUT ANY INFORMATION. By law, paid solicitors must identify the charity for which they solicit and their status as a paid solicitor. Do not be afraid to ask and if they refuse, don't hesitate to hang up and contact your local law enforcement agency.

2. ALWAYS ASK FOR PRINTED MATERIALS FROM THE CHARITY. Any legitimate charity can provide printed materials for you to study and understand the charity's purpose. Ask for materials that clearly state (1) the name, address and telephone number of the charity (2) a description of how and where charitable funds will be used, and (3) the name, address and telephone number of the paid solicitor.

3. ALWAYS ASK HOW MUCH OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS ACTUALLY GO TO THE CHARITY. According to New Hampshire law, solicitors and the charities for which they solicit are required to file an accounting of the fundraising campaign which must include a copy of the terms of the fundraising agreement. This filing should indicate how much of the proceeds actually go to the charity and should be available for the solicitor to disclose to all potential donors.

4. BEWARE OF HIGH PRESSURE SALES TACTICS AND ABUSIVE BEHAVIOR BY SOLICITORS. No legitimate charitable fund-raiser will refuse to take the time to explain the purpose of fundraising and the objectives of the charity in a courteous manner. If you encounter abusive solicitation, please contact your local law enforcement agency.

5. KEEP RECORDS OF ALL DONATIONS, INCLUDING RECEIPTS AND CANCELED CHECKS. This information is especially important for tax deduction purposes and in case you have a complaint in the future.

6. BEWARE OF SOLICITORS “SOLICITING” FOR ORGANIZATIONS THAT HAVE DECEPTIVELY SIMILAR NAMES TO LEGITIMATE CHARITIES. Many for-profit organizations style their names after charitable organizations. Don’t be deceived by these copy-cat businesses whose titles may differ by as little as terms like “association,” “federation,” “national,” “American,” “incorporated,” and “foundation.” As mentioned earlier, ask for more information and contact your local law enforcement agency if you are unsure of the legitimacy of any campaigns.

7. NEVER PAY BY CASH AND NEVER GIVE YOUR CREDIT CARD NUMBER OVER THE PHONE. When making any donations, simply make a check out to the charity itself, **not to the paid solicitor**, and use the charity’s full name. That way you have a record of the contribution and the money goes directly to the charity.

8. CALL THE BENEFICIARIES OF THE CHARITABLE FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN AND ASK IF THEY ARE AWARE OF THE SOLICITATION. If the charities are unaware of the solicitation campaign, please contact your local law enforcement agency immediately.

9. DON’T BE DECEIVED BY SOLICITATION GIMMICKS. Use caution when purchasing products or tickets or when receiving free merchandise. These methods may be legitimate but they add costs to the fundraising campaigns which are deducted from *your* donations. Also use caution when dealing with sweepstakes which may request more money than the prize is worth or may never even provide a prize at all.

10. VERIFY ALL INFORMATION WITH YOUR LOCAL POLICE DEPARTMENT OR LAW ENFORCEMENT AGENCY. All charities and paid solicitors are required to register with the New Hampshire Attorney General’s Office prior to solicitation. If you have any questions or problems, write to OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL, CHARITABLE TRUSTS UNIT, 33 CAPITOL STREET, CONCORD, NH 03301-6397