

*“Give from the
heart,
but please
give smart.”*

**A guide to
wise charitable giving**



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“South Carolinians are among the most generous people in the world, but we must guard against those who would take advantage of that generosity. I hope this brochure will help you choose your charities wisely. Remember- give from the heart, but give smart.”



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Take the time to be informed about charities. Please visit www.scsos.com/char_online.htm. Here you can research charitable organizations that are registered with the Secretary of State's Office as required by the Solicitation of Charitable Funds Act. Available information includes the organization's name, address, and a financial summary showing the percentage of the organizations expenses that were devoted toward the charitable cause.

How can you recognize unscrupulous charities?

BEWARE!

Bills or invoices mailed to you from charities you've not pledge money to.

Evasive, vague answers to specific questions about the charity and how the money will be used.

Words making up the charity's name that sound like a more well-known charity.

Avoid giving solicitors your credit card numbers.

Refusing to mail you further information. Requesting cash donations.

Emotional appeals and high-pressure tactics to get you to make a quick decision or feel guilty about not contributing.

South Carolinians from all income levels respond quickly and generously when they see a true need. We all want to experience the joy of giving, to assist charitable organizations accomplish their goals – whether it’s feeding and clothing the poor, disaster relief, conducting medical research, supporting the arts and education, or any other worthy cause.

Unfortunately not all charities operate with charitable intentions. If you are asked for a donation, chances are the caller is a paid, professional solicitor taking a portion of your contribution as payment for their services.

A true professional solicitor must disclose to you at the initial time of solicitation:
(that he/she is a paid solicitor;
(the name of the charity;
(the location of the charity;
(the purpose of the charity; and
(the registered true name of the professional fundraising organization for which he/she works.

If you receive a call from a professional solicitor and these disclosures were not made, contact investigators with the Secretary of State’s Office at (803) 734-1797 or at ebrown@sos.sc.gov.

You should also ask the following questions (desirable answers are italicized):

Are both the charitable organization and the professional fundraiser you are

working for registered with the Secretary of State’s Office? *Yes. All charitable organizations that intend to solicit contributions within South Carolina or have contributions solicited on their behalf must file a registration statement with the Secretary of State unless they qualify for an exemption.*

Will my contribution be used for services in my local area or state? *Just because your donation is mailed to a post office box in South Carolina does not mean it will be used in South Carolina.*

Is my contribution tax **deductible**? *Yes, if the organization has 501(c)(3) status with the Internal Revenue Service.*

What percentage of my contribution goes to the charitable cause? *65% or more is a nationally-acceptable amount.*

Will you mail me a copy of the charity’s most recent financial report, as well as the professional solicitor’s current registration certificate, both filed with the Secretary of State? *Yes. These must be mailed to you within 15 business days of your request.*

If you are satisfied with the answers given to the above questions, you can opt to give then, or tell the caller that you would like to further investigate their cause by researching the charity on any of the links provided at www.scsos.com/charities.htm. A reputable charity will welcome your further interest and will not rush you to make a contribution.

Here are some facts you should know

concerning public safety fundraisers:

- Public services, like firefighting and police protection, are paid for by **tax dollars**, not donated funds. Even if you say “no” to donating, your local law enforcement officers and firefighters will be there to protect you and/or save your home when needed.

Please note

The following are not included in the definition of “charitable organizations” and therefore do not have to register with the Secretary of State under SC Code of Laws 33-56-30:

- bona fide religious organizations; and
- candidates for national, state or local office or a political party or other groups required to file information with the Federal Election Commission or State Election Commission.

Additionally, there are charitable organizations that are exempt from registration under SC Code of Laws 33-56-50.

Scrooges and Angels List

The Scrooges and Angels list is the Secretary of State's annual listing of local, regional and national charities that represent some of the best and worst of charitable giving. The lists' purpose is to encourage “good giving.” To see the complete list of the ten Scrooges and ten Angels for the current year, please visit our public charities Webpage at www.scsos.com/angels_and_scrooges.asp