



Support America's Charities

Good Giving Tips 2018

Americans are showing their true spirit and donating at record breaking levels. According to Giving USA, charitable giving hit a new record in 2017, reaching a \$410 billion mark for the first time. (An annual study of US philanthropy conducted by Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy for the Giving USA Foundation.) It should come as no surprise — Americans are the most charitable people on earth and when others are in need, we all rise to the occasion.

**It's important to donate generously to support charities.
As the holidays approach, the kindness of our donating society
enriches and lifts vitally important causes across the nation.**

As you give, be well informed as you make your donations and provide other means of support. When giving, choose a charity that is transparent. **Don't be afraid to ask — “How will my donation be used?”** Legitimate organizations provide detailed information up front and a personal point of contact. View the organization's website to find information about how your donation will be used. Be wary if you cannot easily find contact information or other fundamental information, legitimate organizations take extra steps to ensure donors are well-informed.



**Here are some things to think about if
you are giving to an organization that is new to you:**

Know how your gift will be used. Most organizations have financial information and annual reports on their websites, so you can see how your gift will be used. In all events, any organization should provide you with either its annual report or IRS Form 990 upon request. Ask a new organization or a religious organization (many religious organizations are not required to file Form 990) what financial information is currently available. *Legitimate organizations want to be transparent and open about their finances and their results because they know they will receive additional support as trusted organizations.* Detailed IRS Form 990s are available online at Guidestar.org for most organizations.

Donate by check or credit card: Legitimate organizations will always take a check or credit card. Be cautious if you are considering donating cash to organizations with which you are not already familiar, if they are not legitimate, it will be difficult to track them down once they get your cash.

Protect your personal data. The organization should have a clear privacy policy for the use of the personal information it collects. The privacy policy is located on the organization's website or mobile screen. Sensitive personal information such as your social security number, your mother's maiden name, and PIN access are never sought by legitimate organizations and you should not provide this.

Be cautious of high-pressure tactics. Legitimate organizations are professional and courteous when asking for your support. They understand that respectful communication is the right approach to contacts made.

If you are contacted by telephone, ask about the caller’s relationship to the organization.

Tele-fundraising is a longstanding valid practice by organizations to outreach publicly to seek mission support. Legitimate organizations may use the services of professional fundraisers, volunteers, and staff. In all instances, a donor should expect that callers readily explain who they are and why they are calling. Ask for the caller’s callback information and address if there is cause for concern. A legitimate organization and a reputable firm will always offer to send something in the mail.

Be careful of email “spoofing” and “phishing.” When donating online, be careful of “spoofing,” a scam that can trick you. You should not click on a link from an unfamiliar e-mail that appears to be sent from the organization. The e-mail may have the logo and even the correct “sent from” source. Furthermore, the site link may even look like the real organization, because the sender has copied their information as an imposter. To avoid this, go to the organization’s web site directly to learn how to give online and to sign up for their newsletters and fundraising. If you are unsure of the web address, go to the search engine and enter the organization’s name. Phishing occurs when you get an unfamiliar email or text and it asks you to click a link or give a password, bank account or other sensitive information and once you click the link it may spread a computer virus to your systems and use your password to access accounts. Legitimate charities do not seek account information or send you unfamiliar links.

Secure your online donations. When donating online, make sure that you enter your personal information only on a site that is secured. Secured sites will have the “lock” icon in your browser.

Review state reporting sources. State officials monitor charitable activity — and today most states require charitable organizations that solicit funds from the public to register, usually with either the Attorney General or Secretary of State. The respective office in your state can tell you if an organization is registered with the state (although each state affords registration exemptions to religious and a variety of other organization types). If you believe fraudulent activity is taking place, please report it immediately to prevent further harm. Contact information for these offices, including links to the respective Web sites can be found at nasconet.org as well as their important initiatives to protect the public such as frauds promoting fake veterans organizations (See nasconet.org/operation-donate-with-honor-2) If your state is not listed, call your attorney general’s consumer assistance line.

Seek Accountability. Legitimate organizations will provide you with detailed information upon request. If you are not satisfied with the response, send your donation to another organization that is satisfactory — the need is great — your generosity will be rewarding for you and for the broader community you are a part of.



If you have questions or comments, please contact

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