

Investigate Before you Donate

Con artists often use names similar to well-known charities or pretend to raise money for state or local law enforcement agencies. Before you donate to an organization, make sure it actually serves the cause you want to support.

- ◆ Ask for financial statements of the organization to determine who will benefit from your donation.
- ◆ Perform an internet search on the charity to see if they have an informational web site, or if someone has posted a complaint about them.
- ◆ Visit www.kscharitycheck.org or call (785) 296-4565 for a list of charitable organizations registered in Kansas, information on your rights as a consumer and the Kansas Charitable Organization and Solicitation Act.
- ◆ Visit www.give.org for information on tax deduction qualifications and charity ratings.
- ◆ Check the Better Business Bureau for complaints about the charity: (316) 263-3146 in Wichita, (816) 421-7800 in Kansas City or (785) 232-0454 for Northeast Kansas.



Responding to Solicitations

Keep the following tips in mind when asked to donate money by mail, phone or at the door:

- ◆ **Never give cash, credit card or bank account information to an organization.** Always pay by check so you have a receipt of your contribution.
- ◆ **Do not fall for high pressure or emotional appeals.** Many charities use words such as “urgent,” “critical” and “immediate,” but any reputable charity will welcome your contribution when you are ready to give.
- ◆ **Do not feel obligated to pay for a gift you did not order.** Charities often send token gifts such as key chains, greeting cards or mailing labels along with donation appeals.

- ◆ **Be wary of charities with impressive or familiar sounding names.** Many charities say they are devoted to similar causes, but it’s best to decide in advance which charity conducts the most effective program you want to fund.
- ◆ **You are under no obligation to provide a donation directly to the solicitor at the door.** Ask for written material about the charity’s program, or a web address to research on your own and send your contribution directly to the charity.
- ◆ **Be wary of sweepstakes, contests or giveaways that encourage contributions.** As always, if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.



Important Questions to Ask

Any honest, legitimate fundraiser or charity should be willing to answer these questions:

- ◆ What types of programs will your gift support?
- ◆ How much of the donation will actually be used to support the charity’s program as opposed to fundraising and administrative expenses? The larger the percentage of administrative costs, the less money going to support the cause.
- ◆ Are they registered with the Kansas Secretary of State? Visit www.kscharitycheck.org or call (785) 296-4565 for a list.
- ◆ Are programs and services available locally? Most legitimate charities have local programs or offices that benefit your friends and neighbors.
- ◆ Is your contribution tax deductible? Know the difference between “tax exempt” (refers to the organization’s own tax status) and “tax deductible” (you can deduct the contribution on your federal income tax return).
- ◆ When purchasing merchandise, find out what portion of the price actually goes to the charity. If you’re not interested in the merchandise being sold, consider a direct contribution to the charity.



Message from Attorney General Stephen Six:



Dear Kansans,

Charities provide valuable services to our local communities, adding to the quality of life and building networks of support for people across Kansas and across the world.

Unfortunately, not every person or organization posing as a charity actually spends their money to help people in need. This brochure will provide you with information on choosing a charity, contributing wisely and making sure your donations are used as you expect.

Kansans have always been generous in supporting people less fortunate, but it is important to take a few precautions and donate wisely to any group or organization

I encourage you to continue supporting the charities you care about, after finding out the details you need to make an informed decision.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen N. Six".

Stephen N. Six

Quick Tips

Follow these consumer tips to ensure your contribution helps the cause you want to support:

- ◆ Don't judge a charity solely on its impressive sounding name.
- ◆ Ask how the charity goes about accomplishing its purpose.
- ◆ Ask how much of your money will go directly toward the cause (as opposed to other expenses).
- ◆ Check to see if your contribution is tax deductible.
- ◆ Don't be swayed by emotional appeals or free gifts you didn't order.
- ◆ Don't be pressured. Ask for written information and send a check later if you are convinced.
- ◆ Contribute by check. Cash donations are impossible to trace and difficult for the charity to protect.
- ◆ Never give credit card or bank account information to any charity or organization you are unfamiliar with.



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GIVING TO CHARITIES GUIDE



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Provided by Kansas Attorney General
Stephen N. Six