

Don't Judge Non-Profit Charities by their Name - Educate Yourself.

REXANO Editorial by Zuzana Kukol, www.REXANO.org



Las Vegas, NV, September 18, 2007--With family holidays and spirit of giving season approaching, we can expect lots of solicitations from various charities. But how do you make an educated decision which charity to donate to? With so many new ones being formed, and many old ones no longer sticking with their original purpose and only earning money off their name instead of what they really do for the cause, it can be a difficult choice.

As an animal lover who wants to help animals in shelters, would you donate to a non profit group that has 200 million in assets, presents itself as an animal welfare organization, but doesn't operate a single animal shelter? A group that charges \$4,000 and \$20,000 consulting fee to struggling shelters in need of guidance and makes money selling animal euthanasia manuals. A charity whose 'subject expert' on animal cruelty is a person better known for his ties to the Animal Liberation Front, ALF, which FBI considers to be a terrorist group. A charity that gained a nationwide attention with their questionable tactics of raising money from pet lovers for the animals displaced during hurricane Katrina (the Louisiana Attorney General is looking into what really happened with 32 million they raised).

Are you an animal lover donating to this group in hopes your money will save animals from death? <http://www.bloggernews.net/19657>

Before donating money to a charity, check the organizations' tax return (IRS 990) to see how much funds they receive and how much actually goes toward the cause itself.

Good resource to get informed about animal charities is *Activist Cash*, <http://www.activistcash.com/>.

"...a project of the Center for Consumer Freedom, provides the public and media with in-depth profiles of anti-consumer activist groups, along with information about the sources of their exorbitant funding....We also offer valuable information about hundreds of deep-pocketed foundations, activist celebrities, and other key players in the movement to control what you eat and drink."

Easy to use resource for charities' performance is *Charity Navigator* (<http://www.charitynavigator.org/>). It allows you to browse by category, or you can type the name of the charity you want to investigate in the search box. It shows you easy to read page with expenses breakdown graph, revenues, net assets and salaries.

Another resource, *BBB Wise Giving Alliance*, <http://www.give.org/>
"...reports on nationally soliciting charitable organizations that are the subject of donor inquiries. These reports include an evaluation of the subject charity in relation to the voluntary BBB charity standards. The BBB Wise Giving Alliance offers guidance to donors on making informed giving decisions through our charity evaluations, various "tips" publications, and publishes the quarterly Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Guide."

The most detailed and revealing site is *GuideStar It!* (<http://www.guidestar.org/>). It offers IRS tax returns where you can find detailed information about program expenses, donors, assets and salaries for the last few years. It requires you to register for free basic account, but the few minutes required to register are worth it considering the wealth of information on this site. If you choose to go with paid premium subscription, you will get access to extra features:

"1) People search gives you the ability to search 3.3 million individuals by name and get titles, compensation, and more.
2) Download information to build customized lists, compare financials, benchmark, and more on up to 5,000 organizations a month (Excel compatible)."

It might seem time consuming to spend all this time researching your charity, since writing the check to a charity you have been traditionally donating to for the last 20 years seems the easiest thing to do. Just like the priorities and programs of our government changes depending on who is in power at the moment, so do the priorities of charities.

Some charities, that might have started as groups wanting to help animals in shelters to reduce the killing, might now be charities that spend most money on lobbying instead of helping living breathing animals.

Other charities might have started as groups wanting to help cancer patients, but now most of their donations go to administrative expenses and little for cancer research.

So take your time to get educated and make the right informed decision, spend your money wisely. Don't judge the charities by their good sounding name, research who they really are and what they do for the cause.