

Consumers need to be informed when donating

About 2,900 charities are licensed in Michigan to solicit donations from you and your neighbors. Every year, these charities take in millions of dollars in donations. While many use your money wisely, others are not deserving of your generosity, says the Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Commission.

Asking questions about the charity and making an informed giving decision is the only way to

be sure that your money will support the worthwhile services that a charity can provide.

Ask Questions

If you receive a solicitation call, it is best if you don't pledge before you have all the facts. Even if the charity sounds worthwhile, request written information. Take the time you need to think things over - a charity that needs your help today will still need it tomorrow.

Ask:

- WHO is soliciting for the charity - volunteers or professional fund-raisers?
- WHAT does the charity do? What is its purpose?
- WHY should you give to this charity? Is your donation tax deductible?
- WHERE is the charity located? Request a name, address, and telephone number.
- WHEN did the charity begin operating? Has it been effective?

■ HOW MUCH of your money will go to the program you wish to support? How much will go for fund raising or administrative costs?

Facts You Should Know

Most charities and professional fund-raisers who solicit in Michigan must be licensed or registered with the Michigan Department of Attorney General. They must also file annual reports with that office. All

licensed organizations are issued a Michigan Charitable Solicitations number. Ask the charity to provide you with this information before you donate. This information is also available by calling (817) 373-1162, or by writing to the Michigan Charitable Trust Section at PO Box 30214, Lansing, MI 48909. The attorney general is also available at www.ag.state.mi.us.

Most public safety groups are not charities. They are often

social groups, unions, or political action groups whose membership consists of current or former firefighters and law enforcement personnel. These groups may use little of your money for charitable purposes. In order for your donation to be tax deductible, the receiving organization must be specific with Internal Revenue Service requirements. You may wish to ask the solicitor if your donation will be deductible.

Your refusal to donate to these groups will not affect your access to police, fire, or emergency services. Most public safety organizations that solicit are required to file with the attorney general.

You may direct public safety inquiries to the attorney general hotline at (800) 769-4515. Note that this is for public safety inquiries only. Your call cannot be forwarded from this number.

Finally, many charities mail you a small gift or item that you did not solicit. You are not obligated to return this gift or donate to charity. Also, when donating to any charity, your name may be placed on mailing lists issued to other charities or organizations. Ask to have your name removed if you do not wish to have it on a mailing list.

Charitable giving is a process that involves knowing your rights and responsibilities as a donor. Always ask questions and take time to think before you decide. This is the best way to guarantee that your charity dollars will be spent in the manner you expect. You are the key to the charity's success and to the swindler's failure. Don't just give to charity - give wisely.

For more information about this or other consumer issues, contact the Farmington Hills Consumer Protection Committee at (248) 426-4466. Committee meetings are held at 6:30 p.m. the third Tuesday of every month at the William Costick Center, 28600 11 Mile.

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SCHOOL BRIEFS

The following is a round-up of events in the Walled Lake School District, which includes a northwest Farmington Hills.

GALILEO LEADERS

For the past two years, the district has participated in the Galileo program with major sponsorship from the Kellogg Foundation. Because of careful budgeting, we anticipate that the Kellogg funding will assist in carrying the program into a third two-year cycle, which will give the district nearly thirty teachers who have been through the program. This year's participants are: Bette Ambrose, Central; Carolyn Brown, Walnut Creek; Barb Fiorini, Meadowbrook; Chris Golden, Western; Peggy Haver, WLBMS; Kevin Joseph, Banks; Jim Lewis, Jeff Liles and MaryKay Marks, Central; and Patricia Warner, Keith.

GOLDEN APPLE AWARD

The district honored Darrin Jennings, Western teacher and girls' JV basketball coach. He was nominated by his JV team.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION WEEK

Individual volunteers and outstanding staff members are recognized throughout the year through Golden Apple Awards, but each spring the district sets aside one week to honor the legions of volunteers who work throughout the district each day of the school year. The board proclaimed the week of May 31-June 4, 1999 as Volunteer Recognition Week.

PRELIMINARY 1999-2000 BUDGET

Administration presented the proposed 1999-2000 school budget during the state-mandated public hearing. The public and board of education members had the opportunity to ask questions and the board adopted the 1999-2000 operating budget as presented. The board also approved final adjustments to the 1998-1999 budget to more accurately reflect the year's revenues and expenditures.

MILLAGE RATE REDUCED

Based on the provisions of Proposal A, the district will levy 18 mills on non-homesteaded property for 1999-2000. The millage, required to generate the certified hold-harmless revenue for 1999-2000 will be 3.0820-mill. This is a reduction of .2654-mill for homesteaded property owners. To satisfy debt obligations for 1999-2000, 4.8 mills will be levied.