

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Sheriff McBride Reminds Citizens: Beware Phony Charitable Appeals

During the past several weeks, I have received numerous calls from citizens in regard to police associations calling them and asking for donations. Some of these associations hire callers who use rude, high-pressure or threatening tactics to intimidate people to donate and you should just hang up! My office and the Michigan Sheriffs' Association **do not** solicit by telephone. The M.S.A. contacts potential donors via letter. I strongly suggest that citizens never agree to donate over the phone to any organization. Please keep the following points in mind if you choose to listen to a solicitor:

- Be wary of appeals that are long on emotion, but short on facts describing what the charity will do to address the needs of victims and their families.
- If you contribute, do not give cash. Make a check or money order out to the name of the charitable organization, not to the individual collecting the donation.
- If you decide to contribute online, find out more about the charity before making a contribution and be aware of red flags. For example, some charities imitate the name and style of a well-known organization in order to confuse people. Also, when clicking on the link to "donate", look at the organization's URL in the browser window. Exercise caution if the domain name is hidden, is not familiar to you, or is not the same as the one stated in the text of the link.
- Watch out for excessive pressure for on-the-spot donations. Be wary of any request to send a "runner" to pick up your donation.
- Do not give your credit card number or other personal information to a telephone solicitor or in response to an e-mail solicitation. Ask the caller or sender to provide you with written information on the charity's programs and finances.
- Do not hesitate to ask for written information that describes the charity's program(s) and finances; such as the charity's latest annual reports and financial statements. Even newly created organizations should have some basic information available.

- Be wary of charities that are reluctant to answer reasonable questions about their operations, finances and programs. Ask how much of your gift will be used for the activity mentioned in the appeal and how much will go toward other programs and administrative and fund raising costs.

You can obtain further advice on giving, as well as access reports on national charities, by visiting www.give.org, the Web site of the Better Business Bureau Wise Giving Alliance; the national charity watchdog affiliated with the BBB system. Reports on local charities are available through your local BBB office or <http://lookup.bbb.org>.

If you believe that you have been the victim of a questionable charitable appeal, report the crime to your local Sheriff's office or a law enforcement agency immediately.