

## **Consumer Advisory: Beware of Phony Charities**

(Phoenix , Ariz. – Nov. 3, 2006 ) The Holiday Season is fast approaching, a time of year when many Arizona consumers contribute to charities. As the Holidays draw closer, Attorney General Terry Goddard advises consumers to be careful when donating to charitable organizations, especially groups they know little about.

He offers the following tips for consumers:

- Ask questions about the organization soliciting funds. A legitimate charity will be happy to provide information about its work.
- Be careful of charities with names that sound impressive or resemble those of other organizations. Some scam artists use names similar to reputable, well-known organizations to confuse donors.
- Do not make cash donations. Always contribute by check. Make your check payable to the charity, never to the individual soliciting the donation.
- Remember to ask for a receipt and a statement that the contribution is tax deductible.
- Be very skeptical of anyone asking for an immediate donation by requesting your credit card number or bank account information over the phone.
- Find out how the charity will use your donation. Ask for information about its programs and for a copy of its financial report. Ask what percentage of the funds will be used for programming and how much will be spent on administrative costs. Reputable charities will be happy to provide this information.
- Be wary of calls soliciting funds that coincide with highly publicized tragedies, such as devastating fires, floods or other dramatic events. Fraudulent fund raisers will try to exploit your sympathy for those who suffered.
- If you have any doubts about a charity, check with the Secretary of State to ensure it is registered as a non-profit.

If you believe you have been a victim of fraud, please contact the Attorney General's Office in Phoenix at 602.542.5763; in Tucson at 520.628.6504 ; or outside the Phoenix and Tucson metro areas at 1.800.352.8431.

To file a complaint in person, the Attorney General's Office has 25 satellite offices throughout the State with volunteers available to help. Locations and hours of operation are posted on the Attorney General's Web site at [www.azag.gov](http://www.azag.gov). Consumers can also file complaints online through the Web site.