



Calvert County NEWS

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Calvert County Department of Community Resources Offers Guidelines for Charitable Giving *Residents Encouraged to Carefully Consider Telephone Solicitations*

PRINCE FREDERICK, Md. – July 6, 2010 – Based on recent citizen reports regarding phone solicitations from questionable charities, the Calvert County Department of Community Resources offers the following resources and tips to help avoid charity fraud.

Citizens receiving calls from new or unrecognized charitable groups can verify the status of an organization by visiting the Maryland Office of the Secretary of State Web site at www.sos.state.md.us/charity/searchcharity.aspx. The site offers a searchable database listing charities registered in the state of Maryland. The site also includes a link allowing residents to view a copy of the organization's IRS Form 990, a description of the organization's charitable programs and other information about the administration and finances of the organization.

Residents receiving phone solicitations from unfamiliar organizations should ask the following questions:

- Is the charity registered with the Secretary of State?
- What is the full name, address and phone number of the charity?
- Do you work for the charity or are you a paid fundraiser?

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Calvert County Department of Community Resources
Offers Guidelines for Charitable Giving
July 6, 2010
Page 2

- For what purpose will my contribution be used? Verify claims that the charity gives funds or goods to local agencies.
- Is my contribution tax deductible?
- What percentage of its total income does the charity spend on its charitable purpose? Beware of organizations that have large overhead, management or administrative costs.

Residents should also be aware of the following deceptive practices:

- Refusal of the organization to send written material or financial information;
- Use of high-pressure tactics to secure a donation;
- Offers to send a courier to collect your contribution;
- Receipt of an invoice or statement indicating payment due for a contribution you never pledged, and/or;
- A name or logo that closely resembles another charity with a similar charitable purpose.

When dealing with telephone solicitations, residents should not give out personal information such as Social Security numbers or credit card information over the phone. Donors have the right to ask as many questions as necessary to reach an informed decision. Additionally, donors have the right to change their minds after having agreed to make a donation. A pledge to make a contribution is not a legally enforceable agreement.

Further guidelines to avoid charity fraud are available from the Federal Trade Commission at www.ftc.gov/charityfraud/ and from the Maryland Office of the Secretary of State at www.sos.state.md.us/charity/Givewise.aspx. To register complaints or concerns, contact the Office of the Secretary of State, Charities/Legal Services Division, at www.sos.state.md.us/Charity/Concern.aspx or call 410-974-5534.

For information on Calvert County Department of Community Resources programs and services, visit online at www.co.cal.md.us.

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Calvert County is Maryland's smallest county in land area with 213 square miles. It is home to approximately 90,000 people and has one of the highest standards of living in Maryland. There are more than 5,000 businesses in the County and a labor force of at least 1.8 million resides within a one-hour drive. Major industries include defense contracting, information technology, tourism, utilities, light manufacturing and administrative services.