



NONPROFIT NEWS

From the Charitable Law Section at the Office of Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray

HELPING NONPROFITS AVOID SCAMS

For the first time in Ohio, the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection section has opened its doors to handle complaints from nonprofits and small businesses being preyed upon by scammers and deceptive vendors.

Attorney General Richard Cordray is reaching out to nonprofits and small businesses that have been mistreated in the marketplace. Since beginning a test launch of this program roughly six months ago, the office has received more than 500 complaints and secured more than \$60,000 for small businesses and nonprofits.

Attorney General Cordray announced the initiative to the state earlier this month.

Some examples of ways that the office was able to help included:

- A West Jefferson library was charged for a web service that it never authorized. The Attorney General’s Office recovered \$244.
- A southeast Ohio community and visitor’s bureau was tricked into buying unneeded and overpriced toner for a new printer. After returning the item, the company asked for a roughly \$75 restocking fee; the office intervened and made sure that the bureau did not have to pay the fee.

Through this new program, the office hopes to help nonprofits and small businesses from being nickel-and-dimed by unscrupulous operators.

To file a complaint, visit:
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/Complaint

GOOD NEWS FOR NONPROFITS: VOLUNTEERISM IS INCREASING

The latest national statistics show that both the number of volunteers and the rate of volunteering increased during the past year.

The Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that the figures for the federal fiscal year, ending in September 2009, show that 63.4 million Americans, or 26.8 percent of the population volunteered at least once during the year. In 2008, 26.4 percent of people volunteered.

The rate of women volunteering increased from 29.4 percent in 2008 to 30.1 percent in 2009. For men, the

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CHARITIES NOTE SUCCESS OF TEXT DONATIONS FOR HAITI RELIEF

Nonprofits will be evaluating the results of the text-based Haiti relief fundraising initiative to determine if texting strategies make sense for their organizations. While texting donations is not new, it had not been seen on such a massive scale until the Haiti relief effort. The growing use of social media and the increased familiarity with texting have contributed to the dramatic results of the campaign.

The American Red Cross has had enormous success with its text message campaign – more than \$31 million and counting. Donors were asked to text “HAITI” to a specific number and \$10

would be added to their mobile phone bill and then forwarded to the Red Cross. The success of the Haiti initiative dwarfs the result of texting campaigns in 2008 to support the Red Cross’s response to Hurricane Gustav in the Atlantic and Caribbean areas when \$250,000 was raised.

Donors must use caution when evaluating requests for any donation, including a donation submitted via text. Be certain that you know the organization and check the validity of the request. Sadly, some scam artists use texting channels to collect funds for fraudulent purposes. Always ask

questions and check out the legitimacy of the group and the group’s support of the texting campaign. Even if a campaign is legitimate, be aware that mobile carriers may apply various data and texting charges for the transaction.

For more advice on sending donations via text, visit
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/TextingDonations

GOOD NEWS FOR NONPROFITS: VOLUNTEERISM IS INCREASING, CONTINUED

volunteer rate stayed the same and remains at 23.3 percent. As in past years, women volunteered at a higher rate than men across all age groups, educational levels and other demographic classifications.

To find out about new services for charities from Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray's office, including streamlined background checks for volunteers, visit: www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/NewCharitableServices

QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS

- Thank you to all of you who have shared your thoughts about the Nonprofit News! Please consider submitting a question that might be of interest to others, and it may be featured in an upcoming edition. Send comments or questions to CharitableLaw@OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov.

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