

OFFICE OF THE STATE ATTORNEY

EIGHTEENTH JUDICIAL CIRCUIT OF FLORIDA
BREVARD AND SEMINOLE COUNTIES

PHIL ARCHER
STATE ATTORNEY



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Seminole Juvenile Center
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(407) 665-5454

Reply to:

CHARITY AND DONATION INFORMATION

1. Check to see if a charity is registered with the State of Florida by calling 1-800-HELP FLA (1-800-435-7352) or visiting www.800helpfla.com/giftgiversguide.
 - Religious organizations and schools are exempt from the law.
 - The web site has lots of info on current scams and consumer alerts.
2. Check with leading watchdog organizations to see what they have to say about a charity you are considering. They offer a wealth of information about the finances and practices of charitable organizations, including how much they spend on fundraising. Experts generally agree that charities should spend no more than 35 cents to raise a dollar and most leading charities spend considerably less than that.
 - guidestar.org
 - give.org (Better Business Bureau's site)
 - charitywatch.org (American Institute of Philanthropy site)
 - charitynavigator.org
3. If someone appears at your door or calls on the phone asking for a donation, there are things you can do, in lieu of an online background check, to protect yourself:
 - Ask for printed information describing the charity's programs and finances including what percentage of a donation goes to the actual service they are providing and how much goes to fundraising. It's the law!
 - Always write out the check to an organization, not an individual. Never give cash!
 - Do not give credit-card numbers, bank account numbers, or other personal information over the phone. Have them send you information about the charity and then you can determine how to send the money.
 - Be very suspicious if someone offers to come right over and pick up your donation.

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IDENTITY THEFT

1. Order a copy of your credit report from each of the three major credit bureaus once a year. **IT'S FREE!**
2. Mail payments for bills from post office collection boxes. Tear or shred all documents that have personal information on them before placing in trash. Especially, credit card offers!
3. Remove any non-necessary information from your checks such as middle name, phone number, driver's license number, social security number.
4. Review credit card, telephone, cell phone and bank statements for irregularities and be aware of your billing cycles. Contact creditors immediately if you find a discrepancy. Close all accounts that are no longer needed or used. Write the company a letter and ask them to verify in writing that the account is closed.
5. Use passwords on all your accounts. Avoid picking easily determined numbers such as birth date, mother's maiden name or last four digits of your social security number.
6. Send "opt out" letter to businesses you have a relationship with, restricting them from selling, renting, distributing, or exchanging your personal information. To stop receiving pre-approved credit offers call 1-888-5-optout(567-8688)

CONTACT INFORMATION

1. Fla. Attorney General – 1-866-966-7226 or www.myfloridalegal.com
2. Federal Trade Commission - 1-877-ID THEFT (438-4338) or www.ftc.gov
3. Credit Reports: WWW.ANNUALCREDITREPORT.COM
4. Fla. Dept. of Motor Veh. - Fraud Dept. – 1-850-617-2405 or www.dmvflorida.org
5. Social Security Administration – 1-800-269-0271 or www.ssa.gov.