



# ***SCAM ALERT!***

A Consumer Update from  
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## **Charity Cons**

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Every time there is a disaster, like the earthquake and tsunami in Japan or hurricane Katrina, bogus charities arise. Fortunately, many people like to give with an open heart to help others in need. However, that means that criminals use fake charities to seek donations for relief efforts, and then pocket the money for themselves.

Many times these fake charities can be hard to spot because the crooks will set up websites or call centers that appear genuine by using names of legitimate, trusted organizations.

Some tips to ensure your donations are properly used:

- Only donate to a tax-exempt organization. Go to [www.irs.gov/charites](http://www.irs.gov/charites) to verify a group's non-profit status.
- Search the Better Business Bureau's *Wise Giving Alliance* website which evaluates charities. [www.bbb.org](http://www.bbb.org)
- When solicited by phone, always ask the caller to send you written materials about the charity.
- Don't give or send cash. For security and tax record purposes, contribute by check or credit card. Write the official name of the charity on your check.
- As always, never give out personal information such as credit card numbers or bank account numbers over the phone.

The above ALERT is part of the Montgomery County Prosecuting Attorney's initiative to help citizens become aware of ways they can avoid becoming a victim, or ways they can help stop criminal activity that may be occurring. Upon request, the office can provide presentations on crime prevention actions and activities to halt crime and increase the quality of life in our community.

If you would like additional information on the above ALERT, or would like additional information regarding our programs to assist consumers in general and/or seniors in particular, please contact Jennifer Heapy, Supervising Attorney, Adult Protection Unit, or Sarah Schenck, Supervising Attorney, Fraud and Economic Crimes Unit at 937-225-5757.

If you would like us to send *SCAM ALERT* updates to you electronically, please send your e-mail address to: [newsletter@mcpo.com](mailto:newsletter@mcpo.com) to be added to our distribution list.