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DONATING DO'S AND DON'TS

A Word To The Wise

Not all thrift stores are charities. For-profit companies operate some thrift stores, yet they solicit donations under the name of a charity. In these cases, potential donors usually are not informed of the arrangement between the charity and the for-profit company. As little as five percent of the money generated from these donations may actually go to the charity. The for-profit entity may control the entire operation, from solicitation to the resale of goods.

Making An Informed Choice

You can make sure your donations are benefiting the people who need them most by asking a few key questions:

- Will your donation be used to support a cause you believe in?
- What percentage of the revenues generated by your donation will directly support the mission of the organization?
- Does the charity actually operate the thrift store in which your donation will be sold? Or is the store run by a for-profit operation?
- If the store is run by a for-profit, how will your donation help people in need?

What You Should Do

- Give to charities you know and trust. Note that fraudulent charities often modify the names of established groups, so be sure to read carefully the name of the charity before giving.
- Familiarize yourself with the organization soliciting your support. Avoid giving to organizations that send unsolicited e-mails or to solicitors who ask for your credit card number over the telephone or request payment in cash.
- Avoid donating to organizations that can't immediately provide you with information about their mission, history and the causes they are asking you to support.
- Find out how your donation will be used and how much the organization intends to raise.
- Realize that the opportunity to give extends beyond an organization's immediate need.
- Before donating an item, ask yourself if you'd give it to a relative or friend. Disposing of items that can't be sold in the stores diverts dollars from Goodwill's services to the community.

Donation Do's

- Wash or dry-clean clothing.
- Test electrical equipment and battery-operated items.
- Include all pieces and parts to children's games and toys.
- Contact Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries at 330-759-7921 regarding standards for donating computers.
- Contact Youngstown Area Goodwill Industries for a list of donation items that are not accepted or view the list on the website

Donation Don'ts

- Leave items unattended outside a collection center. Donations dropped off outside after business hours encourage theft.
- Donate broken or soiled items.
- Give items that have been recalled, banned, or do not meet current safety standards. For more information, visit the Consumer Product Safety Commission (www.cpsc.gov).

Donors interested in claiming tax deductions should keep itemized lists of their donations. The Internal Revenue Service allows a deduction for each item, but the donor determines each item's value. Generally, an item's value should be based on fair market value. Goodwill provides receipts to donors at its drop-off sites, and attendants can validate itemized lists when they are presented. For general guidelines, including a donation valuation guide, visit www.goodwill.org and www.irs.gov.

Source: *Goodwill Industries International, www.goodwill.org*