

Keep These Tips In Mind When Giving To Charities

UNIVERSITY PARK (Centre Co.) — Because many charitable organizations increase their solicitations during the holiday season, a consumer scientist in Penn State's College of Agricultural Sciences offers some tips on charitable giving.

"Charities may increase their solicitations during the last two months of the year for two reasons," says Cathy Bowen, assistant professor of agricultural and extension education. "People often are more generous during the holiday season. They also may be looking for a place to make that final tax-deductible contribution before the tax year

ends."

Bowen suggests some things to keep in mind when solicited by charities:

- Never give to a charity you know nothing about.
- Don't feel guilty about not supporting every charity that asks for a contribution.
- Request written information from the charity regarding its programs and finances.
- Don't feel pressured to give on the spot or to allow someone to enter your house to pick up a contribution.
- Do not donate over the phone unless you are familiar with the organization. Hang up

on aggressive and harassing solicitors.

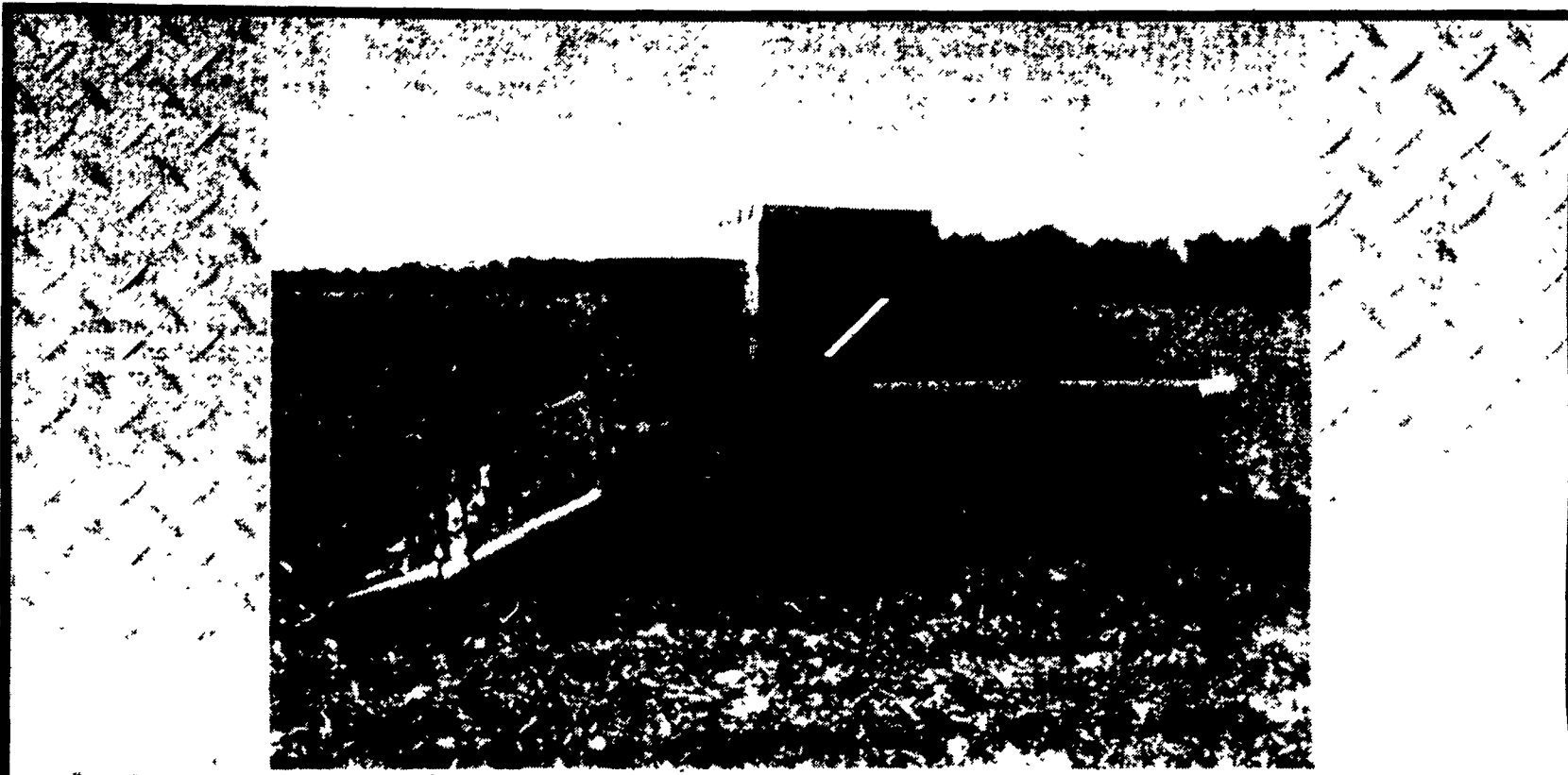
- Never give cash, credit card numbers or bank account numbers. Always write a check payable to the charity, so you have a record of your donations.
- Ask who will benefit from your contribution.
- Find out if your contribution is tax-deductible.
- Don't make assumptions when you hear words like "police" or "firefighter" in an organization's name. Although an organization claims it has local ties or works with local police or firefighters, it doesn't necessarily mean contributions will be used

locally.

- If solicited in person, always ask to see the solicitor's identification.
- Be aware of statements such as "every penny will go to the charity." All charities have expenses, so check carefully and know where your money goes.
- "Finally, if you find that you are getting too many requests, select one or two causes that you will support and ignore the others," Bowen says. "After doing the initial research to determine if the organizations are ones you would like to support, making future contributions should take very little of your time.

"Of course, every three to four years, you will want to re-evaluate whether you wish to continue supporting the charities selected," she adds.

If you have any questions about charitable giving and taxes, or wish to report a fraudulent or deceptive solicitation, Bowen suggests calling the Pennsylvania Bureau of Charitable Organizations (800-732-0999 within Pennsylvania or 717-783-1720 from outside the state). Information also is available at the bureau's World Wide Web site at www.dos.state.pa.us/charity/index.htm.



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Food Poisoning

Food poisoning is a term many people use when they get a foodborne illness. Between 3.3 million and 12.8 million people get food poisoning each year. And almost 4,000 people die from it each year!

People who have food poisoning have symptoms similar to the flu: nausea, diarrhea, fever, stomach cramps, and vomiting. Very young children, older adults, and people sick with another illness may be more susceptible to food poisoning. It could take anywhere from a few hours to a few days for someone to begin feeling ill after contracting a foodborne illness.

Food can be contaminated by any number of harmful microorganisms when it's not handled properly. By being careful, you can reduce your risk of getting sick from a foodborne illness. Follow these steps and be sure to share them with your family and friends!

- Always wash your hands before handling food.
- Wash hands, utensils, cutting boards and work surfaces with hot soapy water after contact with raw meat and poultry.
- Keep cold foods cold and hot foods hot.
- Put all leftovers in the refrigerator right away.

