

The Contribute 2000

Your Guide to Investor-Worthy Charities

As competition for your donor dollar gets stronger, *CONTRIBUTE* understands the value of charity accountability, transparency, and fundraising efficiency. To that end this holiday season, we offer you a ranking of 200 organizations, as measured in the *CONTRIBUTE GUIDE* since the launch of this magazine in April 2006. Twenty-five of the charities listed appear for the first time in this issue (see pages G12-G15).

The Guide offers *CONTRIBUTE* readers a list of organizations in the New York/New Jersey/Connecticut area that are reviewed for financial best practices. Each of the charities reviewed by *CONTRIBUTE*, in addition to having 501(c)(3) federal tax-exempt status, has represented that a minimum of 70 percent of its budget goes to program services.

CONTRIBUTE's reviews provide information on each charity's program focus, sustainability, fundraising efficiency, and financial stability and shows which charities have obtained independent, certified audits. We do this using five consecutive years of the charity's financial information, based on its latest available public 990 federal tax returns.

Organizational information used in the Guide is verified through GuideStar, the New York Philanthropic Advisory Service of the Better Business Bureau, Charity Navigator, the New York Attorney General's Office, the American Institute of Philanthropy, the Nonprofit Coordinating Committee of New York, the IRS database, and the charities themselves.

New this year are two additional methods of evaluating area nonprofits. First, we ranked organization performance in descending order within cause classifications, based on an aggregate of the five categories used to measure financial best practices (see "Methodology," page G15).

Second, exemplary financial performance goes beyond revenues and cause categories and into how efficiently an organization acquires and spends the funds it has—regardless of how high or low the amounts. Therefore, we rank a number of these organizations based solely on their outstanding fiscal management abilities, regardless of cause classification. A key factor is program focus—the percentage of charity income that is spent on those served (see table, top right). We recognize, however, that in the absence of industry standards, there is spirited debate over what constitutes optimal overhead expenses.

Our summary also looks closely at fundraising efficiency—the ratio of a charity's total revenue to every dollar spent on fundraising (table, far right, center). In that

table, we list the five top-performing nonprofits based on their five-year averages.

And since our *CONTRIBUTE*/Harris Interactive Survey (see page 39) shows that 63 percent of respondents consider health and medical causes to be the most important, the table (far right, bottom) lists the five top-performing charities in that category.

Additionally, as we move into a new year, it is important to note that financial information for the last five consecutive years has changed for the 125 nonprofits we measured from April 2006 through April 2007. Roughly 40 percent of that group maintained the same program focus, 37 percent gave more, and 24 percent gave less. Only two organizations, the Connecticut Zoological Society and North Shore Animal League, fell below the 70 percent *CONTRIBUTE* benchmark.

Finally, this summary is not meant to be a comprehensive rating of a charity's overall value, but instead, a tool for donors seeking to size up a group's fiscal management prowess. We welcome your input.

OVERALL TOP-RANKED NONPROFITS BY CAUSE

ANIMAL WELFARE

Central Westchester Humane Society

ARTS & CULTURE

Jacob Burns Film Center

CHILDREN & YOUTH

Fresh Youth Initiatives

HEALTH & MEDICAL

Young Survival Coalition

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & CIVIC

Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC

EDUCATION & LITERACY

TEAK Fellowship

ENVIRONMENT & PARKS

Westchester Land Trust

HUMAN & SUPPORT SERVICES

Paterson Habitat for Humanity

INTERNATIONAL

Asha for Education

TOP-RANKED IN PROGRAM FOCUS

Those charities with the highest percentage of funds dedicated to program services

1. AmeriCares	99%
2. Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC	99%
3. Asha for Education	98%
4. Central Westchester Humane Society	98%
5. Island Harvest	97%

TOP-RANKED IN FUNDRAISING EFFICIENCY

Those charities with the highest return to the organization for every dollar spent on fundraising

1. Mayor's Fund to Advance NYC
2. Project Reach Youth
3. Mental Health Association of New York City
4. AmeriCares
5. Children's Village

TOP-PERFORMING HEALTH & MEDICAL CHARITIES

1. Young Survival Coalition
2. Visions, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired
3. Little Hill Foundation-Alina Lodge
4. Parkinson's Disease Foundation
5. Mental Health Association of New York City

Ratings Methodology

Full explanation of our Ratings Methodology can be found on page G15. Five categories are rated by:

● **Program Focus:** portion of the charity's spending which goes to those served.

▲ **Fundraising Efficiency:** returns to the charity for every dollar spent on fundraising.

● **Sustainability:** number of years a charity can survive based on its current assets and spending.

■ **Financial Stability:** charity's ability to stay in the black.

✓ **Verification:** charity has obtained an independent, certified audit.