



Seattle, Washington
Sunday, November 15, 2009

U.S. charities may not have a happy holiday *Only 38 percent of Americans say they are likely to give charitable gift*

NOTE: As you read the Associated Press article below, please keep The Lancaster-Northumberland Interfaith Service Council in mind.

These are extremely difficult economic times, and Interfaith is using diminishing reserve funds for the first time in many, many years just to meet basic expenses.

We desperately need your help if we're to continue assisting needy families and individuals in our Northern Neck area, some of them without employment and income for the very first time. Your contributions are tax-deductible. Please help.

The Interfaith Service Council's mailing address is P.O. Box 868, Kilmarnock, VA 22482.

And please send this e-mail on to your own lists.

Thank you.



Seattle, Washington
Sunday, November 15, 2009

U.S. charities may not have a happy holiday *Only 38 percent of Americans say they are likely to give charitable gift*

SEATTLE - American charities have weathered a significant drop in giving this year, and while they're hoping for a holiday miracle, a recent survey shows they will probably see a decrease in year-end generosity.

In light of the economic downturn, only 38 percent of Americans say they are more likely to give a charitable gift as a holiday present this year, compared to 49 percent last year, according to a survey conducted by Harris Interactive to be released Monday.

Some of the biggest U.S. charities say they are budgeting for a disappointing Christmas.

The survey commissioned by Federal Way, Wash.-based World Vision indicates they are prudent to not raise their expectations for now. The survey did find, however, that 74 percent of Americans plan to increase their charitable giving once the economy improves.

The nation's most successful fundraising organizations expected to see their income decline by an average of 9 percent in 2009, according to the Chronicle of Philanthropy.

Harris Interactive contacted 1,001 U.S. adults in a random telephone survey, and claims a 95 percent "confidence level."

Giving fewer dollars

About the same number of Americans are giving to charity these days, but they are giving

fewer dollars, said Justin Greeves, senior vice president of Harris Interactive, which regularly polls Americans about their charitable giving.

Times are doubly tough this year for many nonprofits because the need for their services is increasing at the same time donations are decreasing, but Nancy Brown, chief executive officer of the American Heart Association, said her organization is doing its best to cut expenses not services.

"I say this to our staff all the time: 'Our mission is not in a recession'," said Brown. The Dallas-based nonprofit ended its fiscal year on June 30 with donations down about 11.8 percent, and a staff cut of 371 people or about 10 percent of its work force.

The charity did grow in two ways this past year: both the number of donors and the number of volunteers increased. "More people with less money is better than less people with less money," Brown said.

Northwest Harvest, operator of Washington state's largest food bank, also reported volunteerism was up this fall while cash donations were down.

Executive Director Shelley Rotondo said the statewide hunger relief organization distributed more food, in keeping with a record increase in need, during fiscal 2009 than in any time in the agency's 40-year history.

But that generosity is not continuing at the same pace this fiscal year.

Donations not meeting expectations

Donations did not meet expectations during the first quarter of fiscal 2010, which ended in September, and Rotondo was not optimistic about the second quarter, thanks to state unemployment figures holding steady near 10 percent.

Donations to charities with more of an international mission did not see the same boost in generosity that groups like food banks saw in 2009.

World Vision saw individual cash donations drop by \$33 million this past year, but government grants, corporate donations and staff cuts made up for most of the shortfall.

Devin Hermanson, senior director of the nonprofit's gift catalog, has high hopes for the holiday season, despite the fact that the agency's own survey points in the opposite direction. This year's survey found 57 percent of American adults planned to spend less on holiday presents, but that's better than last year's 71 percent.

"Now that things are getting ever-so-slightly better, people are thinking I am going to give my kids a little more this year than I have been giving," Greeves said.