

The 2017 Holiday Giving Guide from the California Association of Nonprofits

Make Your Holiday Gifts to Nonprofits Count

During this time of year, we are often asked how people can give a gift that reflects their values and that is meaningful for the giver and for the recipient.

This guide includes strategies for smart gift giving, while also avoiding scams that may be disguised as charities.

Please share this guide in your own newsletter, with your networks, and on your social media platforms.

Tips for Good Giving:

- ✓ **Say “thank you” to a nonprofit that’s had an impact on you.** Maybe you worked at a nonprofit when you were young where you gained skills and confidence (and a good feature on your resume). Or maybe the Boys & Girls Club or the LGBT Center was an important haven for you. Consider giving one day’s pay (your annual salary divided by 228 days) to that nonprofit. Pay it forward for someone else.
- ✓ **Consider the nonprofits you already know and appreciate.** For example, where do you volunteer or serve on the board? You can give your gift “in honor of” a staff member or fellow volunteer whose work you appreciate. Think about which nonprofits help you, your family members, and your neighbors. Perhaps your niece gets help from a disabilities nonprofit, your parent belongs to a senior center, or you enjoy a wilderness area, a museum, public radio, or an online encyclopedia.
- ✓ **Use social media to ask your personal network for recommendations.** For example, ask your Facebook page for recommendations from veterans about which veterans assistance organizations they respect.
- ✓ **If you are thinking about giving to direct service organizations, consider a matching gift to an organization that advocates on that same issue.** With the new administration in Washington, consider giving not only to an organization that provides direct services to immigrants and refugees, but also to a civil rights law center. If you donate to a food pantry or a homeless shelter, make a matching donation to an organization that is standing up against cuts to programs that families depend on — like health care or food programs.
- ✓ **Give locally...but also give to communities with fewer resources than yours.** If you give to a symphony orchestra in Los Angeles, consider also giving to an orchestra in the Central Valley. If you give to a wilderness preservation organization, consider also giving to an environmental justice group in a black or Latino community. If you donate to your alma mater, make a matching donation to a university that may have fewer donors, perhaps a community college. If you aren’t sure where to give, make your donation to a local community foundation or United Way.

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Now for our help with those bad apples:

Before giving to an organization you don't know — even a famous one — do a little online research. Type the organization's name into Google along with a word such as "problem" or "wrong" to see if there are accusations against the charity, or criticisms of its work. For example, an international nonprofit might have good finances, but a web search reveals that the people in the overseas nation believe the nonprofit is harming local small businesses. (Of course you will have to decide whether any accusations are legitimate and whether or not you agree with any criticisms). You can review the charity's financial reports — typically available free at www.guidestar.org (not all charities have to provide these reports, called Federal Form 990). Members of the public — such as volunteers and beneficiaries — can also write reviews of charities on Yelp and GreatNonprofits.org.

Don't click on links in email from nonprofits when you want to give, especially well-known nonprofits. Instead, type their name directly into your internet browser. Scammers send emails with links that go to "look-alike" pages that appear to be legitimate but instead steal your money and your information.

Don't give your credit card number over the phone or online to a nonprofit you don't know directly.

If you think you've been scammed, give a holiday gift to thousands of other well-meaning people by reporting the scammer to the California Attorney General using this [form](#).

Remember: California's nonprofits are "hidden in plain sight." We're not only the homeless shelter or food bank. We're your church, the Campfire Girls, Downton Abbey, the local chorus. We are all breathing cleaner air and our children's toys are safer thanks to California's nonprofit environmental and consumer advocates. Those of us who are people of color, women, LGBT, and people with disabilities benefit every day from the work of civil rights nonprofits.

As nonprofits,
we rest in the arms
of our communities
and supporters.
Thank you for being
there with us.

A downloadable version of our Giving Guide is available [here](#). Please distribute it widely!

P.S. CalNonprofits is powered by the 10,000+ members who make our work possible. Can we send you information about [how to join](#)?