

# GOOD CITIZENSHIP

## To Truly Make A Difference, Support Charities With Proven Results

by George Atkins

(NAPSA)—Even in tough economic times, Americans donate generously to charity. In fact, recent years saw the two highest levels of public support for non-profits ever, according to The Chronicle of Philanthropy.

In addition, a recent American Red Cross survey found that 90 percent of Americans planned to donate to charity this year. It's always important for nonprofits to make the most of every dollar, but as more people come to depend on charities during hard times, it becomes even more crucial.



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How can people learn which organizations will make the best use of their hard-earned donations? Many watchdog groups publish annual rankings of charities to help donors understand how their money is used. While this information can be helpful, it is important to understand that all ranking processes are not created equal—they can vary greatly in the kind of snapshot they provide. Some ranking reports offer a complete

picture of each organization, while others offer a simple ratio of overhead to program expenses; some look deeply at several performance scores, while others are less comprehensive.

The American Cancer Society has historically believed that the charities most deserving of public support and trust are those that show they are making measurable progress toward their stated mission goals.

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**There are more than 1.2 million charities in this country. You can make sure your donations go to one that spends efficiently and also operates effectively, delivering on its mission.**

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Recently, a group of five national charity watchdog organizations confirmed this position by announcing jointly that donors should pay more attention to results and less attention to expense ratios. One of these organizations, Charity Navigator, also announced that it is changing its methods for rating charities to ensure that both expense ratios and proven results would be among the factors it considers. This sentiment was echoed by the

best-known charity watchdog, the Better Business Bureau, and its Wise Giving Alliance.

The American Cancer Society meets or exceeds the standards established by the Better Business Bureau and other watchdog organizations and regularly reports progress and management performance to supporters, the media and the public.

In addition to the traditional Annual Report for donors, it publishes a yearly Strategic Plan Progress Report, which provides a deeper look at and assesses stated measures of success against the bottom line: lives saved from cancer. All of these reports are available online at [www.cancer.org](http://www.cancer.org) and at the National Cancer Information Center, (800) 227-2345.

The society believes this sort of transparency is necessary to maintain public trust and is proud to be a leader in this area. Its approach to managing the funds entrusted to its lifesaving work is to be as tough on itself as it is on cancer.

• *Mr. Atkins is a retired bank executive and National Board Chair of the American Cancer Society.*